

Getting started

To ensure that your story has a strong start, think about the following points:

- ◆ How will the story begin? In the middle of something? With a puzzle? With a description of a place? With a surprise, or a shock? With something strange? With the sound of a voice? In the middle of a conversation? With a description of a character? With the ending?

Techniques

Some hints:

- ✓ Effective writing is economical – it uses as few words as possible to create the best effect. As you redraft, see if you can remove any words, phrases or **sentences** that are not necessary. (See *Drafting and Redrafting*, page 78.)
- ✓ Think about the **pace** of your story – how will you keep your reader involved and interested? For example, you could speed up the pace when you describe action, and slow it down for scene-setting and descriptions.
- ✓ Make sure that it is clear who is telling the story. Only change to another **narrator** if you want to create a particular effect.
- ✓ Vary the length of your sentences. (Long sentences might help create a slow feel; short sentences are good for creating tension or excitement.)
- ✓ Interesting writing often starts and/or ends by raising questions in the reader's mind. You do not have to answer all of the questions that your story raises: don't think that you have to tie up every loose end, or explain everything away. Leave your reader with something to think about.

Useful words

These phrases might be useful for making your story flow. (Avoid using "Then...", which becomes boring.)

When... had, she...

After the...

Meanwhile...

Later...

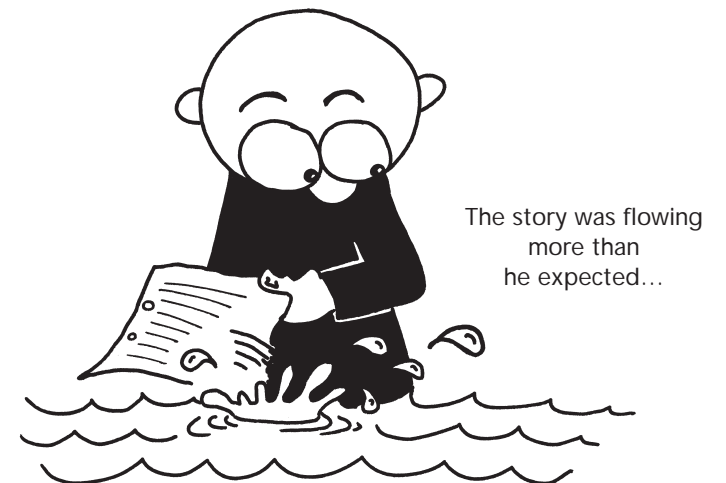
However...

Eventually...

Afterwards...

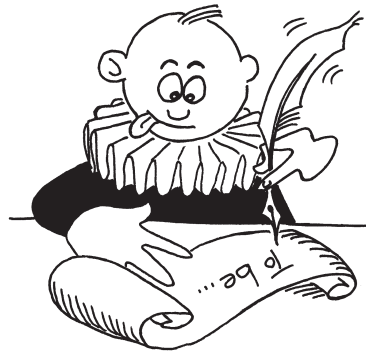
Redrafting

- ✓ If you were the reader, how effective would you find your writing?
- ✓ Is your story well-paced?
- ✓ Does your story have a satisfying **structure**?
- ✓ Have you started and ended in a strong way?



Writing in role as a character

You may be writing as a character in a text. Often, this will be as a diary or a letter about what has happened, and how you feel.



He was beginning to understand the character

Purpose

You may be recounting what has happened and explaining your feelings and thoughts. The purpose of a diary entry would also be to explore the character's feelings and thoughts about what has happened, and to make sense of them.

In a letter, you might want to persuade somebody to help or do something, or you may just want them to understand or share what you feel.

You are trying to show:

- ✓ your understanding of what is happening in the story or play
- ✓ your understanding of how the character thinks and feels
- ✓ your understanding of the language of the character – words or phrases that are typical of them, or their **dialect**
- ✓ your understanding of issues, problems or ideas that the story is about.

Audience

The character will be writing to himself or herself, or to someone that they know well, so the language will be informal.

Structure

Think about how you will **structure** your writing. Try working through the following steps:

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You might get the reader's attention by starting with:

- a strong feeling
- a striking fact
- something mysterious.

If it is a letter, you will probably start by explaining why you are writing. If it is a diary, do not begin "Dear Diary", unless that really fits the character!



Middle

You will have a series of paragraphs.

Each one might be about:

- something that has happened
- a particular feeling
- something that you have decided to do.



Ending

You might finish with:

- a question, to leave the reader thinking
- a concluding thought
- an appeal to the reader to do or understand something
- a decision to do something.

Writing a formal letter

This section will help you to plan, write and present a formal letter.



Purpose

The purpose of a formal letter will vary. It might be to:

- ◆ **inform** the reader
- ◆ **explain** something
- ◆ **persuade** the reader to do something.

If you are writing in role as a character, then you are also trying to show that you understand the way that character thinks, feels and uses language.

Audience

A formal letter is almost always written to someone who the writer does not know personally. It will almost always be on a matter of business. For example, writing to an author, writing to a newspaper, applying for a job, making a complaint, requesting information, and other things...

Techniques

In a formal letter, you should:

- ✓ use formal connecting words (see page 58)
- ✓ be polite
- ✓ be concise (do not use more words than necessary)
- ✓ plan the order of paragraphs carefully
- ✓ check that you have made all the points you need to
- ✓ check especially carefully that there are no mistakes
- ✓ set the letter out correctly (see opposite)
- ✓ write neatly or word-process the letter.

You should usually not:

- ✗ use **slang**
- ✗ use **dialect** forms
- ✗ be too emotional.



Address you are writing to

Kangaworld Ltd
Tree House
Copse Street
Nutsford
Nutts
NU5 3AB

144 Nutkin Lane
Nutsford
Nutts
NU1 1NU

Your address

1st August 2000

Date

"Sir/Madam" if you do not know the name of the person

Dear Sir/Madam

Carefully ordered paragraphs, making a series of points

I wish to express my concern about the kangaroo which I recently purchased from your company.

Contrary to the promises in your advertisement, looking after a kangaroo in a small semi-detached house has presented a number of problems.

Firstly, exercise has been far from easy.

Opening paragraph explains what the letter is about

the police officer's trousers.

In conclusion, I feel that I must return the animal to your care. I would be grateful if you would contact me as soon as possible to make the necessary arrangements.

Concluding paragraph

Yours faithfully

Your signature

Name printed

Ms A Jack

"Yours faithfully" if you have not addressed the person by name; "Yours sincerely" if you have addressed the person by name