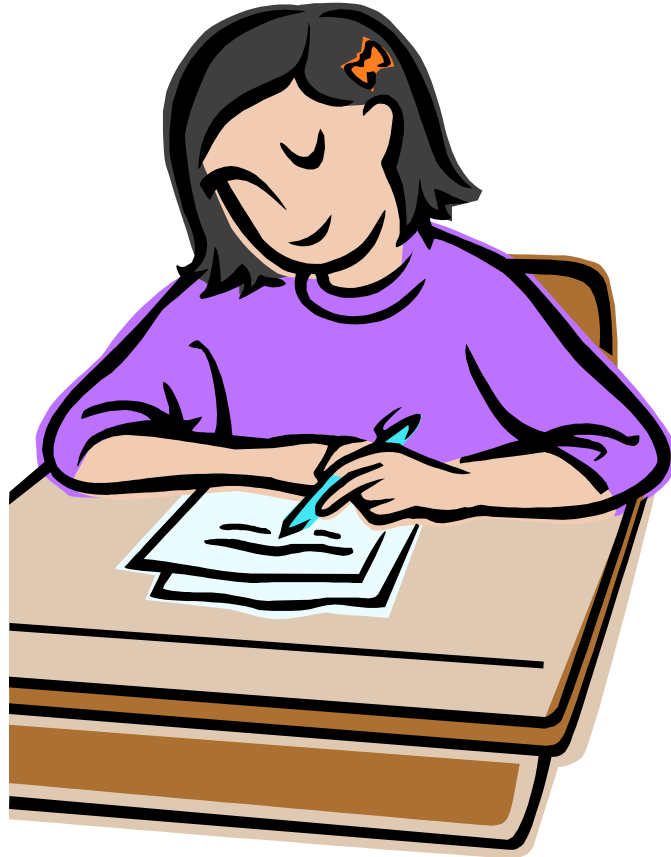


Make Your Writing Sparkle



By Award Winning Australian Author
Cheryl Wright

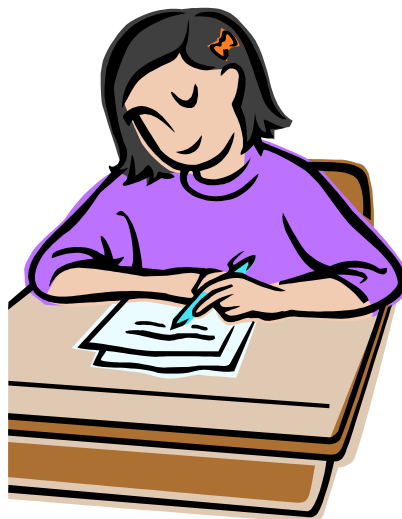
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Make Your Writing Sparkle

Workshop Written and Presented

By Cheryl Wright

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About the Author



Cheryl Wright is an award-winning Australian author, freelance journalist, and editor. She is the owner of the Writer2Writer.com and RomanceWriter2Writer websites and produces the Writer to Writer monthly ezine for writers. She is widely published, including novels, short stories, non-fiction books, poetry, and features. Her work has also been published in anthologies and other collections.

In addition, she undertakes website design and maintenance, and provides a variety of writing services including editing (books, short stories, articles etc), proofreading, report writing, ghost-writing, business writing, rewriting, advertising copy, webcopy, newsletters, and more.

Cheryl presents workshops at schools, libraries, and writer's conferences, and teaches writing online when time permits.

She is the romance editor for the long-running *Magazine of Unbelievable Stories* (published by Quill-Pen.net Press <http://quill-pen.net>) for their 2007 series, and also their upcoming novel series.

Her upcoming releases are *Saving Emma*, scheduled for release late 2007 by [Black Velvet Seductions](http://BlackVelvetSeductions), and her non-fiction book *The Write Resources* is scheduled for release by [Central Avenue Press](http://CentralAvenuePress) in 2007.

Visit Cheryl's website to learn more: www.cheryl-wright.com

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Make Your Writing Sparkle - Introduction

How often have you submitted a story - whether it's a short story or a novel - to a publisher, only to have it rejected?

