

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# SEVEN STEPS TO WRITING SUCCESS



Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue



Step 5: Show, don't Tell



Step 6: Ban the Boring Bits



Step 7: Exciting Endings

by  
**Jen McVeity**

## STEP 4:

## Dynamic Dialogue



### What Authors Say . . .

*"If you have 817 characters in your story, the bad news is you're going to need 817 different voices."*

**John Marsden**

*"With dialogue I always read it out aloud... and come back to it the next day and do it again... in three reads you can iron out most of the rough bits... In fact that works for the whole story... reading it out loud...try it."*

**Terry Denton**

*"I love writing dialogue for my characters, as in my books it tells as much about them as their appearance."*

**Leigh Hobbs**

*"Your characters must NOT all speak like you."*

**Hazel Edwards**

*"Listen, listen and then listen again. To sound authentic you need to know how each person speaks differently from everyone else. Find their voice and you've found the character."*

**Libby Gleeson**

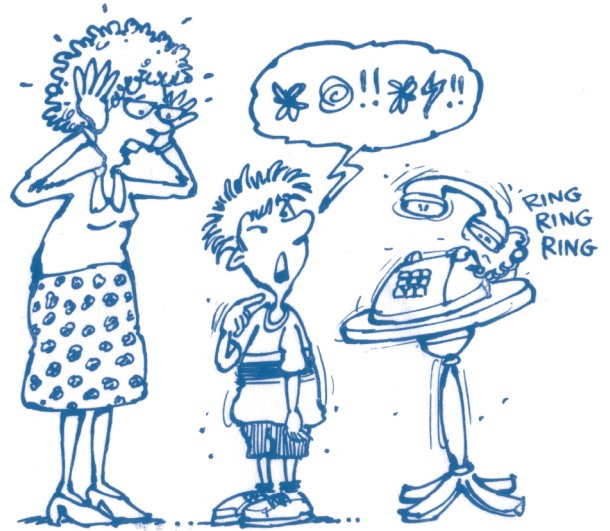
# STEP 4: DYNAMIC DIALOGUE

## 'Stop That at Once!'

Dialogue is a great way to start a story.

Remember the Five Minute Fast Starts? (Step 2.) Here's another version of that.

Start the following stories with dialogue. Five starts in five minutes is the rule!



1. Every time you swear, the phone rings.

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2. A large plant in the lounge room eats ants, then mice, and then the cat gets very nervous!

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**3. When your socks start to smell, they turn bright orange.**

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**4. There's a kindergarten kid who follows you everywhere, even to the bathroom.**

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**5. Your new glasses make you see blue apples and purple lemons.**

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# Train Talks

Write an outrageous sentence on a piece of paper.

For instance:

- I have a bee on my backside.
- There is a grub in your chocolate.
- I poked the goldfish and it bit me.

Swap your sentence with a friend.

Now, pretend you're talking on a train together. You both have to work the conversation around to fit in your weird sentence and make it sound natural.

This is great practice for learning how to drop clues for mystery stories.

Can you remember your conversation? Write it here.  
(Make sure you edit out the boring bits too.)



# STEP 5:

Show, Don't Tell



## What Authors Say . . .

*"Pretend you are really living in the story... It helps to write about the kinds of people and places you know."*

**Emily Rodda**

*"Sort your main character out first. If they're real enough, they'll write the story for you."*

**Meredith Costain**

*"I carry a notebook and constantly jot down ideas, images, bits of dialogue and bits of stories."*

**Margaret Wild**

*"So what's more effective?"*

*TELL: My little sister is really annoying.*

*SHOW: 'Mum,' screamed my little sister, 'Mickey yelled at me.'*

*Yell was right, she'd just stepped on my whole Lego project. I pushed her out of the room. Bad mistake. Her voice screamed even louder.*

*'And now's he's pushing and hurting me.'"*

**Jen McVeity**

*"Don't tell readers what to feel. Show them a situation and the readers will react with feeling."*

**Rose Inerra**

# STEP 5: SHOW, DON'T TELL

## Actions Speak Louder than Words

Showing means giving proof.

List THREE things to prove the following.



