

THE 10-POINT INSIDE OUTLINE CHECKLIST

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Check to be sure that there is one clear point: Is the story about something? Does it say something? Can someone look at your Inside Outline and see it?

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Check to be sure that the POV is consistent and clear throughout, whether you have one POV character, two, or 12. The point that goes with each scene should be about that POV character and what they know, feel, and believe.

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Check for an arc of change: Does the ending resolve the problem of the beginning?

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Check the character motivation and logic: Do the protagonist's actions make sense? Would they actually behave this way based on who they are and what they want? There is logic to the way people behave, even when they behave in contradictory ways.

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Check to make sure your protagonist has agency over what happens to them. Are they making choices and decisions, or are things just happening to them? We want a protagonist who is engaged in their own struggle and their own story, not a cardboard cutout who only reacts to whatever happens to them.

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Check the consequences of every decision your protagonist makes. Is something at stake? In other words, do they stand to lose something? Will something happen if they make one choice versus another?

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Check the cause-and-effect trajectory: In every single chapter, do the actions the protagonist takes drive to the next thing that happens? This is where you will probably spend the bulk of your time and effort: thinking this through and locking it in. It's hard because changes you make will impact every other scene in the story. Don't shy away from making those changes. Better to do so now than when you have an entire manuscript.

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Check the force of opposition. Is it clear what is standing in the protagonist's way on the inside (their beliefs about the world and their role in it) and the outside (their culture and society, the expectations people have of them, the circumstances they find themselves in, competitors and antagonists)? We want the protagonist to struggle as they make their choices and decisions. We want it to be hard so that your readers can

experience what it would feel like to struggle in this way without actually having to do it themselves.



Check pacing and flow of the story: Is there tension throughout? Does it build and grow? Are there scenes that don't drive the story forward? Can they be cut?



Check genre conventions: Does the story do what the genre needs it to do? Certain genres have clear expectations around word length, content, outcomes and conclusions, etc. Make sure that your story meets them.

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