There are lots of reasons why your work will be rejected, and here are just a few:

- You don't write tight
- Your characters are not fully developed
- Your dialogue is unwieldy or doesn't fit the character/s
- You head-hop (jump from one Point of View to another all the time)
- You didn't use enough emotion, or the motivation wasn't strong enough
- The ending was predictable

This short ebooklet will give you some guidance to fix your current stories, or at the very least, will help with the new stories you create.

This is not intended to be a full tutorial; it simply can't be. I've written three separate books on the subjects we'll be tackling, and together they total more than 200 pages.

What we will do though, is to look briefly at each of the common areas that inevitably cause problems for novice writers - and even for more experienced writers sometimes.

I've pulled in bits and pieces from each of the books, as well as my ecourses, and added additional information where necessary. It includes complete lessons, except for the summaries and exercises.

If you would like to learn more, you'll find complete information about all three books here:

<http://www.writer2writer.com/storyresources.htm>

You can also check out my website for writers - www.writer2writer.com - where you'll find heaps of articles on the craft of writing, a number of free courses, resources - both free and paid - as well as a list of other websites, links for research etc. to help with your writing career.

If you write romance, the [RomanceWriter2Writer](#) website is for you. It is specifically for romance writers, and includes articles about writing romance, as well as courses, links to publishers, sites for romance-related research, and more.

The aim of both sites is to help writers learn their craft, and to ultimately earn income from their writing.

Cheryl

Writing Dazzling Openings

[Excerpt from [Outside the Square Fiction Workshop](#)]

In this lesson we are going to explore opening sentences.

One of the most crucial parts of a story is the opening sentence. If it doesn't grab the attention of an editor, then my friend, you're in trouble.

Most editors will tell you that if they're not caught up in the book within the first three paragraphs, they simply don't - and won't - read on.

One way I learned a lot about writing was to read other people's books. So that's what we're going to do now.

So go ahead and grab a book from your private collection. Any book - it doesn't matter what the genre is, or who wrote it. Just grab a book.

Open at the very first page of the story. Does the opening sentence draw you in to the story? Do you want to read on, to find out what will happen to the character you've just been introduced to?

My bet is that it does. Few publishers contract books that don't pull the reader in from the first few words.

You'll quickly learn that the title and first line are extremely important to your story. When I write a story - whether it's a short story or novel I need to have some of the storyline in my head before I can begin the characterisation. That's because I need to fit my characters to the story.

So, for your first exercise, I would like you to consider the story you would like to write.

Now write the very first line of your story. It needs to be short, sharp, and to the point. Don't ramble, keep it as condensed as possible

Give your opening sentence some thought, and **don't** write the first thing that comes into your head.

Write it down, think about it, and then work on it. Look at your sentence and ask yourself some questions:

- 1) Is it too long, and will the reader lose interest?
- 2) Is it to the point?
- 3) Does it give a sense of intrigue?
- 4) Does it leave the reader wanting to read more?
- 5) Does it give too much information, losing the reader's interest?
- 6) It is a 'teaser'?

Remember, some of the best opening lines are less than ten words long. That doesn't mean you have a limit; it's more of a guide.

Here are a few examples of opening sentences that I have used in stories and books:

Heart pounding, Rosie sat up abruptly in bed.

"Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn!"

"Get your stinking hands off me, you creep!"

"Phew, that was close!"

"Cut the crap, Jason."

Now that you have an idea of what you need to do, get to work!

Creating Memorable Characters

[Excerpt from [Think Outside the Square: Writing Publishable \(Short\) Stories](#)]

Building Characters from within your mind's eye:

⇒ Part One - Backstory

The first step in this journey is to give your character a background and backstory.

Many writers believe you only need to do this if you are writing a novel. I disagree. Although you may never reveal any of this information in your story, knowing your character's backstory will help you, the writer, to understand her past.

There are a number of methods you can instigate to get this information. Some writers literally 'interview' their characters, asking questions, talking out loud. Others write a short story or essay, learning of the character as they write.

