# What Makes a Good Story Great?

These key elements can help you write more successful stories and keep your readers engaged and satisfied. Use these tips to move, inspire and fill your readers with wonder. Stories are better when they have:

1.  **An immersive setting** that is detailed but changes over time as needed.

2.  **Memorable characters** that have goals, strengths, flaws and personality.

3.  **A great beginning** that introduces the characters and plot but makes the reader want to know more.

4.  **A compelling plot** that drives the story. The plot is the result of choices a character makes or actions they take that cause events to happen next.

5.  **Dramatic content** like mystery, tension, surprise and/or wonder.

6.  **Conflict** such as one or more of the following (usually one main conflict):
    *   Character vs. Character: When two characters have opposing wants, needs, personalities, etc.
    *   Character vs. Self: An internal opposition of morals, choices and/or mental health struggles.
    *   Character vs. Society: An external conflict to right a wrong, find freedom, justice, happiness, love, etc.
    *   Character vs. Nature: This can include weather, wilderness, natural disasters, etc.
    *   Character vs. Supernatural: Battles with ghosts, monsters, spirits, etc.
    *   Character vs. Technology: When a character is pitted against AI or other technology.

7.  **Relevant dialogue** that keeps the story flowing and is interesting to the reader. Make sure dialogue is used to advance the story, not just to have a conversation.

8.  **Effective writing** where everything you include is important for the tips above. Keep your story focused.

9.  **A good flow** when read aloud. Read it to yourself out loud to see if the words sound right.

10. **A satisfying ending** that resolves your main conflict.

Most importantly, edit, edit and edit again! Check spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. Make sure the story makes sense to others reading it (since they don't know everything you know about your characters or plot). Have others read and give feedback on your story. Have fun and keep writing!

More details about each of these tips can be found on the following pages. Notice that all the elements overlap with each other to make a comprehensive story.

## An immersive setting

1. Start with a strong opening:
   - Grab the reader's attention with an exciting or intriguing sentence. You can use words like "Once upon a time" to begin a traditional fairy tale or create your unique opening that hooks the reader.
   - Introduce a key element of your scene, such as a character, a problem, or an interesting location. This will make the reader curious and want to keep reading.
   - Use descriptive language to create a vivid image in the reader's mind. Describe how things look, sound, smell, or feel to engage their senses and make them feel like they are there.

2. Describe the setting:
   - Provide details about where the scene takes place. Is it in a magical forest, a bustling city, or a distant planet? Let your imagination guide you!
   - Use descriptive words to paint a picture in the reader's mind. Talk about the colors, sounds, and unique features of the setting.
   - Include specific details that make the setting come alive. For example, if it's a forest, mention the tall trees, the sunlight peeking through the leaves, or the chirping of birds.

Remember, when developing a scene, it's important to engage the reader's imagination by using descriptive language and creating a sense of excitement or curiosity right from the beginning. Keep practicing and exploring your creativity as you develop your storytelling skills!

**Developing memorable characters** in a story is a lot of fun. Here are some tips to help you create characters that people will remember:
   - <u>Give them a unique appearance</u>: Think about how your character looks. You can give them interesting features like colorful hair, special clothing, or a unique accessory. This will make them stand out and be easy to remember.
   - <u>Give them a special personality</u>: Think about how your character acts and behaves. Are they brave, funny, or kind? Do they have any special talents or skills? Make your character's personality interesting and different from other characters in your story.
   - <u>Give them a goal or a problem</u>: Characters become more memorable when they have something they want to achieve or a problem they need to solve. It could be something big like saving the world or something smaller like finding a lost pet. This will make readers root for your character and want to follow their journey.
   - <u>Give them strengths and weaknesses</u>: No one is perfect, and your character shouldn't be either. Give them strengths, like being brave or smart, but also give them weaknesses or flaws. This will make them more relatable and realistic.
   - <u>Give them a backstory</u>: A character's backstory is their history or what happened to them before the story you're writing. Think about where your character came from, their family, or any important events that shaped who they are. This will make them more three-dimensional and interesting.
   - <u>Let them grow and change</u>: As your story progresses, your character should face challenges and learn from their experiences. They can overcome their fears, learn new things, or change their attitudes. This growth will make your character memorable because readers will see how they evolve throughout the story.
   - <u>Make them interact with other characters</u>: Characters become more memorable when they have interesting relationships with other characters in your story. They can have friends, enemies, or mentors who help them or challenge them. These interactions can create exciting and memorable moments.

Remember, the most important thing is to have fun and let your imagination soar. Don't be afraid to be creative and try new things. Happy character creation!

