

Checklist for Writing a Winner by Deborah Raney

1. OPENING – Is the reader’s interest captured in the first line, paragraph, page? Does the novel begin in the right place?

2. CHARACTERS – Are lead characters likable, yet flawed? Do they feel larger-than-life, yet real? Do they change and grow from opening to end?

3. PACING – Does the reader feel compelled to keep turning pages?

4. DIALOGUE – Is the dialogue natural and realistic, yet concise? Does it advance the character arcs and plot?

5. SECONDARY CHARACTERS – Are secondary characters believable? Do they have a solid reason for being in the story?

6. SETTING – Is the setting well-described and integral to the story?

7. POINT OF VIEW – Is the POV for each scene wisely chosen and well-distributed? Are transitions smooth and intentional? Does the writer avoid head-hopping?

8. STYLE – Is the author’s “voice” unique and appealing without being intrusive?

9. CLICHÉS – Does the writer avoid clichés and stereotypes in plot, dialogue, characterization, narrative? (If tried-and-true plot devices or language are used, are they used in fresh ways?)

10. MOST IMPORTANT – **Would you recommend this book to your friends?**