I prefer to write it down partially in dot form, partially essay form. I then move on from there. (See 'Sample Character')

Here are some questions to get you started:

How many siblings does she have? Are they male or female? How old is your character? Does her birthday fall on the same day as someone famous? Is she named after someone famous? Does she have an unusual name? What is the origin of it, or the reason she was given that name?

What is her hair colour? How tall is she? Does she walk with a limp, a cane, or have one finger missing? Is she afraid of heights, terrified of enclosed spaces, or petrified of spiders? Is she afraid of the ocean?

Is there a reason for any of these things? Perhaps she was locked in an old refrigerator as a child? Or maybe she fell from a two-storey building, or almost drowned as a toddler?

What type of books does she read? For instance, if it's romance she reads, is that because romances were banned in her childhood, and it is now a rebellious act. (The books your character reads *could* give insight into her character.)

Is she a home-body or love to go out raging and partying? Does she drink herself into oblivion, or is she a non-drinker? Maybe, as a teenager, she was not allowed to socialize with friends. Or perhaps she was banned from drinking alcohol. (These things could be total acts of rebellion - another aspect to your character's personality.)

What type of music does she enjoy? Classical, jazz, rock etc. (If it's more classical, then this character may have a laid-back type of personality.)

By now, you've probably realized what I'm asking you to do - build an overall picture of this character.

Some other questions you could ask your character:

What is her greatest weakness? Failure?

When she was fifteen years old, did something significant happen to her? (Such as a car accident, a friend died, her brother abducted etc.)

Did she ever endure date-rape?

Attack by a stranger?

Was she ever attacked and/or injured by a vicious dog?

If she found someone unconscious in the middle of the road, what would she do?

What are her pet hates?

What does she love about herself? What does she hate about herself?

Does she have any bad habits? Good habits? Fears or phobias?

Does she like animals? If not, why not?

What has been her greatest challenge in life?

If she was granted one wish, without any limitations, what would it be?

What sort of clothing does she like to wear?

- a) to a party
- b) to work
- c) out for a walk
- d) visiting friends

By now, you should have a really vivid picture of your character. I don't mean physically, rather personality wise.

And you should also know what motivates her.

If you don't have a full-bodied vision of her, go back and start the exercise again. Now that you've got the idea, you can add your own questions, too.

➡ Part Two - Creating your character

Close your eyes. Go on, I'll wait for you.

What do you see? A tall, lanky, mud-covered man leaning against a fence? Perhaps you visualize a short, wild-haired gang leader picking his teeth with his switchblade? Or maybe it's a beautifully manicured, stylish woman dressed to the nines?

Who ever it is, you just have begun the journey of creating your main character, also known as the protagonist.

Don't worry about a name at this stage. That can come later. Of course if a name jumps out of the computer screen or off the page at you, go ahead. Scribble it down.

Sample character:

Here's a character I created recently. It still needs loads of work, but this might give you a little extra insight into how I go about creating my characters.

Undercover Police Officer

Male

6'2"

32 years old

Long blonde hair pulled back into a bun

Muscle bound - keeps fit, works out.

Sleeveless t-shirt, torn jeans, cowboy boots

Five o'clock shadow

Earring in left ear, tattoos on both arms

Overall appearance: Scruffy, ruggedly handsome

Background:

Grandfather murdered in his home after a property disagreement could not be resolved. Joined police force to seek justice.

Marital Status:

Single. Would like to settle down, but his lifestyle restricts social life. He also feels it would be unfair to any potential partner, as he can sometimes be away for months at a time.

Personality Traits:

Wary. Trusts no one. Heavy smoker; smokes when something is on his mind and he needs to mull it over. Wants to quit but doesn't have the willpower or inclination.

Contacts:

High in the police hierarchy. Has large network he can call upon for backup. Does not necessarily follow correct etiquette, and prefers to listen to his gut instinct.

