

# Get Your Book Right Before the World Judges You

*What Agents, Publishers, and Reviewers Are Looking For*

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Part 4 - Style

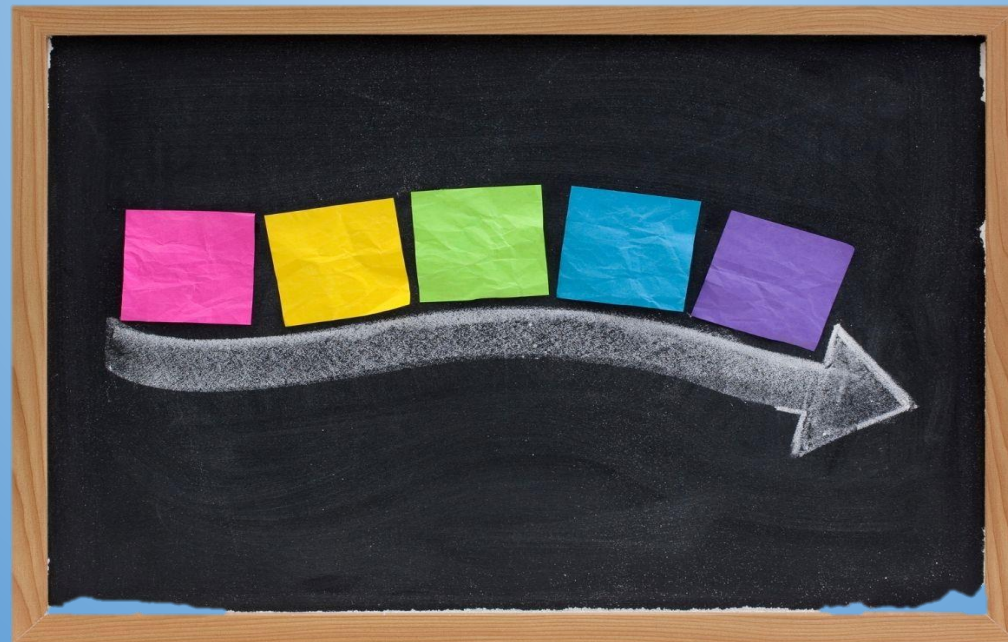
# Ease of Reading



- Ease/Speed of Read
  - Easy to get lost in the story without quirky things that pull you out
  - You don't have to go back and look things up because you got lost
- Shorter sentences keep the action moving more quickly
- Shorter paragraphs and shorter chapters are good

# Ease of Reading

- Well-Organized and Length Appropriate
  - Did it flow well or were you lost as to the time and setting?
  - If it had headings, were they helpful and informative?



# Words Matter

- Vocabulary/Diction
  - Was the vocabulary at the right reading level?
  - Did the author use big words when a simpler word would be better?



# Words Matter

- Narration vs Dialogue
  - Was there a mix of narration and dialogue?
  - Improper use of words or grammar within dialogue is acceptable if it's purposeful. Improper spelling is not.
  - Did they *tell* when they could have been *showing*?

# Showing vs Telling Examples

## **Telling:**

- John was sad to see his girlfriend leave.

## **Showing:**

- John wiped tears down his face as he watched his girlfriend board the plane.

## **Telling:**

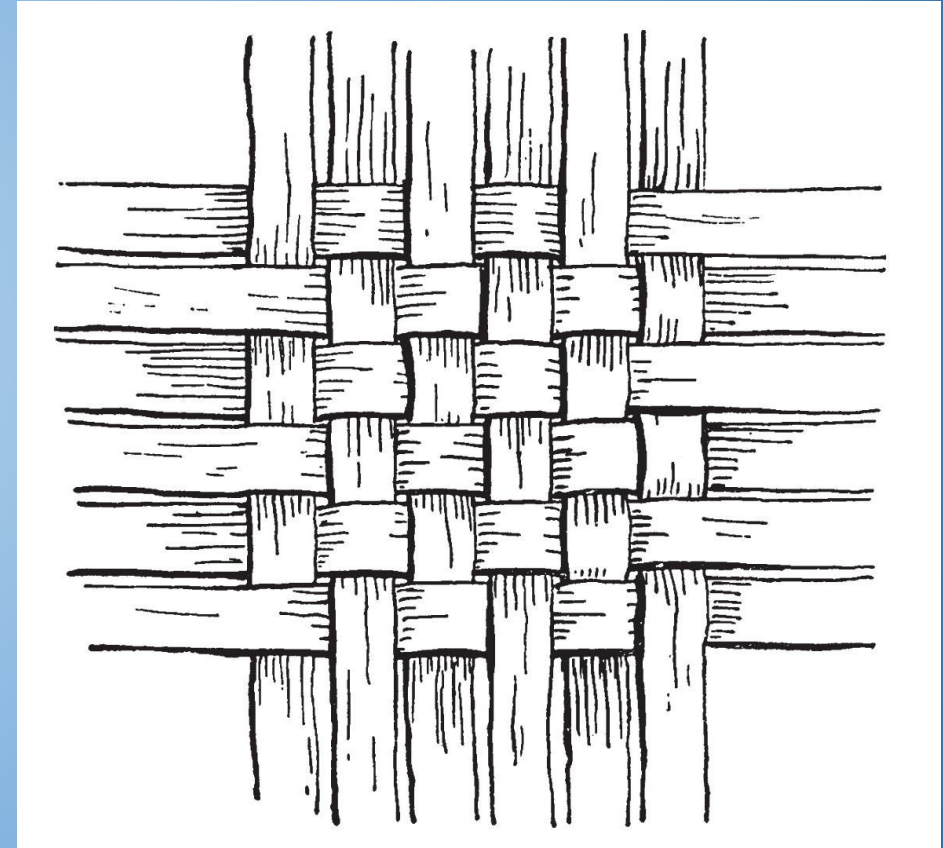
- The house was creepy.

## **Showing:**

- Only a single dim candle lit the room. The house smelled like dust and rotting wood, and something faintly metallic that made John think of blood. Stuffed animals were mounted around the room: a wild-eyed buck, a grizzly frozen in fury, a screech owl with sharp yellow talons.

# No Data Dumps

- Character traits
- Backstory
  - In conversations not flashbacks
- Describe setting through eyes of character (S v T)



# Eliminate extra words

- Just, so, now, however, such as, back, really
- Go/Going to: “I’m going to try to get help” vs. “I’ll try to get help” or “I’ll get help”
- Started to: “He started to fill the tank.” vs “He filled the tank.”
- Tried to: “He tried to help me” vs. “He helped me.”
- Would: “He would sing me to sleep” is really “He sang me to sleep.”
- Avoid using BOTH action tags and dialogue tags together

*(Talked about this is Part 2)*



# Don't Be Repetitive

- Common Descriptions
- Stating the Obvious
  - Having a character say something instead of allowing audience to infer it
- Belaboring a Point
  - How nervous/scared/traumatized someone is



# Basics

- Avoid Bouncing Around Timeline; Be methodical
- In 3d person, don't let the narrator sneak in details the reader shouldn't know
  - “Little did she know the robbers were around the corner.”



# Don't Break the 4<sup>th</sup> Wall

- Unless it's intentional
- <http://writeonsisters.com/writing-craft/pros-cons-breaking-fourth-wall/>

# Active vs. Passive Voice

- Use active voice, not passive. Artistic license for effect should be the exception, not the rule
  - Passive: Woven into the thread at the bottom was a delicate ring of gold from which vines of gold wandered up toward her waist.
  - Active: A delicate ring of gold from which vines of gold wandered up toward her waist was woven into the thread at the bottom.

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