

Checklist for Creative Writing

- ❑ Choose your voice (*1st person, 3rd person, omniscient, limited*) for a reason.
- ❑ Choose your verb tense (*present, past*) for a reason.
- ❑ Write in active voice (*He moves a rock*) and avoid passive voice (*A rock is moved by him*).
- ❑ Use contractions where one would naturally use contractions.
- ❑ Avoid forms of the “to be” verb (*am, is, are, was, were, be, been, being*).
- ❑ Avoid useless words (*really, truly, actually*) when unnecessary.
- ❑ Avoid clichéd words and phrases (*It was a dark and stormy night*).
- ❑ Avoid simple sentences or fragments, except for an intended effect.
- ❑ Vary sentence length.
- ❑ Vary sentence structure.
- ❑ Avoid pronoun repetition (***She** picked up her suitcase. **She** walked to the door. **She** went to her car. **She** rolled down the window and waved to everyone. And **she** left*).
- ❑ Avoid unnecessary word repetition (*She no longer wished to be on **stage**, so she moved across the **stage** and exited the **stage** through the **stage** door.*)
- ❑ Avoid saying the same thing twice (*He yelled **loudly** . . . or He restored things **back** to . . .*). We always yell loudly and things are always restored back, you needn’t say so.
- ❑ Avoid obvious or over-simplified introductions of your characters.
- ❑ **Read aloud!** If you can’t read it naturally, then it isn’t natural; it isn’t real. Work on it.
- ❑ Use figurative language. It is through metaphor, symbolism, motif and other **subtle** techniques that the author evokes the proper response in the reader without being intrusive.
- ❑ And finally, the cardinal rule: **Show, don’t tell.**