

What to Add in Drafts to Make Your Story Sell Better

By Victory Crayne (c) 2010

Ah, that sweet spot when you've completed the first draft of a new story. In your excitement, you may want to show others your creation. After all, if you had so much fun writing it, it **MUST** be good, right?

Hold it right there!

First drafts can always use some revisions and, in some cases, **SERIOUS** rewriting. You wouldn't want people to read your half-baked draft and think that it is your **BEST** work, would you?

First, let your draft sit for a few days. You'll **ALWAYS** come up with improvements that you can't see in the excitement of just finishing the first writing. Your first draft is to get your intention about the story out. Your subsequent versions are to refine your execution of the story.

Here are some ideas on what you can do in your subsequent drafts to "dress up" your writing.

1. Add descriptions of your settings to help the reader feel he/she is "in the scene" with your characters. You may picture the scene in your mind, but unless you give your readers enough clues about that scene, you won't transport them into your story. Avoid the "white room" syndrome. Use all of the senses, not just visual: smell, taste, feel, sound, colors, shapes, etc.
2. Genre: Add enough clues to satisfy readers that this story fits the genre. Do this on the first page or they may return the book to the shelves with "no sale" for you.
3. Add physical descriptions of your characters, just enough to help the reader feel they are "in the presence" of each person. The first thing we do when we meet someone is evaluate their gender, size, shape, hair, colors, clothing, etc. Introduce each character so your reader feels they have met this person.
4. Add enough dialogue, action, and description to show what their personalities are like. Stories are about people. Make your people come alive. For examples: (1) Jack looked up and slammed his palm down on his desk. "Hey! Did you hear me?" Jack was more effervescent, easily able to express his moods. He claimed it helped him come up with more ideas outside of the box. At an even six feet, Jack was built lean and wiry. He kept in shape with a three-mile jog almost every morning. (2) Don took off his dark-rimmed glasses, frowned at them, and picked up a tissue. "You're always so darned eager to jump ahead." He sighed as he wiped his lens.
5. Change how you relay some information by using dialogue instead of narrative. Readers love dialogue, the lifeblood of every story.

6. Add facial expressions, body language, and perhaps some internal dialogue to show the emotions of your characters. Dialogue is easy to write, but we humans learned to show emotion on our faces and bodies long before we had language. Even babies do it. If you appeal to the part of your reader's brain that processes visual clues of emotion, you'll be adding depth to your characterization.
7. Add likes and dislikes for your characters to endear them to readers. To discover what that might be, ask yourself: My character wants ____ but is blocked by _____. For examples: (1) John loves playing his piano in the evenings but is blocked by his wife's insistence on watching sitcoms so loud. She says she needs the break from her stressful job as a commodities stock broker. Is it any wonder he drinks too much and argues a lot? He hates himself for doing that, so he drinks even more. (2) Serena loves to garden but finds it hard to do when there is so much damned housework left.
8. Add author's or character's voice to the settings, emotions, etc. This can be as simple as an observation or a comparison, for example, (1) "He kept expecting her to call him from the next room. Without her, the house seemed like an Egyptian museum after hours--cold and lifeless." or (2) "He lifted one arm and took a sniff of his armpit. *Who let a dead chipmunk in here?*"

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I help people who want to write books achieve their dreams.