Additional information:

I have tried to build up a picture of this character's physical traits as well as what motivates him (i.e. why he became a police officer) and how he conducts his personal life. As I get to know him better, I will add to his profile. Although it may seem like something that comes easy to me, that's rarely the case; this short piece took close to 30 minutes to create.

The method I use is to create the character in my mind's eye. I see him as a person, standing in a place he would mould to, I dress him the way I feel he would fit the surroundings. Then I decide what motivates him; why he's doing what he's doing, the thing/s in his past that pushed him to decide to take this path or the reason he lives the life he does. I think about traits that will make him that little bit more unique than any other character. For instance, in one of my novels the hero is a big, strong macho man. He's a charmer, he's an organiser, and he's an undercover cop. He's also afraid of heights - that simple phobia made him more human, more realistic, and since heights are also my phobia, I found it easy to portray it in the novel.

If you want to learn more about character creation (and I recommend you do), try going along to your local acting group.

Sit in on their rehearsals; watch the characters growth from instigation to that first performance. Witness the changes first hand, the transition of the character in his/her personality and traits.

Or perhaps you'd prefer to study a movie. One that comes to mind as a good example is *Witness*. Follow the change in the character Harrison Ford portrays - the detective; from an uncaring, hard-nosed detective, until the end where he falls in love with the mother of the boy who witnessed the murder. Total transformation.

Make 'em Perfect - Give 'em Flaws!

[Taken from the [Short Story Autoresponder Course](#)]

How often have you heard someone say "he's a perfect hero"?

If you want full-bodied 3D characters in your stories, you need to make them believable to readers. To achieve perfection in characters, any characters - minor or major - you have to give them flaws.

Huh?

I can hear you now: "But I want my characters to be perfect!"

Let me ask a simple question - how many people do you know who are perfect? People with no problems, phobias or annoying habits, no relatives they'd rather disown, or skeletons in the closet. Someone whose life is, well, perfect?

Nope, me neither.

Think about some of the flaws (or problems) your friends or relatives might possess. We'll start with a few phobias: fear of spiders, snakes, heights, cars, water, people or crowds.

Then there are the 'mania' group of problems: obsessive compulsive, bipolar, panic disorder, schizophrenia.

Now let's add a few personality flaws: snorting while laughing, constant clearing of throat, neck cracking.

Of course there's also hyperactivity and its related problems.

And these are just a few!

Think for a moment about some of your favourite television shows. How many of the main protagonists are perfect? Not many, in my opinion.

For instance, in "Monk" the main character - Detective Adrian Monk (Tony Shalhoub) - would drive any normal person crazy. He suffers from obsessive compulsive disorder and a number of phobias, which all stem back to the murder of his wife, Trudy. Monk is afraid of absolutely everything there is to be anxious about, and won't go anywhere without his nurse. Heights, germs, crowds, milk, and driving all terrify him. You name it; he's frightened to do it.

On the upside, Monk has a photographic memory and is brilliant when it comes to catching the bad guys. Despite the fact he's on psychiatric leave from the police force, he's a perfect character, er, totally flawed character!

Now take good ol' "Columbo" from many years ago. He was a damned annoying character; dirty, scruffy, and in some ways inconsistent. But he always got his man, er, woman, er - he definitely got the bad guy every single time!

Let's now look at long-running television series NYPD Blue: Detective Andy Sipowicz (Dennis Franz) is a great cop. But he's got issues - his son is estranged, when it comes to his personal life he's got no confidence in himself, plus he's bald and overweight. But we all love him! Why? Because he's the underdog; we're all egging him on, we absolutely want him to achieve whatever it is he aims for.

In that same show, you will also find Detective John Clark Jnr. (Mark-Paul Gosselaar). His main issue is the fact that he's walking in his famous police detective father's footsteps. Everything he does has to be as perfect and brilliant as his father would do. John Jnr. wants to live up to his father's achievements, but in endeavouring to achieve that almost impossible task, he has many self-doubts.

Take a long hard look at your characters. Do they reek of perfection?

Ack!

Give them a dressing down, some bad qualities, and a few ghastly habits that leave something to be desired.

Make your characters perfectly....flawed!

