

How to Start a Story

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/how-to-start-a-story/>

This entry is part 11 of 16 in the series [Devil in the Details](#)

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The question I get asked most from new writers is, “Where do I start?” This I think *seems* like a simple, straightforward question, but actually it’s really huge enormous and almost impossible to answer in a helpful way.

(Why? Because the real question is much broader and more encompassing than, “What words should be in the first paragraph?”)

With that in mind, I’m going to try anyway.

Here are the 7 things you need. How to start a story:

1. Have a clear idea in mind the type of the story you want to create.

Close your eyes and imagine it. How should the book look, how should it feel, who should be reading it and under what circumstances?

You must understand this very clearly, because when you write a story of any kind at all, you need to realize that the end product is just that – a product. Know who would want your product and how they'd use it.

For example, if the story is for kids who are pre-readers, then your audience is two-fold: the child and the reader (mom, a sibling, a babysitter, etc.). Then ask yourself *when* they'll want to read it: before naptime, with a crafting project, in a classroom, etc.?

If the demographic can read, say a 13-year old, then the type of story will be very different, and so will the style. When and why would the teenager read it? For escapist fun, for advice, for more detailed information on a topic of interest?

- If you're not sure of your options, [look HERE for the types of books with pictures](#). All demographics.
- If you're not sure of the work involved, [look HERE for the word count and page count requirements](#) of various types of books. All forms and all ages.

In all circumstances, you should have a clear concept of how your book will make people feel. This is something a lot of writers don't consider, to their detriment – and sometimes to the detriment of others. Know what it is you want to put out into the world and why.

Be clear on these two points and your story will be all the more likely to be well received. If you don't know *who* would read your story or *why* – then how can anyone else know?

2. Create your protagonist.

Before you start developing the plot, establish a rich character. I've written about this before: stories are driven by character, not the things that happen.

- For an [in-depth look at that process, go HERE](#). From there, you can also download my personal Complete Character Creator worksheets for FREE. This is what I use, and I hope you find it helpful!
- You'll of course need more than the protagonist. [GO HERE for a list of the 15 types of character that affect plot](#).

3. Always plot your plot.

Especially in kids books, write with intention and purpose. Don't let things just happen to your protagonist.

- For more detail on [how to establish plot, go HERE](#). This outlines the most important decisions you'll ever make in your story creation – and *amazingly, it's something most people don't know to do*.
- If you really want to know how to literally start your story, you should try this excellent tip: start at the end. [READ THIS](#) for a deeper explanation and the 3 reasons why.

4. Surround yourself with people who read and write.

Social support of your own interests is really key to becoming a great writer. Though writing is something we do alone, becoming a writer is something you cannot do alone.

- For more on [how to go about doing that, go HERE](#). This explains everything you need to know about how to create a creative writing group.
- Attending book events is essential to meeting writers and readers. [GO HERE for the 5 most important lessons](#) I learned at the 2015 book fair in Frankfurt.

5. Get a website for your writing.

Even if your first book isn't published yet! If you've decided to be a writer, commit to a website. You don't need to become a regular blogger, but it's vitally important to have an online connection – with other writers, other readers and any publishing professionals you might meet along the way.

Even if you plan to only ever self-publish, you should try to make connections with publishing pros - because they are part of your world. The publishers and self-publishers are not separate from each other. Both require readers, and the fact is – we share them with each other.

- If you are thinking about [self-publishing, THIS is a must read](#).
- If you are thinking about submitting your manuscripts to [traditional publishers, you should read THIS](#).
- For some guidance on [what your website should be and do, go HERE](#). This is the stuff you'll need to think about before you actually launch a site.

6. Don't ever be shy about being a writer.

Tell everyone.

- Have a [book launch party](#),
- plan a [book reading tour](#).
- Make sure your [local librarians know who you are](#). It's important.

Don't pretend you don't care if no one reads your story. Of course you do! If I thought no one would ever read *these words*, I'd hang up my keyboard right now. We writers need to be read. That reception is vitally important.

So make sure you do what you need to do to get read. If no one knows, that won't be possible.

7. Always, always, always create high quality.

It's unfortunate but true – many people have the idea that they can maybe make a quick buck throwing a so-so quality storybook on the market. This is really false thinking and a [disservice to kids](#).

We need to create top quality for our kids, not something that is passable. Be sure your story is polished and don't be shy about getting an editor to help you do that. *Do whatever it takes to do it right.*

There are a lot of people who can help you with that. I'm of course here, and **you can always send me your questions**. I'm happy to help.

If you're looking for a writing course and more hands-on guidance, I can provide you with that, too. We're currently beta-testing our first writing course, which I hope to formally launch in December. *If you'd like to join, send me a note and I'll put you on the list.*

Regardless, don't let anyone tell you that you cannot or should not pursue what you really want to do. If you've decided that you want to write, I can help you. It's what I want to do.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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