**Writing a great beginning** to a story is an important part of grabbing your reader's attention and making them want to keep reading. Here are a few ideas:

- <u>Start with an interesting</u> question: Begin your story with a question that makes the reader curious. For example, "Have you ever wondered what it's like to travel through time?" This question immediately grabs the reader's attention and makes them want to find out more.
- <u>Create a vivid setting</u>: Describe the place where your story takes place in a way that makes it come alive in the reader's mind. For instance, "In the heart of the enchanted forest, where the trees whispered secrets and the air sparkled with magic, a small cottage stood hidden among the mossy green ferns."
- <u>Introduce an intriguing character</u>: Introduce a character that your readers will want to learn more about. For example, "Amelia was not an ordinary girl. With her bright blue hair and a mischievous grin, she was known throughout the village as the girl who could talk to animals."
- <u>Start with action or excitement</u>: Begin your story with an exciting event or action to immediately grab the reader's attention. For instance, "The dragon's roar echoed through the valley as the brave knight drew his shining sword and charged towards the beast, ready to save the kingdom."
- <u>Use a powerful description</u>: Paint a vivid picture using descriptive language to capture the reader's imagination. For example, "The sun dipped below the horizon, casting a golden glow across the city skyline, as Sarah tiptoed along the edge of the rooftop, her heart pounding with a thrilling mix of fear and excitement."

Remember, a great beginning to a story should make your readers curious, introduce them to interesting characters or situations, and create a sense of anticipation for what's to come. Happy writing!

**Developing a compelling plot** is an exciting part of storytelling. Some tips to keep your story moving:

1. <u>Choose a Main Character</u>: Start by selecting a main character for the story. It could be a person, an animal, or even a fantastical creature. Encourage the student to think about the character's personality, strengths, and weaknesses.
2. <u>Set the Stage</u>: Determine the setting or the world in which the story takes place. It can be a real or imaginary location, such as a school, a forest, or a faraway planet. Encourage the student to think about the atmosphere, time period, and any unique features of the setting.
3. <u>Introduce the Conflict</u>: Every good story needs a problem or conflict to drive the plot. Help the student brainstorm different conflicts their main character could face. It could be a personal challenge, a mystery to solve, or an external obstacle to overcome.
4. <u>Create Rising Action</u>: Once the conflict is established, brainstorm a series of events that build tension and suspense. These events should lead the main character closer to a resolution or goal. Encourage the student to think about obstacles, surprises, and discoveries that make the story interesting.
5. <u>Climax</u>: The climax is the most intense point of the story where the conflict reaches its peak. Help the student come up with a pivotal moment or a turning point that challenges the main character and brings them face-to-face with the conflict. This is an opportunity for the main character to show their growth or use their strengths to confront the problem.
6. <u>Falling Action</u>: After the climax, the story should start winding down. The falling action is where the consequences of the climax are revealed and the loose ends begin to be tied up. Discuss with the student how the main character can learn from the experience or resolve the conflict.
7. <u>Resolution</u>: The resolution is the final part of the story where the conflict is resolved, and the main character's journey comes to a satisfying conclusion. Help the student think about how the main character's life has changed and how the story wraps up.
8. <u>Add Details and Descriptions</u>: Encourage the student to enhance their story by including vivid descriptions, dialogue, and sensory details. This will make the plot more engaging and help the reader visualize the events.

Remember to seek guidance and feedback throughout the process and use your creativity. Writing a compelling plot takes practice, so remember to have fun and enjoy the storytelling journey!

There is a difference between **dialogue and narrative**.

In a story, dialogue and narrative are two different ways to tell what's happening. Let's start with dialogue. Dialogue is when characters in a story talk to each other. It's like having a conversation. When you read dialogue in a story, you can see what the characters are saying and how they are talking.

On the other hand, narrative is the part of the story where the author tells you what's happening. It's like the storyteller giving you information. When you read narrative, you learn about the characters, the setting, and what they are doing. Narrative helps to set the scene and describe what's going on.

Now, when should you use dialogue and when should you use narrative in your own writing? You can use dialogue when you want to show what the characters are saying and how they are interacting with each other. It's like watching a movie and hearing the characters talk. Dialogue makes the story more interesting and helps you understand the characters better.

On the other hand, you use narrative when you want to explain what's happening in the story. You can use narrative to describe the characters, the setting and the actions they are taking. It's like reading a book and getting all the details about what's going on.

To make your story more engaging, you can use a combination of dialogue and narrative. For example, you can have a character say something in dialogue, and then use narrative to describe their actions or emotions.

Remember, both dialogue and narrative are important in a story. Dialogue brings the characters to life and lets you hear their voices, while narrative helps you understand what's happening in the story. So, when you're writing your own stories, try to include both to make your story exciting and easy to follow.

