

The Busy Writer's Book of Checklists

Checklist 6 – Scenes

Aspect of Scene Creation	Your Assessment		
	<i>Works Well</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>	<i>Poor</i>
Have you chosen the best viewpoint character for this scene? (A rule of thumb is this: the best viewpoint character is usually the one with the most to lose.)			
Does this character have a definite goal for the scene? (This may be a problem to overcome; another character to be questioned; a place to be reached etc.)			
Is the time and place of the scene clear to the reader? (You may have foreshadowed this in a previous scene. If not, make sure there is a clear transition sentence so the reader understands 'where' and 'when'.)			
Is there an inciting incident for this scene? (Earlier in the story, there should have been an incident that made THIS scene necessary. If this is the first scene in the book, that incident will be in the past. THIS scene is likely to have something happen that will incite a following scene.)			
Have you included conflict in the scene? (The viewpoint character wants something: what is going to prevent him from getting it, or make his job harder?)			
Who or what is the opposition to the main character getting what he wants? (This may be his own doubts/fears; forces of nature; other characters. Be wary of letting your character get what he wants too easily - readers get bored if there is no conflict.)			
What is the main character's strategy for getting what he or she wants? (Is this logical behavior for this person? Does it 'fit' with the personality you have given the character?)			
Have you carefully planned the resolution? Does the main character get what he wants? How does this propel him into another situation (scene)?			
Does the scene move the story forward? (If the scene is included solely to show us aspects of a character's personality, think about taking it out and showing us these things in another scene that DOES move the story forward.)			
Is the scene well-paced? (It should fit in with the pace of the story; don't have too many scenes of furious action following one another; don't have too many slower scenes in a row.)			
Is the scene an appropriate length? If it seems to drag, see what you can cut out. If it seems to race along too breathlessly, look for opportunities to slow it down by telling us more about the viewpoint character's thoughts or emotions.			
Have you used scenes and sequels appropriately? (A scene should have a goal, conflict and resolution. A sequel is a section of narrative where the viewpoint character reflects on what has happened and decides on his next course of action.)			
Have you arranged your scenes in the most effective order? Could you increase suspense or improve pacing by shuffling your scenes around?			
Do you need to 'play out' some scenes instead of TELLING the reader what happened? (You may be missing an opportunity to add emotional punch if you report action or dialogue instead of letting the reader 'join in'.)			
Have you ended the scene in a way that makes the reader keen to keep turning pages to see what happens next?			