Using Point of View

[Taken from the [Short Story Autoresponder Course](#)]

In this lesson, we will explore point of view (POV), which can make a lot of difference to how your story is told.

There are a number of different POV's but the main two are third person omniscient and first person.

Third person omniscient is an all seeing, all hearing, all knowing viewpoint. Simply put, the 'narrator' can see, hear and understand all that is going on in the story. She misses nothing. No matter which character's viewpoint the story is in, the omniscient narrator knows everything.

It depends on your story which POV you will choose. Your decision can also be determined by the publisher's guidelines; some are not open to first person POV stories. It is important to research this before wasting your time and effort.

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3rd Person omniscient:

Although in reality the temperature was above 40 degrees, the atmosphere was comparable to that on Antarctica.

Mary Allen twisted her shirt in her small sweaty fingers as she stared across at Pete. Without muttering a single word, without so much as a movement, Pete glared at Mary Allen; she felt the full effect of his wrath. How could she have done such a thing?

Reasons for writing in omniscient POV:

- \* You want the reader to know what's going on even if the other characters don't.
- \* To build tension
- \* To make the character motivation clearer.

~~~~~

First Person POV:

Mystery writers love this POV, simply because if the protagonist can't see it, then neither can the reader. It's a legitimate way to hide clues without actually concealing them. Until the protagonist finds them, the writer need not have any qualms about concealment.

There is one main rule with this POV; do not attempt to describe something the first person character could not possibly see or feel. To write this POV effectively always put yourself in the POV character's shoes.

For instance, let's pretend the character - we'll call her Mary - is standing on a bridge over a river.

She looks around; what can she see? She can see to her left and to her right. She can see straight ahead and down into the river.

So... she might see Joe in a boat coming toward her, and she might also see a friend walking toward her from the left. But because she doesn't have eyes in the back of her head, she can't see 'Pete the rogue' in the boat at the other end of the river.

If Pete fired a shot and killed Joe, then Mary would not have witness what happened. But she would see Joe die.

If you shift the POV from one character to the next, the same story can be totally turned around. Here's an example of this taken from "Think Outside the Square: Writing Publishable (Short) Stories":

*Cinderella's POV:

Cinderella was sick and tired of doing the chores. Why was it always her? Why couldn't those brutally ugly sisters pitch in and help once in a while? She longed to attend the Prince's ball that evening, but with that horrid stepmother overseeing every little thing she did, there wasn't much hope of that.

*Stepmother's POV:

"Cinders! For goodness sake, hurry up!" Why oh why did her husband have to die so suddenly? She should have waited a little longer to marry him. If only she'd known he was on his way out, if only she'd know what a lazy cow his daughter, Cinderella, was. Perhaps she wouldn't have jumped in, feet and all, and married him so quickly.

Using POV effectively can strengthen your story immensely.

Write a scene using 3rd Person Omniscient. Here's the set-up:

A man and wife are driving along the highway on their way home from vacation. Without warning, they crash into a stationary vehicle.

Now rewrite the scene using:

a) 1st Person

b) Male POV

c) Female POV

Outstanding Ideas: Make it Stand Out

[Taken from [I Wanna Win! - Tips for Becoming an Award Winning Writer](#)]

When entering contests, you need to submit your most outstanding work. Otherwise, you'll just get lost in the process.

There are way too many writers entering contests to submit mundane or ordinary stories. You need to make your own submission stand out from the crowd.

How, you might ask. Simple, come up with brilliant story ideas.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks I've seen in writers is finding ideas - then not following through on them. Don't let this happen to you.

I've written a few articles on this subject over the years. I've included my favourite one "Today I Witnessed a Story" in this book.

Finding ideas does not need to be an elusive thing. Most of us drive these days. When we drive, we can't possibly see everything there is to see; we're too busy watching the road and other drivers to take everything in.

One of the most productive ways I find ideas is to take a walk. Okay, I know; not everyone likes walking, but when you do, you'll notice things you've never seen before.

