

Fiction Writer's Toolbox

Susan M. Baganz

Part 1: BEFORE YOU WRITE

Essentials for Success in a long-term writing (*James Scott Bell, The Art of War, pp 11-13*) :

1. Desire
 2. Discipline
 3. Commitment to Craft
 4. Patience
 5. Honesty
 6. Willingness to learn
 7. Business-like attitude
 8. Rhino skin
 9. Long-term view
 10. Talent
-

LENGTH OF STORY (*Estimates – check publisher requirements*)

Flash Fiction – 100 – 1000 words
Short stories – 1,000 – 10,000 words
Novellete – 10,001 – 25,000 words
Novella – 25,001 – 40,000 words
Short Novel – 40,000 – 60,000 words
Novel – 60,001 – 90,000 words

WORD COUNTS BY GENRE

Literary 80,000-110,000

Mystery/Thriller/Suspense 70,000-90,000

- Cozy Mysteries are usually shorter 60-80K

Romance 40,000-100,000 (80-90K)

Romantic Suspense

Contemporary Romance

Amish

Historical Romance (Biblical, Amish, Civil War, Western's, WWII, Regency)

Women's Fiction 40,000-100,000

Speculative Fiction (90,000-125,000)

Dystopian or Horror - 80,000 to 100,000

Fantasy - 90,000 to 100,000

Paranormal/Urban - 75,000 to 95,000

Science-Fiction - Steampunk - 90,000 to 125,000

Historical 100,000 – 120,000

Young Adult (YA) 50,000-80,000

-The protagonist and other main characters are usually between the ages of 13-early 20s

New Adult (NA) 60,000-85,000

- The protagonist and other main characters are usually between the ages of 18-24 or so – college years, finding themselves, identity.

Mid-Grade (MG) 30,000-50,000

Ages 9-13

PANSTER vs PLOTTER (Your writing style)

PANSTER	PLOTTER/PLANNER

Point of View and Tense

Head Hopping

First Person

- First Person Present Tense
- First Person Past Tense

Third Person

- Third Person Past Tense

Omniscient

Character vs. Plot

- Hero/Heroine
- Backstory
- Physical Descriptions
- Inner Struggle
- Inner Conflict
- Spiritual

A Note on Formatting:

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Part 11: AS YOU WRITE

STARTING THE STORY

Why are beginnings so important?

Why Potentially Good Beginnings go Bad:

Four Most Important Aspects of Starting Any story.

- 1. Establish Protagonist**
- 2. Location**
- 3. Time Period**
- 4. Inciting Incident**

STORY PLOT

THEME

MORE WRITING BASICS

Speaker Attributions:

- Dialogue tags:

- Action Tags:

Strong Verbs

Active vs Passive Voice

Surprise!

Show vs Tell

Writer's Block

BACK UP YOUR WORK OFTEN!

Fiction Writer's Toolbox*Susan M. Baganz***Part 111: AFTER YOU WRITE**

Starts and Finishes to CHAPTERS**Chapter Hooks**

- Stakes – What are the stakes and why do they matter?
- Hero/Heroine Identification – Establish point-of-view in the first sentence or two
- Anchoring – Who, what, where, when, and why?
- On the run – Start in the middle of the inciting incident
- Problem

Failure Endings

- Sleepy Time Slugs – Doesn't move the story forward
- Disaster Averted – Failure to tie things up
- Three-peat – Using the same ending over and over.

Fixes:

- Change your timing – end in a different spot than someone might expect
- Mix up your endings – Keep some variety in how you end your scenes and chapters.
- Punch word – Power word. Leave and emotional impact. Deliver a blow to the reader. Address deep needs. Stimulate strong emotions.
- Anticipation – Let the reader know the issues are larger than the reader might assume. May even tell you explicitly that something is about to happen.
- Cliffhangers – Keep them hanging.... They have to keep reading to find out what happens next.
- Questions

- Buttons – Simple sentence
- Threat of death or danger
- Shock factor
- Prediction - foreshadowing
- Revelation of a secret

Prologues and Epilogues

Prologue – Don't use if you're just trying to sneak in backstory.

Epilogue – Don't use to tie up loose ends or to make sure the reader “gets it.”

Scene Breaks

When?

- POV switch
- Time lapse
- Change scene

THE REVISION PROCESS

Formula:

2nd Draft = 1st Draft – 10%. Good luck.

Stephen King, *On Writing*, page 222

Resources

www.autocrit.com

www.prowritingaid.com

www.grammarly.com

Overused Words

Feel/felt
Have/had
Knew/know
Look
Hear/heard
See/saw
Just
Then
Than

Weasel or Filler Words

Just
That
Suddenly
Very
Every
Some
Most
But
OK/okay

Adverbs

Actually
Totally
Completely
Continually
Constantly
Literally

Really
Unfortunately
Ironically
Incredibly
Hopefully
Finally

Repetition

Mistakes

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Part IV: GETTING PUBLISHED

Competition

Platform

Two reasons why:

1. The market is more crowded than ever
2. People are more distracted than ever

Three things platform does for you:

1. Provides visibility
2. Provides amplification
3. Provides connection

Elevator Pitch

Blurb

Agents

Editors:

Manuscript Evaluation

Developmental/Project Editing

Content Editing/Substantive and Structural Editing

Copy-editing

Proofreading

How do you get an Editor?

By accident

Pitch at a conference

Hire One

Assigned by Publisher

Your Book Title**Cover Art****RD – Release Date****Marketing****ROI – Return on Investment****Books mentioned in this talk:** (in order of mention based on time available)

Bell, James Scott, *The Art of War for Writers*.

King, Stephen. *On Writing*.

Collins, Suzanne, *Catching Fire*.

Twain, Mark. *The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*.

Mills, Diane. *Firewall*.

Heyer, Georgette. *April Lady*.

Ziarnik, Beth. *Her Deadly Inheritance*

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*.

Heitzmann, Kristen. *Breath of Dawn*.

Baganz, Susan M. *The Captain's Conquest*.

Baganz, Susan M. *Feta and Freeways*.

Baganz, Susan M., *Bratwurst and Bridges*

Ackerman, Angela and Puglisi, Becca. *The Emotion Thesaurus*.

Poe, Edger Allen, *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

Henderson, Dee. *True Honor*.

Henderson, Dee. *The Negotiator*.

Baganz, Susan M. *Pesto and Potholes*.

Baganz, Susan M. *The Virtuous Viscount*.

Adams, Kevin. *The Extravagant Fool*.

Baganz, Susan M. *The Baron's Blunder*.

Wade, Becky. *Her Stubborn Heart*.

Lickel, Lisa. *Parhelion*.

Henderson, Dee. *The Healer*.

Baganz, Susan M. *Salsa and Speed Bumps*

Baganz, Susan M, *Feta and Freeways*.

Richards, J. Chris. *Shattered Trust*

Jerico, Daisy. *Sparks Fly*.

Baganz, Susan M. *Angel on Fourth Street from Little Bits O' Love*

Baganz, Susan M. *Root Beer and Roadblocks*.

Klumpers, Anita. *Winter Watch*

Hyatt, Michael. *Platform* (<https://michaelhyatt.com/platform/>)

Baganz, Susan M. *Sugar Cookies and Street Lamps*

Baganz, Susan M. *Whitney's Vow*