However, it's important to avoid using dialogue too much because an excessive amount of dialogue can make the story feel like a script or play, rather than a well-rounded narrative. Here are a few examples to illustrate the appropriate use of dialogue:

Example 1:

Sally and Tom were exploring a mysterious cave. They stumbled upon an ancient treasure chest.
"Wow, look at this treasure chest! I wonder what's inside," pondered Sally.
"I don't know," said Tom, "but it looks really old. Should we open it?"
"I'm curious. Let's give it a try!" Sally exclaimed.

In this example, dialogue is used to show the characters' excitement and curiosity about the treasure chest. It adds a sense of anticipation and allows the reader to experience the characters' emotions firsthand.

Example 2:

After a long day of school, Emma sat down with her parents for dinner.
"Mom, Dad, guess what? I got an A on my math test today!" exclaimed Emma.
"That's fantastic, Emma! We're so proud of you," said Emma's mom.
Emma's dad added, "Great job, kiddo. Keep up the good work!"

In this example, dialogue is used to convey Emma's achievement and her parents' positive reactions. It helps create a warm and supportive family atmosphere in the story.

To avoid using dialogue too much, it's important to balance it with narrative. Here's an example that demonstrates the appropriate use of narrative alongside dialogue:

Example 3:

The sun was setting, casting a warm glow over the beach. Sarah and Jake walked hand in hand, their bare feet sinking into the sand.

Sarah turned to Jake and said, "I love watching the sunset. It's so peaceful."

Jake nodded, his eyes fixed on the orange and pink hues in the sky. "It's my favorite time of the day," he replied.

In this example, narrative is used to set the scene and describe the characters' actions, such as walking on the beach. Dialogue is then used sparingly to convey their shared appreciation for the sunset. This combination allows the reader to visualize the scene while also experiencing the characters' connection through their conversation.

Remember, using dialogue and narrative in balance helps create a well-rounded story. Use dialogue to show important conversations, character interactions and emotional moments, while narrative fills in the details, sets the stage and provides a broader understanding of the story.

Here are some steps for a **satisfying ending**:
1. Resolve the main problem: Every story has a problem or conflict that the main character faces. To write a satisfying ending, make sure the problem is solved or resolved. This could mean that the main character overcomes a challenge, finds a solution, or learns something important.
2. Show the change: A good ending often shows how the main character has changed or grown throughout the story. They might have learned a valuable lesson, become a better person, or achieved their goal. It's important to show this change in the ending to give a sense of completion.
3. Tie up loose ends: Make sure to address any unanswered questions or unresolved plot points. If there were any side characters or subplots, find a way to wrap them up as well. This helps bring the story to a satisfying conclusion and gives readers a sense of closure.
4. Create a feeling of satisfaction: A satisfying ending should leave the reader feeling happy, fulfilled, or inspired. It should feel like everything has come together nicely. You can achieve this by making sure the main character achieves their goal, finds happiness, or overcomes their obstacles.
5. Consider the tone: The tone of the ending should match the overall tone of the story. If the story was funny and lighthearted, the ending should be too. If it was a bit sad or serious, the ending should reflect that as well. A consistent tone helps make the ending feel satisfying and complete.
6. Leave a lasting impression: A great ending will stick with the reader even after they finish the story. It could be a surprising twist, a memorable quote, or a powerful image. Think about what would make your story memorable and find a way to incorporate it into the ending.

Experiment with different ideas and endings until you find the one that feels just right.

Here are some story editing techniques to use prior to finalizing your work:
- Check for Spelling and Grammar: Read through your story and look for any spelling mistakes or grammar errors. Use a dictionary or ask an adult for help if you're unsure about a word. Example: Change "The dog was runing fast" to "The dog was running fast."
- Improve Sentence Structure: Make sure your sentences are clear and easy to understand. Avoid run-on sentences and check for proper punctuation. Example: Change "I went to the park and played with my friends we had so much fun" to "I went to the park and played with my friends. We had so much fun."
- Add Descriptive Language: Use adjectives and vivid details to make your story more interesting and engaging. Describe how things look, feel, sound, or smell. Example: Change "I saw a bird" to "I saw a beautiful, colorful bird with feathers that shimmered in the sunlight."

- <u>Remove Repetition</u>: Avoid using the same words or phrases too many times in your story. Look for opportunities to use synonyms or rephrase sentences to make them more varied. Example: Change "The cat was cute. It was a really cute cat" to "The cat was adorable. It was a really sweet kitty."
- <u>Check for Logical Sequence</u>: Make sure your story flows logically from one event to another. Check if the order of events makes sense and if any parts need to be rearranged. Example: Change "I ate breakfast after I brushed my teeth" to "I brushed my teeth before eating breakfast."
- <u>Ask for Feedback</u>: Share your story with a classmate, teacher, or family member and ask for their input. They can help you identify areas that need improvement or offer suggestions for making your story even better. Example: "Can you read my story and let me know if you think it's clear and if there's anything I can do to make it more exciting?"

Remember, editing is an important part of the writing process, and it helps make your story the best it can be.