You'll notice the gnome statues in the garden of the elderly lady up the street, and you'll see the ginger kitten that likes to scamper from one end of the garden to the other. You'll hear the puppy that barks at everyone who wanders by, and you'll notice the multitude of plants and flowers that line your street.

You'll also hear things you've never noticed before, like the flock of birds that fly over every afternoon at five, or the pelicans that go to their special place early in the morning.

You might even get to see some more unusual things that can be included in your stories. Most of my stories have had some basis from life in one form or another.

"Arms of a Stranger" came about when I was standing at a pedestrian crossing, waiting for the traffic lights to change. I looked across and saw a young woman impatiently tapping her fingers on the steering wheel of her car. My mind immediately went into 'what if' mode. I could almost feel the wheels spinning in my brain.

First I wondered why she was so impatient. I decided that someone was after her, and she was concerned about sitting at the lights for any length of time. Then I went into action; I thought "what if" someone came along this very instant with a sledgehammer and smashed it right through her windscreen in front of her?

A novel was born in those few minutes I waited for the lights to change. (And that same novel placed second in a recent contest.)

Take a walk, open your eyes, look around you, and get some brilliant ideas from life.

Another method I use for finding ideas is looking through books of dreams. I close my eyes and flip the pages randomly. Then I move my finger and stop. Wherever my finger lands becomes the basis of the story.

I also have a book that discusses various methods of murder. I've done a similar thing with the page flipping, and written quite a few stories (and had them published) from what eventuated.

If you still have trouble finding ideas, then help is at hand. Here's the link to a wonderful piece of software called [WriteSparks!™](#) - it's an absolute delight to use. And best of all, there's a never-ending (free) trial version. If you'd like to increase your data base of ideas, you can upgrade to the paid version some time in the future.

Storing Your Ideas:

Once you've found your ideas, you need to keep them safe for future use. There are a number of ways to do this:

- Make a folder specifically for this reason on your computer
- Keep a notebook
- Use file cards
- Have a two ring binder
- Keep an 'ideas' box

Everyone uses different systems; find the one that suits you best and stick to it. The key point is to keep a record of them. More often than not, if you don't store your ideas, you will never get that same idea again.

Dialogue: Keep it Natural

[Taken from [I Wanna Win! - Tips for Becoming an Award Winning Writer](#)]

Have you ever read a novel where a four year old child talked like a nine year old? I have, and it took away all credibility of the writer *and* the story. And it annoyed the hell out of me.

Whenever using children in your stories, study their speech patterns; that is, the way they talk, the words they use, and how they actually say the words.

For instance, my four year old grandson calls my computer a 'puter'. Vegemite (an Australian spread) is 'shemmimite'.

No matter how much we coach him, he simply cannot say either word correctly. Why? Because they are difficult words for a child of that age.

The same goes for your adult characters. Don't have a high society woman talk like someone out of the slums, or a princess speak as a commoner would. And if your Australian jackeroo spoke like an American cowboy, he would be incredibly out of place.

Imagine if your favourite television cops started talking like the average man on the street. Or Sesame Street characters. Would they still be believable? Certainly not.

Your stories must be treated in exactly the same way. Don't write dialogue that doesn't suit the character; it will get you absolutely nowhere.

One of my favourite past-times is to sit, watch and listen to people's conversations. It can be a very interesting exercise. Occasionally I take notes, but mostly I don't; I prefer to remain inconspicuous, and note-taking would certainly seem rather odd. <g>

I will often go to a food court or coffee shop and just take it all in. I particularly enjoy listening to groups of people sitting around a table chatting. It's interesting listening to the different language each person uses. (And I don't mean 'language' as in a foreign language; I'm referring to the tone of voice, and the use of vocabulary and slang.)

With just a few years difference in age, language can vary considerably.

Dialogue: Make it fit the character

[Taken from [I Wanna Win! - Tips for Becoming an Award Winning Writer](#)]

I'm sure you've heard the expressions 'walk the walk' and 'talk the talk'. These relate to keeping your characters speech patterns consistent with the character.