What SHOWS someone is generous?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

What SHOWS someone is terrible at music?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

What SHOWS a person is scared of dogs?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

What SHOWS a person is on a diet.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

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# Body Language - Secret Signals of Feelings

You'll be surprised how people's body language often shows exactly what they are feeling.

Head outside, sit somewhere for a while and 'people watch'.  
Look at the expression on people's faces, what they do with their arms and feet  
and even how they stand.

For instance:

- The woman twisting her wedding ring around and around is nervous.
- The man rubbing the back of his neck is frustrated.
- The woman with the sagging shoulders and two toddlers is exhausted.
- The girl talking to a boy and playing with her hair is flirting.
- The kid rubbing his eye and shuffling his feet is telling a lie.

**So what body language do you see  
- and what do you think it reveals about the person?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_



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# Show me a Secret

To write convincingly, you have to make your reader feel they are actually there - racing the volcano lava, struggling in the raging river, dying of thirst in the desert.

1. Team up with some friends.

2. Pick an emotion. e.g.

- happy
- sad
- love
- nasty
- jealous
- angry
- frightened

3. Pick a setting. e.g.

- the beach
- a cubby house
- my aunt's house
- under the bed
- the year 2112



Now, you have to act out a scene which shows your two words. BUT - you CANNOT name the emotion or the setting.

If you've done your SHOWING well, anyone in your audience will easily guess your two words.

Here's an example: **Nasty** in **my aunt's house**.

*'Hey Aunt Sue have you seen Albert?'*

*'Who's Albert?'*

*'You know my mouse. He's missing and I am really worried.'*


*'I haven't seen your dirty mouse, try the bedroom.'*

(Kid goes out, Aunt lifts up a bowl on the table, picks up the mouse, then she grins evilly and calls...)

*'Here kitty, kitty, kitty.'*

# STEP 6:

## Ban the Boring Bits

A circular inset image showing three young women sitting together, looking at a document or piece of paper. They appear to be in a classroom or study setting, smiling and engaged in their work.

### What Authors Say . . .

*"When you read through your work you will come to bits where instinctively you know it's not right... and your brain usually tells you don't worry... it's OK, no one will notice. Don't believe your brain... trust that first instinct and find out what's wrong and change it."*

**Terry Denton**

*"Often I scrap the first chapter."*

**Hazel Edwards**

*"It's easy to fall in love with words, but too many rich words get in the way of the story. (Sometimes simple words can be the richest.)"*

**Jackie French**

*"If something's not quite right, try adding tentacles."*

**Shaun Tan**

*"I go over and over my work, editing out things. You have to. In TV or films, anything over three lines they cut out."*

**Paul Jennings**

# STEP 6: BAN THE BORING BITS

## Boring Beds, Breakfasts and Bus Trips

*I woke up that morning and got out of bed and raced downstairs. I stuffed my face full of cereal and then had three bits of toast and jam. Mum had two cups of coffee and more toast. Then we got into the car and drove through five traffic lights to....*

**Big yawn.**

**Everyone eats, sleeps, combs their hair and spends lots of time traveling.**

**It's part of life - but it's boring.**

**Movie producers know this well.**



For instance, what's something we do EVERY day? Often several times? Yes, that's right, (no sniggering now), we go to the toilet. But wait - ever seen James Bond go to the toilet?

So here's a real challenge. List TEN movies which have a toilet scene.

(HINT: Often the scene is used for humour.)

### Movies with Toilet Scenes

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....
7. ....
8. ....
9. ....
10. ....

# The Cutting Room Floor

Many movies on DVD have a section which show the deleted scenes.

Hire a favourite movie on DVD and watch it at home. Afterwards, watch the deleted scenes.

Often these scenes cost thousands of dollars to make, but then they are edited out.

See if you can figure out why these scenes were deleted.

e.g. We did not learn anything important about the characters or it slowed down the action.

**MOVIE:** .....

**Deleted scene 1:** .....

**Reasons why it was deleted :** .....

.....  
.....  
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.....  
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**Deleted scene 2 :** .....

