

A Quick & Dirty Guide to Revising your Novel

Lesson 1: What the heck did you write?

If you saw the post on Wednesday, then you know where we're heading with revisions. First, we have to **make revision goals**. To do that, we have to establish what you **WANT** to have when you finish revising. But to do *that*, you have to first know **what you ACTUALLY have**.

We're going to figure this out by reading our novel and making note of big picture problems. Big picture problems include anything that require more than just a sentence tweak or dialogue-tightening. These are the pieces of the novel that *tell* the story--the skeleton and muscle of your book.

So, let's dive into this very first lesson, shall we? I'll walk you through it step-by-step.

Supplies needed today:

- Multi-colored pens (at least 4 colors)
- Index cards
- A printed copy of your entire manuscript

So what the heck *did* you write?

1. Print your manuscript in its entirety.* Preferably double-spaced for easier writing-in, but do whatever you can do. Also be sure your pages are numbered... Trust me when I say you don't wanna mess with having to organize unnumbered pages. (If you don't have a printer, most office supply stores can print for you.)

Big Picture Problems:
a.k.a. MANUSCRIPT DOOM

1. Plot plot holes, dropped plots, no conflict/tension, pacing issues
2. character inconsistent, too many, two-dimensional
3. setting info dump, white room, not compelling

*Okay, so I realize not everyone can or will print their MS. Just know that when I explain how I revise, I am assuming you have a printed copy of your novel. Do what you can. ♥

2. Read through the *entire* manuscript in one sitting (if possible). You want to read the whole thing together because everything will be much fresher in your mind, making plot problems, inconsistencies, etc. easier to spot. Find a nice, uninterrupted spot to do this. If you can't read the whole thing at once, then try to do it with as little time between readings.

3. As you read, you will be using the following worksheets to identify problems in these areas:

1. Plot Problems
2. Character Problems
3. Setting Problems
4. Other Problems
5. How to Use the Worksheets

4. When you see a problem, use a colored pen to mark it in the margin (this is explained in detail on the How to Use the Revisions PDF). My color-coding is as seen in the picture →



5. DO NOT MAKE CORRECTIONS ON THE

MANUSCRIPT. When there are major problems with plot, character, voice, whatever, you will likely be cutting large portions of the text, moving chunks around, writing new scenes, etc. It's a waste of your time to line-edit words that will end up cut or drastically altered

I learned this the hard way after spending MONTHS editing small things that wound up being removed. Just like working if you were working with a publishing editor, you will do line-edits and small stuff LAST.

Wrapping Up

And so, my friends, we are finished with Lesson 1. It's a lot to absorb and a lot of work—I don't expect you to rush through it!

But, if you're finished by next Monday, then get ready for Lesson 2! We'll be **setting our goals by planning The Perfect Book**.

Now, get head on over to the worksheets and get started finding your big picture problems!