

How Should You Revise a Short Story?

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By Dave Hood

There are a number of ways to revise your short story. You might want to write the first draft and then revise it for each of the elements of fiction—setting, character, plot, theme. You might want to revise your story for voice, style and tone.

Revising is not a rewrite. A rewrite is where you throw away the original story and then begin again. Revising a short story means to improve your story, refining your story, correct weaknesses in your story. For instance, you might change words, condense sentences, delete repetition.

I suggest that you write your story by first using a macro approach, followed by a micro approach. The macro revision involves revising your story for the elements of fiction, such as setting, plot, character. In the micro revision, you revise for style, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and so forth.

In this article, I'll explain how to revise your short story using macro and micro revision techniques.

Macro Revision

Here are some of the things you need to consider when revising the elements of fiction:

Setting and Time

- Is the setting realistic and believable?
- Does setting provide a backdrop to the story?
- Does the setting create a mood or atmosphere?
- Is the setting a motive for the character to take some course of action?
- Do you show and not tell the reader?

Plot/Plot Structure

- Does your story have an inciting incident?
- Does central character face setbacks/obstacles as he/she attempts to achieve a particular goal?
- Does the story include a climax or turning point?

- Do you resolve the story by answering the conflict?

Character and Characterization

- Does the character have desire to reach some goal?
- Does your story include flat and round characters?
- Have you employed action, dialogue, description of appearance to develop your central character?

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Point of View

- Is your story told from a consistent point of view?
- What point of view are you using? First-person POV? Second-person POV? Third-person POV?

Vivid Description

- Do you show and not tell?
- Do you use sensory details to show what happens?
- Do you use specific details to who what happens?
- Do you use figurative language as a form of description?

Figurative Language

- Does the story include similes?
- Does the story include metaphors?
- Do you use allusion?
- Do you use personification?
- Do you use symbolism?

Dialogue

- Do you include dialogue in scenes?
- Does the dialogue reveal conflict, move the plot forward, reveal character?
- Do you include quotation marks and dialogue tags dialogue?
- Does the dialogue sound realistic?

Theme

- Does your story have a theme?
- Does each element of fiction contribute to the meaning?
- Do the symbols help to develop the theme?
- Is the theme revealed in the conflict?
- Is the theme revealed in the consequences of the story?
- What is the meaning of the story?

Voice

- Do you tell the story with a particular voice?
- Does the story have a consistent voice?
- Does the diction support the voice?

Showing and Telling

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- Does your story include narrative summary?
- Does your story use scenes to show how important events, such as setbacks, conflict, and the climax unfold?

Micro Revision

In the micro revision, you correct the following:

- Grammar
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Writing style, such as diction and syntax

Final Thoughts on Revision

Too much revision can damage your story. You might make it incomplete. So, ask yourself: What can I cut or eliminate or improve without damaging the story?

As well, revise only until you feel your story is complete, and then stop.

Share your story with people you trust. Have them read your story and provide their opinions. Then decide whether you want to revise your story with their suggestions.