**Reasons why it was deleted :** .....

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# STEP 7:

## Exciting Endings



### What Authors Say . . .

*"I always have the ending defined well before I start. Any short story should have a wham at the end."*

**Paul Jennings**

*"I start a book when I know the first sentence and the ending - if the characters are 'alive', they'll take care of the middle."*

**Wendy Orr**

*"In every student literary competition, over 17% of stories finish up with 'And then I woke up, it was all a dream.' It's a cheat ending. Those stories NEVER win. If you want a great story, get a great ending."*

**Jen McVeity**

*"A powerful ending will leave the reader satisfied - so writing begins when I know my ending is cooked."*

**Christopher Cheng**

*"Start at the end! It's too easy to write the first chapter and get stuck- but if you write the ending first you need to know who and what you're writing about!"*

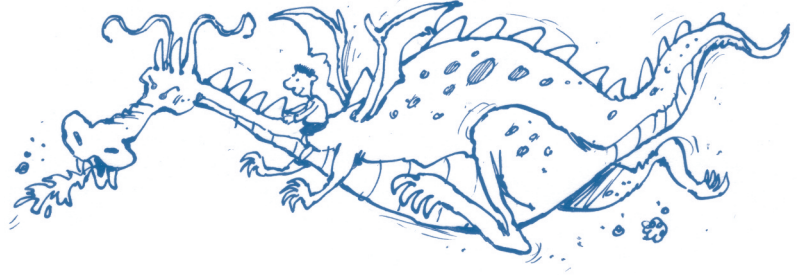
**Jackie French**



# STEP 7: EXCITING ENDINGS

## Working Backwards

Sometimes writers pick up a line or a phrase that haunts them. Often it 'feels' like the last line of a story. Some writers even work backwards from that one line to create a whole novel.



Get together with some friends and create a story to match the last lines below. Don't tell the story, just give the plot in point form.

- Dad never knew about Davey the Dragon. I sure wasn't going to tell him.

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- I'm not going to say sorry. Well, maybe not.

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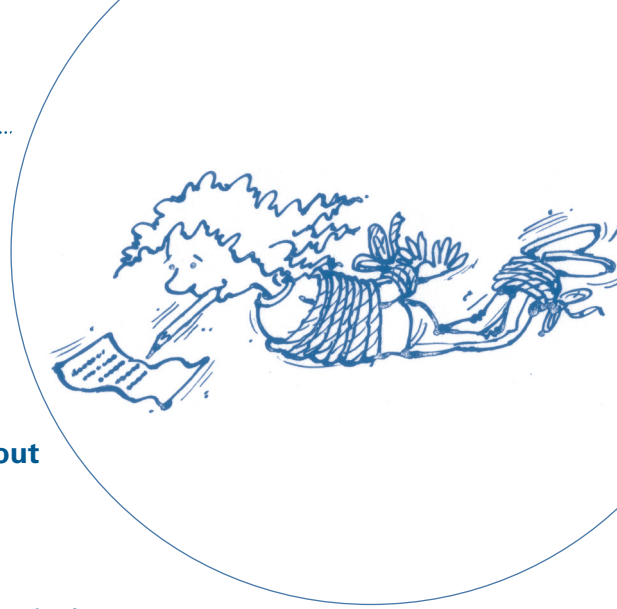
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# Sticky Situations

Can you find some solutions to these tricky story plots?

These situations often happen in stories.

Alone, (or it's more fun with friends) see if you can figure out a way to escape these sticky situations.



- You're trapped in a cellar with a locked door and no windows.

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- A friend has been bitten by a snake in the middle of the outback.

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- Thieves have tied you up in a warehouse - and the warehouse is on fire.

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# So you've got the **DEDICATION**,

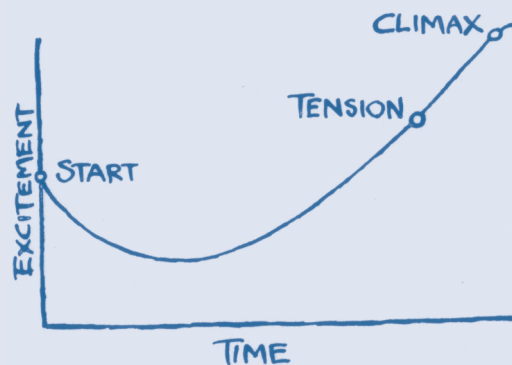
## Write a story of **INSPIRATION**,

### And get ready for a **CELEBRATION!**

Put all the *Seven Steps* together  
- and create a brilliant story.

