

## Secondary Writing Manual

This manual is designed to help guide students and teachers through the short story writing process. It includes some tips on crafting a story, an editing checklist, a page of suggested written or visual prompts to stimulate creative thinking and a marking criteria. Start early enough to produce your most polished writing. You'll be surprised at how much you can improve your work by drafting, editing and refining.

### What makes a good story?

A [hook that captures the attention of the audience](#). E.g. “*EXCUSE ME!*” Antonia whispered at the receptionist. Her temples pulsed as she desperately considered how to attract the attention of one person, whilst avoiding the attention of everybody else. She failed. All eyes glared at her accusingly.

A [compelling storyline that moves your reader along](#). Write so that your reader will want to know what is going to happen next and will not want to put your story down. Use ideas, techniques, structural elements and plot devices to help with this.

A [believable plot](#). Although you want to surprise and engage your audience, your plot needs to be believable. The sequence of events should support the conclusion. Each idea should add something important to the story. If you take it out, does it matter?

[Interesting, believable characters](#). The reader needs to feel like they know the main characters personally. Include characteristics, thoughts, personality traits, good and bad habits and relationships with others when creating characters so readers feel something for them – whether they are feelings of frustration, admiration or dislike is up to you.

[Authentic action](#). You can achieve this by choosing appropriate verbs e.g. pouncing, stalking, grinning. Sentence structure, paragraphing and dialogue can help to create desired pace.

[Clever use of descriptive language](#). Carefully select adjectives, verbs, adverbs and nouns to describe events and situations. E.g. “The cockatoo greedily tore open another pinecone as it feasted on what was hidden inside” This gives us a better picture of what you are trying to say.

[Dialogue](#) – real, not forced. Listen to the way people speak in different contexts; such as school, home, work etc. Some characters might use formal language, whilst others might use more slang.

[Showing not telling](#). This is one of the most important points. Don't tell us what happened – show us! Make the reader feel they are part of the story. Include dialogue with authentic voice. Don't just describe what you can see, but appeal to all the senses. Instead of: *The man went to the ANZAC parade with his granddaughter*, try, *“Come on, Love.” The old man’s carefully polished shoes clicked unevenly on the pavement. His uniform hung loosely from his tired frame and smelled of mothballs, but his chest swelled with humble pride as he grasped his granddaughter’s hand. Isabelle almost struggled to keep up with him.* You now have some atmosphere, mood and a character that we care about.

A [satisfying ending](#). Your story should end with a feeling of conclusion. Whatever problem you built into your story has been dealt with and the character should have ended the journey with a sense of resolution that satisfies the audience, for better or worse.

## Editing checklist

You've finished your first draft. Congratulations!

Now put your story down for at least 24 hours (or even a whole week if you have time) to let it "settle". Come back with a fresh view. Have someone else read your story and note any parts that don't make sense, or where the story doesn't flow well. Read over your story again. Be honest and be prepared to delete words, sentences and even paragraphs. If you are using a computer, the best way to do this is to save a copy before you begin deleting, then it won't feel like you are throwing your work away permanently. It's still there if you decide to add it back in. You'll be surprised at how much you don't need.

Now read it again and consider these points:

- Is the story engaging? Does it make me feel excited, sad, amused...?
- Does the plot make sense? Do I need to explain anything more clearly? (Did I rush to get to the end?)
- Check the following carefully: Does the opening paragraph hook the reader? Do I have a strong crisis, complication or problem? Does the series of events provide enough detail so my reader won't get lost or confused? Does my story end with closure? Will the reader be satisfied?
- Have I "shown" the reader what's happening – instead of "telling" them?
- Are my characters interesting and believable? Will the reader feel like they know my characters (even if they don't like them)?
- Are all the characters necessary to support the plot? (There's no need to list multiple characters who don't have a part in the story. Get rid of extras).
- Will the reader feel as though they are part of the story? Have I created a realistic setting that readers can relate to?
- Do I have enough dialogue? Does the dialogue make the story move along? Have I used a new line for each speaker? Does the character's language and voice help the reader to know them better?
- Did I adhere to the same tense throughout my story - past, present or future - unless deliberately changing for effect?
- Is the point of view consistent throughout the story (have I used first person or third person voice? - e.g. is the narrator telling their own story or someone else's?)
- Have I checked the structural elements of my short story? Have I used paragraphs and punctuation effectively? Have I included a variety of sentence structures? Have I used capital letters for names and proper nouns, etc.?
- Have I checked my spelling?

## Ideas and suggestions to get you started

This year, our optional theme is *Local or Personal Stories*. You may find some of the ideas below useful for getting you started, or you may use your own.

### Story starters

- I was crossing the road, minding my own business when I suddenly got caught up in a massive fun run!
- When we set out on our overnight canoeing adventure, everything was fine...
- The mystery at the dam wall...
- The time I thought running away to join the circus was a good idea...
- My friend dragged me to the skate park. Turns out I'm a natural...

### Visual Prompts



### Image references

[GALLERY: 40th annual Albury Nail Can Hill Run 2016 | The Border Mail | Wodonga.](#)

[Canoe The Murray in Albury, NSW, Extreme Sports - TrueLocal](#)

[Hume Dam | Murray-Darling Basin Authority \(mdba.gov.au\)](#)

[Back in the Big Top, Flying Fruit Fly Circus \(Albury NSW\) | ArtsHub Australia](#)

[Australian vertical skate star Renton Millar gives new Albury Skate Park tick of approval | The Border Mail | Wodonga, VIC](#)

## Secondary Marking Criteria

The criteria assessed in the secondary writing task are:

Criteria	1	2	3
1. <b>Reader Engagement</b> – The writer’s capacity to engage and affect the reader.			
2. <b>Text Structure</b> – Effective structure that supports a cohesive storyline.			
3. <b>Expression</b> - Construction of grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs appropriate spelling and punctuation.			
4. <b>Characterisation</b> – The portrayal and development of Character.			
5. <b>Setting</b> - The development of a sense of place and context.			
6. <b>Vocabulary</b> – The range and precision of the language used.			
<p>7. <b>Technique</b> - The crafting of a text that is effective in structure and content.</p> <p>Sophisticated structural and language devices may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– foreshadowing</li> <li>– flashbacks</li> <li>– red herring/decoy</li> <li>– plot twist/subversion of expectation</li> <li>– circular/parallel plots</li> <li>– symbolism/figurative language</li> <li>– personification, simile, metaphor, allegory</li> <li>– alliteration,</li> <li>– in media res</li> <li>– evoking an emotional response</li> <li>– encouraging reflection</li> <li>– displaying irony</li> <li>– building tension</li> <li>– effective use of dialogue</li> <li>– subject/verb agreement</li> <li>– tense consistency</li> <li>– showing, not telling</li> </ul>			