

# Short Story Revision Checklist

Title of Story: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## 1. Plot & Structure

- Is the central conflict clear and compelling?
- Does the story have a strong beginning that hooks the reader?
- Does the middle build tension effectively?
- Is the ending satisfying (whether resolved or intentionally open)?
- Have I eliminated scenes that don't advance the plot or develop characters?

**Example:** If a scene doesn't reveal character, advance plot, or establish setting/atmosphere, consider cutting or revising it.



## 2. Character Development

- Are my main characters dimensional and believable?
- Do characters have clear motivations for their actions?
- Is there growth or change in at least one character?
- Have I shown character traits through action and dialogue rather than just telling?
- Are secondary characters distinct and purposeful?

**Try this:** Write a one-sentence description of what each character wants. If you can't, revisit their role in the story.



## 3. Sensory Details & Setting

- Have I grounded scenes in specific locations?
- Are there vivid sensory details (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch)?
- Does the setting enhance the mood and themes?
- Have I avoided generic descriptions in favor of specific, fresh details?

**Exercise:** Highlight all sensory language. Is each scene engaging multiple senses?



## 4. Dialogue & Voice

- Does each character have a distinct voice/speaking style?

- Is dialogue natural but purposeful (not just small talk)?
- Have I balanced dialogue with action and description?
- Does dialogue reveal character and advance the plot?
- Have I used dialogue tags effectively (not overusing "said" alternatives)?

 **Experiment:** Read dialogue aloud. Does it sound like real people talking?

## 5. Point of View & Perspective

- Is the POV (first, third limited, omniscient) consistent and effective?
- If there are POV shifts, are they intentional and clear to the reader?
- Am I maintaining the right narrative distance from the events?
- Have I avoided head-hopping within scenes?

 **Check this:** Who's telling this story, and why are they the best choice?

## 6. Theme & Subtext

- What is the story really about beneath the surface plot?
- Are themes revealed organically through character and plot?
- Have I avoided being heavy-handed with the message?
- Is there subtext in dialogue and character interactions?

 **Reflection:** Can you state your theme in one sentence? Is it evident but not obvious in the story?

## 7. Pacing & Tension

- Does the story maintain appropriate momentum?
- Are there variations in pacing (faster for action, slower for emotion)?
- Have I built and released tension effectively?
- Are there unnecessary digressions that slow the story?

 **Strategy:** Mark each scene as high, medium, or low tension. Is there a satisfying rhythm?

## 8. Final Polish

- Have I eliminated clichés in language and plot?
- Have I removed unnecessary adverbs and replaced weak verbs?
- Is the prose consistent in tense and style?

- Have I proofread carefully for spelling, grammar, and punctuation?
- Have I read the entire story aloud to catch awkward phrasing?

 **Gut check:** Which passage are you most proud of? Which still makes you cringe?

---

**Notes:**

**Next revision goal:**