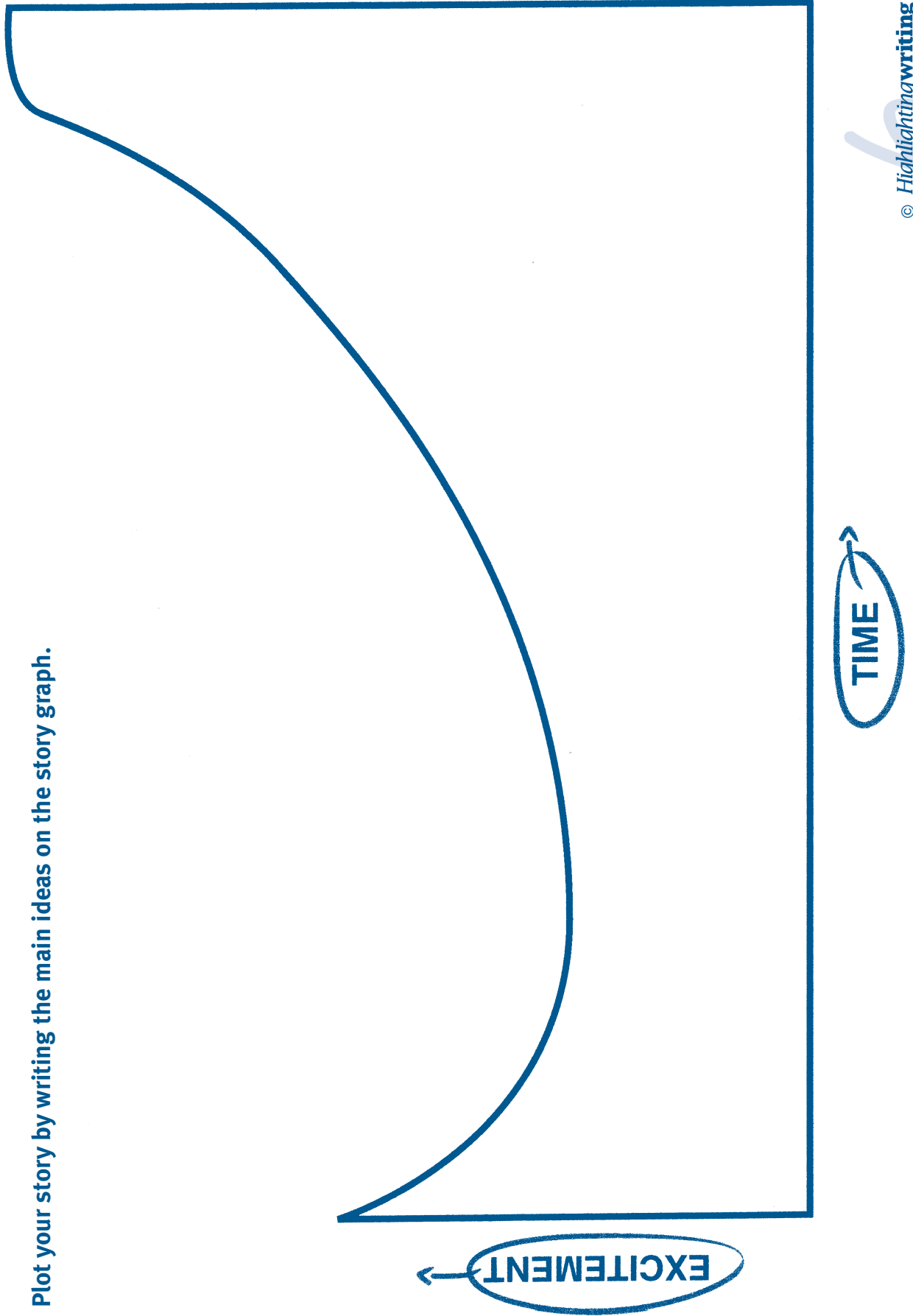
We'll help you with Step 1, the planning. After that, you'll know exactly what to do. After all, you are now a *Seven Steps* graduate - and what a success you are!

