FICTION CRITIQUE GUIDE
PART 2 • POLISHING

Streamlined prose is the key to a page-turner.

1. FORMAT: *This is a typical layout. It can vary depending on particular requirements.*
        First page: Author's name (and contact info if applicable) at top left. Word count (total words in story) top right. No page number. Title in caps, centered one-third of page from the top. Text starts two spaces down from title.
        Second page: Header for Story/Chapter title and author's name, top left. Page number top right, starting with 2. The header will automatically repeat the heading and insert the correct sequential page numbers.
        Spacing: Margins one inch all round. Double space text for hard copy; single space for e-books. Indent paragraphs at 6 to 12 spaces. A new scene and passage of time are indicated by a one-line break in the text. The first word of the beginning paragraph and after breaks starts at the left margin.

2. POINT of VIEW: No confusion exists as to which character is thinking, speaking or acting. The POV of each character requires a new paragraph, section, or chapter.

3. GRAMMAR: All aspects of text are correct to avoid distracting the reader, unless dialect is obviously being used intentionally.

4. INTRUSION: "Show, don't tell" avoids getting into the scene when you don't belong there. Adverbs ending in -ly tend to show the author's judgment rather than the character's viewpoint. Author POV: *she walked slowly.* Character POV: *she dragged her feet* or *he saw her walk slowly*.

5) PORTRAYAL: The portrayal matches the situation. A plane crash is described through descriptive action, not through dialogue.

6) REDUNDANCY: Avoid speed bumps by replacing overused, vague words with specifics, e.g. just, really, very, usually, always, never, so, all, some, about, approximately, nearly, almost, try, much, too, big, large, small (to name a few).

7) BREAKING RULES: Creating your own unique style, which may involve breaking rules, is fine as long as the reader is not confused and there is no author intrusion.

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