

# REVISION:



## Tips for Diving Into the Wreck

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# FINISHED?



- Congrats on finishing—your first draft.
  - The good news: You got to the end, which is a lot further than most writers ever will get with a novel/memoir/screenplay/poem/essay.
  - The bad news: There is no such thing as a publishable first draft.
- So what's next?
  - Time to dig in and revise!

# 1. DO A CHECKOUT DIVE



- Read like a writer in your genre
  - Word length? How many chapters? How long? Diagram the story arc, either on paper or in your mind. Where do the key plot shifts occur? What are their themes?
- Know what's being published from people like you
  - It's marvelous to read the classics. But also read work published in the past three years from first-time authors with similar platforms. What did they do with characters and dialogue?

## 2. DON'T GO ALONE



- Only certified divers go solo, and not even well-published authors do
  - Connect with two or three other writers who work in the same genre and have comparable experience to yours (or a bit better)
  - Ask a couple of non-writers you respect who read in your genre to read your first draft
  - Set ground rules
    - What you're looking for in terms of feedback
    - What you're looking for in terms of response time
- **DON'T REVISE DURING THIS TIME**

# 3. STRETCH TO AVOID INJURIES



- Take a day or a morning or an afternoon to compare the notes you took during your checkout dive with your manuscript
- Take a day or a morning or an afternoon to compare the comments your writer and non-writer readers provided
  - Where are the pain points? How do you stack up against what's being published?
  - Where are the recurring comments from readers? Is everyone saying they find a scene slow or a character confusing?
  - Where are the joy spots? What is resonating with readers, and what do you seem to be doing right when looking at today's publishing landscape?

# 4. GET THE RIGHT GEAR



- For a writer who wants to be read, theme is the center-point. Doesn't matter whether we work in a plot- or character-driven genre.
- The four magic words of storytelling: *Something happens, somebody changes*. Plot, characters, and setting are the gear that we use to communicate the theme. It's important that we use the right gear.
  - Plot/General: Where are we at the beginning of the story, and where are we at the end? Where are the crisis points, climax, and resolution? Watch the number of "action" scenes (above the line) vs. the number of "thinking scenes (below the line
  - Plot/Scenes: Does every scene move the story toward its logical, satisfying conclusion? If not, how can it—or should the scene be cut?
  - Character: Does every character serve a purpose/have a voice? If not, how can he or she—or should the character be cut?
  - Setting: What is the setting's role in communicating the theme? Is the setting a character itself, or simply a prop?

# 5. USE AN OXYGEN MASK



- Some facets of effective writing are as important as breathing. Don't forget them as you revise!
  - Point of view: Needs to be consistent throughout the work.
  - Consistency: Set up a timeline to make sure your story and characters are where they're supposed to be throughout the book.
  - Dialogue: Read exchanges out loud. Is each character's voice consistent throughout the book?
  - Research: Depending on the genre, you may need to be a slave to detail, including what people are wearing, the geography, the weather?
  - Tighten: Make sure every adverb and adjective is there for a reason.
  - The Gold Standard: Where are you telling where you should be showing?

## 6. COME UP FOR AIR



- It took you more than a month to write your first draft; it's going to take you more than a day to complete the revision process if you're going to do it effectively.
- Don't let this be the only thing you ever write; start concepting or writing your next project. This will add clarity and dispassion to the revision process.



# AND DON'T FORGET...



➤ TO GET IT OUT OF YOUR  
COMPUTER AND OUT TO THE WORLD!

Thanks for coming!



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