

# 10 WRITING TIPS



# 10 WRITING TIPS

You already know how to write a book. That is how you have arrived at the editing stage. And to this page. The following tips are intended to help you make your book the best it can be before it comes under Pagetrim's microscope.

## SHOW NOT TELL

01

Make sure your characters show us their personalities and behaviours through actions and words. Don't tell the reader they are kind. Have them do good deeds. The same applies to all elements of your story. If it's a windy day, show us *leaves being torn from trees* or *umbrella ribs cracking*.

## POINT OF VIEW

02

Are you in the head of only one character per passage or chapter? Be careful not to jump between heads as this confuses the reader. It can be tricky with multiple main characters interacting in a scene or chapter. Concentrate on which character is leading the scene and show the reader what they think, feel, and see.

## REPORTED SPEECH

03

There is no need to use a range of reporting verbs when it comes to reported speech. If you stick with, *he said, she said*, you can't go wrong. It reads much better than *he replied, she responded, she shared, he exclaimed*. It's okay to use these, of course, but sparingly. Descriptive reporting verbs such as *shouted* and *whispered* are fine.

## SIMPLE IS BETTER

04

Have you kept your writing simple and your sentences written in the minimum number of words? Remember that big words do not enhance quality in writing; how you construct your sentences is more important. However, avoid boring adjectives like *nice* and *great* as much as you would avoid cliches.

## SUBJECT + VERB

05

Don't always begin sentences with subject-verb structures. For example, *he, she, I, they, John, Mr Turner*, which are always followed by the verb. Mix the way you begin sentences for variety. For example, using the participle clause: *Headed upriver, she saw the sun tease the horizon. Enjoying the sounds of the forest, the group continued in single file.*

## CHAPTER SIZE

06

How long are your chapters? Generally speaking, readers prefer shorter chapters. It's easier to set reading targets, provides opportunities to sneak in a chapter or two while commuting on the bus or train, and provides a sense of accomplishment when reaching the end of a chapter. 3 to 6 pages are perfect, but longer chapters are, of course, fine.

## CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

07

Do your chapters end in a way that leaves readers craving more? This does not mean you need a cliff-hanger at the end of every chapter. You certainly don't. But you want to entice the reader back. Does each chapter leave the reader thinking? Guessing? Excited? Intrigued? Shocked? Amused?

## CREATING TENSION

08

Are your climatic scenes capturing the tension? Again, this is quite a skill. One technique to achieve this is short, sharp sentences. Another is making each sentence of high drama a new line, essentially its own paragraph. Some writers are better at this than others. It takes practice.

## OVERUSING ADVERBS

09

Don't overuse adverbs because they can clutter writing. And adverbs are often unnecessary. By choosing a strong, appropriate verb or explaining a situation with clearer context, you'll find you may not need an adverb. For example, *ran quickly* can be replaced with *sprinted*. Another example: *she banged her fist on the table aggressively*. Banging a fist on a table is already aggressive and doesn't need further emphasis, especially if some context has been provided. Adverbs should not be eliminated from writing entirely, though. A few here and there are fine.

## THE 5 SENSES

10

Have you used at least 1 of the 5 senses in each chapter other than only sight? You want the reader to taste, smell, feel and hear the same as the characters for a fully immersive reading experience. Try to introduce the senses in various ways, too, rather than simply saying *it tasted like rotten animal* or *smelt like grandma's cherry pie*. For example, *the delicious cherry pie aromas made her hungry*.

Now that you have the techniques, how do you deploy them? Well, there is a *technique* for this, too. Make a checklist. In the vertical column of your spreadsheet, list your chapters. In your horizontal column, make the techniques your headings. Then go through each chapter and tick off each technique you have used.