



7 ESSENTIALS FOR A GRIPPING START TO YOUR NOVEL

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WRITE-FOR-A-REASON.COM

Welcome to Write for a Reason!

Thank you for downloading this free guide to help you with the beginning of your story.

I hope the following following seven ideas will encourage and inspire you in your writing journey. But before we dive in, do you know why the start of your story is so important?



Research shows that you have about **THREE MINUTES to grab your reader.**

In that time, the person who picks up your book will make the decision to keep reading, or give up. **Help!**

If a child picks up your story and:

- * immediately knows where and when the action is taking place
- * gels with your main character
- * is excited and intrigued...

...he or she is likely to **stick with it!** If not, they might not.

You see how important it is for your story needs to engage readers ***right from those first few sentences?***

So, with no further ado, here are your:

7 ESSENTIALS FOR A GREAT START TO YOUR STORY

1. **Begin with some kind of action.** The days of novels starting with long descriptions are gone. Something needs to be *happening* – and it needs to be interesting enough to engage your readers.



2. **Introduce your protagonist** (main character) straight away. He or she can be doing something that betrays their personality, perhaps by facing a challenge that either gives away their weakness or shows their strength. This isn't the place for lots of background information, though – that can come later.



3. **Include some kind of emotion** congruent with your story, to help your readers begin to engage immediately at an emotional level. Perhaps your protagonist is lonely? Get your readers to feel for him!



4. **Introduce a conflict.** Something needs to go wrong in the first chapter. A small problem to set the scene is fine at this stage – perhaps a bully pushing your protagonist, a strange smell in the cockpit of the rocket, or a dragon seen in the neighbourhood... your imagination is the limit!

5. **Tantalise your readers,** piquing their curiosity. This follows on from the previous tip. Give a delicious sense of anticipation! If your readers are curious about what is going to happen, they will want to read on to find out more.



6. **Introduce readers to the setting:** make sure they know where and when the action is taking place. Is the story set in this world, or on another planet? Is it set in the past, present, or future?

7. **Keep it simple.** If you want to complicate your plot, wait until readers are at least comfortable with the setting and premise of the story. The start of your story should be easy to read and understand. Readers won't want to go back and read anything again they haven't understood. You can begin with a flashback if writing for teenagers, but beware of confusing younger readers.

So there you are – seven ideas for beginning your story. By the time your readers have read the first few pages of your novel, they should have a good idea of what the story is about (is it a comedy, a mystery adventure, a drama, a romance?) and know who the main character is. They will also know a bit about where and when the action takes place. Plus you should have stimulated your readers' curiosity and caused them to *feel* something, so they want to read on.

Does your beginning do all this? If not, it's time for a bit of an edit! :-)

Here's a quick tip for you: read a selection of novels for the age group you write for, and check out the first chapters. Do you find all these seven elements in the stories?



Any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. I look forward to being able to encourage, inspire and equip you further in your writing journey.

Janet

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P.S. I will be in touch again soon. In the meantime, why not come and join us on [our facebook page](#)? :-) Love to see you there!