

How to write a short story

A short story is a work of fiction. It is a product of the author's imagination. Every short story has a beginning, a middle part and an ending.

Development of a short story requires careful thought and planning. Not every writer employs the same techniques in writing a short story. Some start with the plot and then create the characters. Others start by creating characters and then allow them to interact. From this interaction, the plot takes shape. Here are a few tips for writing a short story. Note that these are not meant for a seasoned writer who has already mastered the art of story-telling. Nonetheless, a beginner with little or no experience in writing a short story should find these tips helpful.

Step 1: determine the plot

The theme is what the story is about. A theme sometimes conveys a moral. If you have read the Aesop's Fables you should know what I mean. All of those stories have a message. Some stories are written just for the purpose of conveying a message. The message could be any of the following:

The victory of virtue over vice

Sportsman spirit: It is not about winning; it is about how you play the game

The righteous may have to face huge hardships

Honesty is the best policy

You don't really have to state the message at the end of the story. As the story develops and ends the reader should be able to comprehend the message.

Step 2: outline the plot

Every story requires a plot. Actually, the story develops from the plot. You can indicate the plot in the opening lines and then develop it gradually. As the plot unfolds characters will appear on the scene and start interacting with one another.

Complications and conflicts

These are an integral part of the plot. Complications and conflicts don't have to be really complicated.

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Minor complications will do just fine – it depends upon the plot. Think about events that lead to the conflict. What are the problems that the characters encounter? You can develop complications and conflicts out of the interactions of the characters. Sometimes, destiny can play a role in making your characters' life complicated.

Develop the crisis

What are the results of the conflict? How do they lead to additional, more complicated conflicts? The conflict or complications should lead to what is called the 'rising action'. The rising action will create more complications and tension and will raise the story up to the crisis. The crisis is the turning point. It leads to the climax. The climax is the highest point of interest.

Bring the story to an end

Once you have reached the climax, you can't climb any higher. The conflict and crisis needs to be resolved in the climax. Think about the outcome of the events that lead to the climax. Do these events change the characters or the way they interact with others? Do they learn any lessons? Once the conflict and crisis are resolved the story comes to an end. This final outcome is called the denouement.