For instance, if I asked a high school teacher to become a kindergarten teacher for a week, you would think I'm crazy. The language is completely different. Four year olds cannot comprehend the same language level as teenagers. Dialogue is absolutely no different.

Another example: if you used the same sort of dialogue for 'Bear in the Big Blue House' as you did for "Crossing Jordan" we'd be in real trouble, right? Right.

So what you must do is to study the type of language used by your characters before you even think about putting words into their mouth.

Let's say you've got a criminal in your story; first you need to decide what type of criminal he is. For instance, is he going to be a common criminal, or rather your upper class type criminal? There are two distinct patterns of speech there. For instance, the former may hold-up service stations and local stores, dress fairly casually, and demand money by saying "Gimme ya money, an' gimme it now!"

Whereas the latter would be more likely to con little old ladies out of their life savings, without so much as a hint of deception. In which case they would most likely be extremely well spoken, well dressed and mix in high society.

It could even be many, many years before anyone even realises what they've been up to. In some cases, these people actually get away with their ill-gotten booty.

A snippet of dialogue from this rogue may be more along the lines of: "Aahh Pricilla, there you are, my dear. Would you like me to accompany you to the bank, dearest?"

It's not quite so easy to eavesdrop on these types of characters - unless you want your butt kicked - so I'd suggest watching movies and reading books; particularly 'true crime' stories to help you authenticate your baddies.

Scene Structure: Start and Finish at the Right Place

[Taken from [I Wanna Win! - Tips for Becoming an Award Winning Writer](#)]

I'm often asked about scene structure.

Like the beginning of a short story or novel, you should always start a new scene in the midst of the action. The aim is to get the attention of the reader; draw them in, make them want to read on.

This example comes from my short story "Dusty Road to Hell":

"Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn!"

Gloria slammed down the bonnet of the car and resigned herself to waiting all night.

I could, of course, have started much earlier:

Gloria hurried to finish her dreary office job so that she could get started on her holiday. It would take hours to reach her destination.

She had three toilet stops, and grabbed a bite to eat at an insignificant diner on the boring, dusty back road.

I don't know about you, but I much prefer the first version. It becomes very clear after the opening sentences that Gloria is in the midst of nowhere, and is stranded because her car has broken down. *We simply don't need the boring back story.*

Ending the scene works in a similar way. Find a dramatic thread to leave the reader wanting for more.

By that I mean, don't give them all the answers, leave them with an unanswered question, a reason for turning the pages.

Here is the opening scene from my novel "*Saving Emma*" - a suspense/romance - which was released January 2005:

What did we do to deserve this? Emma Larkin thought, as she sat on Sally's bed assessing the damage. The padded bed head had been slashed, clothes were hanging out of drawers, even the toy box had been up-ended.

"I thought we'd get away from all this," she said to herself more than to her four-year-old daughter.

Tears slowly trickled down her face as she picked up Sally's music box, trying to put the broken toy back together. What they'd do now, she had no idea.

The local police had been of no help—this was way out of their league—and they'd left what little family they had back in Melbourne.

She had absolutely no one to turn to.

The move to Bairnsdale was a last ditch effort to get their lives back on track. All this upheaval, and what had it achieved? Precious little, Emma decided.

"Don't cry, Mummy," the little girl told her, reaching out to give her mother a hug. "We can clean up the mess, and Uncle Coop will fix the music box if I asked him." Sally planted a big sloppy kiss on her mother's cheek, then settled herself comfortably on Emma's lap.

"Four days in a new town, a new home, and already..." Emma sat quietly sobbing.

Life had changed dramatically since her husband's murder two years ago.

Notice how I've started in the middle of the action? I could have told you about her life before she moved to the new town, and I could have told you every little detail about her husband's murder. But, I wanted to draw the reader into the story from the moment they opened the book.

Like-wise with the end of the scene, I wanted the reader to keep reading, to want to turn the page, and to find out for themselves about Emma and her daughter.

Also keep in mind that if the scene does not move the story forward, it has no place in the story *at all*.

Absolutely everything included in the story must have a purpose. If it doesn't, then cut it out.

