

YOUR THRILLING STORY IN 1000 WORDS (OR LESS)

A thrilling short story in 1,000 words or under, you say? Yeah, you got this! But we've no room for fluff, so we'll have to make everything hit hard. **Here are some things to consider:**

1

BRAIN-DUMP FIRST, EDIT LATER

Writing and editing are two different mindsets, and they don't play well together. First, let yourself write freely. Get messy. Let the ideas spill out without judgement or restriction. Then, come back later to shape and refine your work.

2

ATMOSPHERE IS EVERYTHING

Thrillers live and breathe in the atmosphere. Think of the tiny details that make a setting feel dangerous, claustrophobic, or uncertain. A single flickering streetlight or an unanswered phone can do more work than a full page of description. Let the mood carry the suspense.

3

DITCH THE FILLER

Words like *just*, *really*, and *suddenly* can water down your writing. Thrillers thrive on precision. Every word should matter, every sentence should drive the story forward or increase the tension.

4

KEEP YOUR CAST SMALL

In a short story, we don't have time to meet many characters. Focus on creating a bond between the reader and your main character, so they'll feel like they're in that character's shoes, experiencing everything with them.

5

ONE OR TWO SCENES

A thousand words might sound like a lot... until you start writing. Then you realise it's noooooth. If you want your story to feel rich and immersive, keep it to one scene where we can really connect with your character. If you're going for a high-energy, fast-pace vibe, you miight squeeze in two scenes. Think "before and after" a single event, not a chapter-based journey.

6

FILTER-FREE ZONE

Cut words that distance the reader, like *felt*, *saw*, *thought*, *wondered*. Instead of "she felt scared," write "her hands shook as the key slipped from her grip." Pull the reader into the moment. Let them experience what's happening, not watch from the sidelines.

7

START IN THE THICK OF IT

Drop us into the action, the mystery, or the unease. You want to grip your reader from the very first sentence, and have them piecing together the world around them, feeling everything your character feels as the setting unfolds.

In saying that, *you don't have to get the start of your story perfect when you first write*. It may even be one of the last things you do, once you already know how your entire story plays out, so that you can set it up perfectly for the emotion-packed ending, linking everything back together.

“Start” your story however your brain-dump happens: maybe the characters are walking along a street and happen across a creepy house. Then, in your editing, you’ll trim all of that out to drop us in the characters racing heart while they’re already inside and just felt a presence moving past them in the dark.

8

END WITH A PUNCH

The ending is your final chance to leave the reader breathless. Don’t let it drift away quietly. Aim for something sharp, memorable, or unsettling – the kind of ending that lingers in the reader’s mind long after they’ve finished.

9

BE YOUR OWN READER

Step away from your story for a few days, then return to it with fresh eyes. Read it as if you didn't write it. Do you feel the tension? Did you see the ending coming too soon? Now's your chance to tweak to build tension, drop hints, or play into emotion.

10

BORROW SOME FRESH EYES

When you've spent hours with your story, you stop seeing it clearly. Ask someone you trust to read it. Encourage them to tell you what worked, what confused them, and what stayed with them. The right feedback can sharpen your story in ways you can't do alone.

Be free, enjoy the process! Remember, it's meant to be fun (though there're sure to be times you're overwhelmed with self-doubt and want to pull your hair out or delete the whole thing - we all get this way, it's a phase, push through! The other side is so satisfying!).

You're a writer, now, and you CAN do this!