

STRONG BEGINNINGS CHECKLIST



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Table of Contents

5 Don'ts of starting a story	1
5 Do's of starting a story	1
Strong beginnings checklist	2
Resources	3

This is the Strong Beginnings Checklist which is a part of Robin Glassey's online class, Polishing Your Draft—The 5 Essential Layers of Editing.

Congratulations!

You're tackling the beginning of your story. Using this checklist will help strengthen your beginning as well as help you get on your way to polishing your draft.

Remember, knowledge alone isn't enough—you need to act!

You can do this!

Strong Beginnings

- ❖ Draw the reader into the story
- ❖ Make a promise to the reader in terms of theme/genre/storyline
- ❖ Use a unique and compelling narrative voice
- ❖ Make the reader emotionally connect quickly to the main character

The 5 don'ts of starting a story

Don't:

1. Start in the wrong place (backstory)
2. Info dump (too much exposition)
3. Use clichés (first day, dream, funeral)
4. Start with an irrelevant character
5. Forget a hook

The 5 do's of starting a story

Do:

1. Start at the point of change in a character's life
2. Make a promise to your reader (what is the story you will tell, what can the reader expect?)
3. Introduce the reader to one of your main characters and the setting (make the reader care)
4. Create an emotional connection (use actions, emotions/thoughts & strong dialogue to connect to the reader)
5. Include a hook

STRONG BEGINNINGS CHECKLIST



Review the Strong Beginnings Checklist below to help you evaluate your manuscript for any needed edits you may need to make to strengthen the beginning of your story.

- My opening line hooks the reader’s attention.
- My story begins at the right time in my character’s life—right before the inciting incident (before their life changes).
- The setting is clearly stated.
- The genre is clear to the reader.
- The theme of the story is clear—the emotional promise has been made to the reader.
- It is clear who is telling the story—the point of view of the character/narrator is consistent.
- There are no large blocks of infodumping in my first chapter.
- There are no “Did you know . . .” infodumping conversations hiding in my first chapter.
- My first chapter ends in a hook.

Strong Beginnings Edits To be Done:

RESOURCES

For some additional information on strong beginnings topics, see these web articles:

[7 ways to create a killer opening line for your novel by Writer's Digest.](#)

[How to captivate readers with a magic opening line by Henneke.](#)

[Point of view definition and examples: getting point of view right.](#)

[Four types of info dumps and how to avoid them by K.M. Weiland.](#)

[Exploring theme—a key component to successful writing by Courtney Carpenter.](#)