TIP: Start each scene in the middle of the action. Make each beginning exciting; give your readers a reason to read on. It is just as important to end the scene on a cliff-hanger. Leave them wanting for more.

Twist at the End: Make it Unusual

[Taken from [I Wanna Win! - Tips for Becoming an Award Winning Writer](#)]

Earlier in the book we discussed dazzling openings; in my opinion, having a twist at the end of every story is imperative.

Using a twist at the end has more than one function: it makes your work stand out, and gives the judges a surprise by not having that same ol' same ol' feel.

I don't know about you, but if I read something that has a ho-hum ending, I feel cheated. I love brilliant, outstanding and unusual endings.

Brainstorming is one of the best ways I know to have a brilliant twist at the end. When you are writing, if your ending is predictable, you've not given it enough thought. Get out your pen and paper, and start brainstorming!

This time I'm going to share one of my winning entries with you. This particular piece was written specifically for the contest in question, and it had to be less than 400 words, and begin with a particular sentence. This story placed second:

Murder Most Heinous

They returned too late. The occupants were dead.

At first they stood stunned, then looked about in total disbelief. Mary Allen was the first to move. She grabbed John by the hand, then started to back out of the room. After all, the killer, or killers, could still be there - right in this building!

The room reeked of death. Blood and death.

If only they'd stayed home, if only they'd decided not to go to the seminar after all. If only...

Mary Allen suddenly realised, they could be dead too if they'd stayed home. She tried to stifle a shriek, but it came out anyway. Tears began to roll down her face and she sobbed uncontrollably.

This time, John took charge. Dragging Mary Allen out of the room, he pulled out his mobile phone and called the emergency number.

"Police, Fire or Ambulance?" He vaguely heard the voice at the other end of the line.

"Police! There's been a murder! Uh, m-m-m-murders!" He had kept his emotions under control - until now, but it was all too real, too close, too horrible.

Somewhere behind them, leaves rustled. Mary Allen shrieked loudly, at the same time falling - in her haste to get away. "He's here, he's still here!" she screamed.

John reached for her, but despite his attempts, Mary Allen fell hard into the bushes. She pulled her hand away quickly as she felt something cold and hard against her skin.

She looked down. Blood covered her fingertips. "Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek! He's going to kill us too," she sobbed, trying to get to her feet and away from the blood-covered axe.

Sirens could be heard in the distant background.

It was a nightmare, a dreadful, terrifying nightmare. Who would do such a thing? And for what purpose?

It seemed an eternity from the moment they heard the siren until the police actually arrived. Three vehicles filled with uniformed officers and detectives stopped haphazardly nearby, weapons drawn.

An ambulance arrived seconds later, followed by the coroner's vehicle. A uniformed officer led the distraught couple to a police vehicle, as one of the detectives moved solemnly closer.

Mary Allen watched intently as the officers surrounded the house.

"No, no. Over there!" she sobbed, pointing in the opposite direction to the house. She motioned toward the axe. "There's the murder weapon. They killed four of our best roosters; chopped off their heads!" ©

I'll bet you didn't foresee that ending!

Having a reader predict the end of your story is one of the worst things that can happen to a writer in my opinion. Like judges, editors love stories with a twist at the end. In fact, some editors love them so much that many publications have a section especially for stories with usual endings.

Consider writing all your stories with a twist at the end. It could be the difference between winning and losing a contest.

Thank You!

Well my friend, we've come to the end of our time together. I hope you enjoyed the course, and it has helped you with your fiction writing.

Now that you've seen how easy and enjoyable fiction writing can be, I urge you to continue with your writing ambitions.

The complete and unabridged versions of my books contain much more information and advice than I can squeeze into a mini-course like this, including information about editing, formatting your work, using body language, brainstorming, getting published, and much more.

Please check the details of the books here:

<http://www.writer2writer.com/storyresources.htm> and don't forget to check out the free courses and articles available at the site.

In closing, I'd like to wish you every possible success with your writing endeavours, and look forward to seeing your name on the best-sellers list!

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