- a) **Start with a bang** - put the main character in an action scene.  
A fight, a rescue, a sudden danger.
- b) **Back fill** - the Who, What and Why are filled in WHILE the action unfolds.  
(Not in big slabs at the beginning.)
- c) **The main problem is introduced.** Make it big.
- d) **Complications and more problems.** Things get very bad indeed.
- e) **Tension scene** where the hero/heroine fights against incredible odds.  
Surely they must fail...
- f) **Climax** - incredibly, wonderfully, they win!



## Plan for Success (Step 1)

Plot your story by writing the main ideas on the story graph.

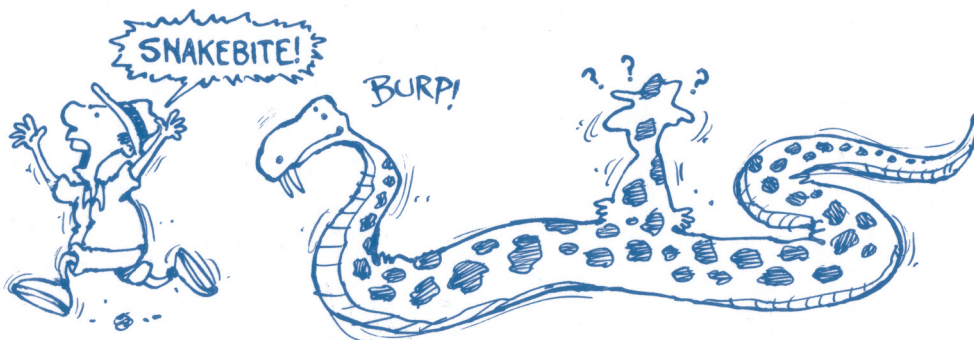






## CHECK LIST

- Have you **SHOWN** the important things? (Step 5)
- Have you cut out the boring bits?  
**No Beds, Breakfasts and Buses.**  
(Step 6)



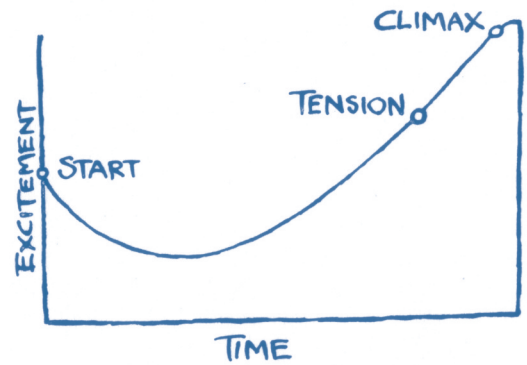
## CHECK LIST

- Are the tension scenes tight? Does your hero/heroine nearly fail? (Step 3)
- Check there's no quick-fix ending  
- your reader should feel satisfied.  
(Step 7)

# WHAT ARE THE SEVEN STEPS?

## Step 1: Plan for Success

**Top Tip:** A joke, a movie, a TV sitcom, a book and a great story - what do they all have in common? They all follow the same 'story graph'. Start with a bang, slowly build up the tension and end on a real high point.



## Step 2: Sizzling Starts

**Top Tip:** Start where the action is. Not at the beginning of the day where nothing is happening. Begin when the volcano starts oozing lava or as you walk in the door to the big disco competition.

## Step 3: Tightening Tension

**Top Tip:** You must believe the hero (male or female) will fail. The tornado is too strong, the villain is too evil, the black forces of depression are too overwhelming. Yet, through strength, talent and determination, somehow our hero wins.

## Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue

**Top Tip:** Think of dialogue as a mini play in the story. Let your characters walk, talk or even stalk - that's how we get to know them.

## Step 5: Show, Don't Tell

**Top Tip:** If I tell you I am generous, do you believe me??? No way. But if I buy all 20 raffle tickets to help cancer research, are you more convinced? Actions really do speak louder than words.

## Step 6: Ban the Boring Bits

**Top Tip:** Everyone gets up, gets dressed, travels to school...it's not exciting. So why write about it? Ban all mention of the 'boring B' words - beds, breakfast and bus trips. Think like the movies, the heroes never travel, they just arrive...

## Step 7: Exciting Endings

**Top Tip:** Would you tell a joke without knowing the punch line? If you want to build to a big climax you have to know where you are heading.



**seven steps**  
TO WRITING SUCCESS

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