

The Busy Writer's Book of Checklists

Checklist 4 – Viewpoint

Aspect of Viewpoint	Your Assessment		
	Works Well	Needs Work	Poor
Have you decided whose story this is?			
Have you decided the best viewpoint to use for your main character(s)? For example: first person, third person subjective (singular); third person subjective (multiple)? If you are not sure, try writing a scene from both first person and third person viewpoints and see which 'feels' best, and which reads better. Also take into consideration whether you want readers to know something that the main character doesn't know - if so, you will need third person viewpoint.			
If you are using multiple viewpoints, is it clear at the beginning of each chapter or scene whose eyes we are looking through? Do you need to insert transition sentences to make this clear?			
Have you checked to make sure that you are not slipping out of viewpoint (e.g. describing a person's expression when we are supposed to be 'inside' that person's skin?)			
Have you reduced the number of viewpoint characters to only those necessary to tell the story? (This may be one character or six characters - but generally it is most effective to have no more than four.)			
Have you avoided switching viewpoint in the middle of a scene? (This is not 'wrong', but much of the time you lose more than you gain: the reader becomes distanced by constant head-hopping, and finds it harder to identify with the characters.)			
If you use multiple viewpoints, does each character seem like an individual? (Different characters should have different views of the world. Each person's internal monologue will reflect their individuality.)			
Have you filtered the SETTING through the viewpoint character's world view? ((Different characters will see the same setting in different ways. What is important to one person may not be noticed by another.)			
Have you shown your viewpoint character's emotions and thoughts about what is happening to him/her? (This helps the reader to empathize with your viewpoint character.)			
If you have a child as a viewpoint character in your story, have you taken care that his perspective on events rings true for his age? (A common mistake is to have a child sounding like a shorter version of an adult.)			
If you use multiple viewpoints, have you alternated them in a way that helps to build suspense and to show events coming to a head?			
If you use multiple viewpoints, do you have sections where the smooth flow of the story is spoiled by too many short scenes from different viewpoints?			
If you are using first person viewpoint, have you checked your story to make sure that you are not telling the reader information that this character couldn't possibly know?			
Have you done everything possible to make sure the reader identifies with each viewpoint character? Do we really 'become' that character?			
<i>Other Aspects of Viewpoint That Need Consideration:</i>			