

Month 3

DIALOGUE 101

*Dialogue does a lot of heavy lifting in your book—
here's how to get it right.*

Always have a subtext.

Make sure your characters are moved to speak for a reason.

Make sure your characters have a unique voice.

Cut out the fluff.

Keep each utterance brief. 3 beats or less.

Use “said” as a dialogue tag most of the time.

Ask yourself:

Does this dialogue DO something?

Does it advance the story?

Does it expose conflict and tension?

Does it reveal character goals?

Does it show or impact character dynamics?

Does it provide key information?

What is different after the snippet of dialogue?

Month 3

DIALOGUE STYLISTICS

You can choose to ignore these grammar rules, but if you do, make sure you have a SYSTEM that is clear & consistent.

-Each speaker gets a new paragraph.

-Each paragraph is indented.

-Punctuation for what's said goes inside the quotation marks.

-Any actions that happen before or after dialogue go in a separate sentence. If Judy screamed and THEN spoke, you should write it this way: Judy screamed. "Ew! A cat!"

-However, if Judy screamed out her words, use a comma instead of a period (so that it's all part of the same sentence). Judy screamed, "Ew! A cat!"

-Notice how the sentence inside quotations gets a capital letter on the first word.

-Dialogue tags coming after the dialogue snippet are preceded by a comma inside the quotations: "I really don't like cats," she said.

-Same thing goes for a question mark. The pronoun that goes with the dialogue tag is lower case. "Is that hideous thing a cat?" she asked.

-If there is an action between two snippets by the same person, it looks like this: "I can't stand cats," she said. Her mouth curved into a frown. She whispered, "A huge cat tried to suffocate me in my crib as a baby."

-Long speeches with several paragraphs don't have end quotations, but you start the next paragraph with them. (But I don't recommend big speeches!)

Month 3

IS MY BOOK READY TO BE SEEN BY BETA READERS?

- 1** Is your book finished?
- 2** Is it clear, with a complete storyline, a great setting, cool characters, and an actual plot in which something happens?
- 3** Have you CAREFULLY completely self edited it?
- 4** Do you feel like there is barely anything more you can do with it?
- 5** Go back and edit til that "barely" is gone.
- 6** Do you sincerely believe your beta readers won't hate you for subjecting them to this?
- 7** If you're not sure, but need help, try sending this version to the kinder half of your reader pool.
- 8** Am I mentally prepared for dealing with the feedback?
(You may never be- just don't say I didn't warn you!)

Month 3

QUESTIONS FOR BETA READERS

*Remember that your beta readers are readers, not editors.
They are not meant to fix or correct your book.*

Did you get sucked into the story from the very beginning? If not, why not?

Did you get oriented fairly quickly at the beginning as to whose story it is, and where and when it's taking place? If not, why not?

Could you relate to the main character? Did you care what happened to them? Were they believable?

What did you think of the setting?

Was there a point at which the story lost you or a point that lagged?

What would you love to see me add to the story?

What could stand to be removed?

Are there any extra characters in your opinion?

Did any parts confuse, annoy, or bore you? This could be passages, scenes, or characters.

Was there anything that didn't make sense or any plot holes?

Causality: Was all the stuff that happened plausible? Were character reactions and actions emotionally realistic?

How was the dialogue? Realistic, useful, too much? Too little?

How was the ending?

Are there any repeating issues or problems with grammar or style that you noticed?

Month 3

AUTHOR PLATFORM AUDIT

WEBSITE

Do all links work?
Did I optimize SEO to my ability?
Does it portray me as a writer?
Does it communicate to my audience?
Does it allow audience to reach me?

LEAD MAGNET

Has my lead magnet been converting?
Is the call to action strong enough?
Are there multiple links to my lead magnet?
Have I sent at least one message to my list?

AMAZON

Have you created an author page?
Is your bio intriguing?
Is your book description optimized?
Are there links to your website / social media?
Did you link book trailers?
Do you include book reviews / social proof?

SOCIAL MEDIA

Are all of my bios optimized with links?
Are my books or upcoming book listed?
Is my icon or photo clear?
Have i been communicating clearly?
Have I been engaging?

CONTENT

Is my content on-brand?
Does it contribute to my message?
Does it allow more of my audience to find me?
Is my bio optimized?
Is the content shareable?
Does it link to my webpage/lead magnet?

GOOGLE SEARCH

Does my content have the right keywords?
Do I get at least two pages of results for me?
How can I show up in more places in the right way?
Check title tags and meta descriptions on site
Your URLS should be keywords!

Month 3 Checklist

- New outline from draft**
- Story level edit**
- Scene level edit**
- Line level edit**
- Reviewing Beginning, inciting incident, ending**
- Have I chosen Beta Readers and gotten them my book?**
- Have you weighed pros and cons of self pub vs conventional?**
- Have you conducted a website audit?**
- Have you tweaked your lead magnet?**
- Have you concocted and sent your first email?**
- Have you jotted down at least 10 content ideas?**