

**“Write a
short story
every week.
It’s not
possible to
write 52 bad
short stories
in a row.”**

Ray Bradbury
Freedom With Writing

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE SHORT STORY

HOW TO WRITE SHORT STORIES, MICRO FICTION AND FLASH FICTION



SHORT STORIES, FLASH FICTION, AND MICROFICTION HAVE BECOME POPULAR AS QUICK READS FOR PEOPLE WITH A BUSY SCHEDULE. READ ON FOR TIPS ON HOW TO WRITE THEM.

A SHORT STORY IS TYPICALLY LESS THAN 10,000 WORDS, WITH MOST PUBLICATIONS ASKING FOR STORIES UNDER 3,000.

FLASH FICTION LOWERS THE WORD COUNT TO BETWEEN 500 AND 1,000.

MICRO FICTION, ALSO CALLED THE SHORT SHORT STORY, HAS A TOP LIMIT OF 300 WORDS.

JUST BECAUSE IT IS SHORT, DOESN'T MEAN THAT IT CAN BE WRITTEN QUICKLY. PERHAPS MORE THAN IN LONGER FORMS OF FICTION, WORD CHOICE (DICTION) IS PARAMOUNT. TO GET THE EXACT FEELING, IMPRESSION, OR WORD PICTURE IN THE READER'S MIND TAKES POWERFUL WORDSMITHING. MANY WRITERS SPEND DAYS AND EVEN WEEKS PERFECTING A SHORT STORY FOR THE DESIRED IMPACT.

ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS:

ONE INCH MARGINS

LEFT JUSTIFIED

ARIAL FONT, SIZE 13 POINT

DOUBLE SPACED

NAME IN UPPER RIGHT CORNER

TITLE BELOW YOUR NAME

1,000 – 1,500 WORDS

O M G

WHAT DO I DO!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?



EVEN THOUGH SOME STORIES ARE EXTREMELY SHORT, THEY STILL NEED TO HAVE A BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END. IF THEY LACK THESE ELEMENTS, THEY BECOME VIGNETTES, OR PICTURES, INSTEAD OF STORIES. EVERY WORD MUST BE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN TO ENHANCE THE STORY SO ALL UNNECESSARY WORDS MUST BE CUT.

HAVE A CLEAR THEME.

**WHAT IS THE
UNDERLYING MESSAGE
OR STATEMENT BEHIND
THE WORDS?**

**THIS WILL CREATE A
CONNECTION AND LEAVE
MORE MEANING IN THE
MINDS OF YOUR READERS.**



Judgment



Survival



Peace and War



Love



Heroism



Good and Evil



Circle of Life



Suffering



Deception



Coming of Age

- **JUDGEMENT**
- **SURVIVAL**
- **PEACE AND WAR**

- **LOVE**
- **HEROISM**
- **GOOD AND EVIL**

- **CIRCLE OF LIFE**
- **SUFFERING**
- **DECEPTION**

FOCUS

**YOUR STORY'S POINT
IS ITS THEME, A
NARROW SUBJECT
LINE**

**IT'S TEMPTING TO
DIGRESS, BUT IN A 'SHORT'
STORY YOU HAVE TO
FOLLOW THE STRAIGHT
AND NARROW**

START WITH ACTION

**THERE IS NO ROOM IN
THE WORD COUNT FOR
BACKSTORY, SO
BEGINNING THE
NARRATIVE IN THE
MIDDLE OF THE ACTION
WILL HOOK THE
READER**

**GIVE THE STORY
FORWARD MOMENTUM**

**DIALOGUE CAN BE A
GOOD PLACE TO START,
SHOWING AN
IMPORTANT
CONVERSATION OR
EMOTION**

COVER A SHORT TIME SPAN

**IT MAY BE ONE SINGLE
EVENT THAT PROVES
PIVOTAL IN THE LIFE OF
THE CHARACTER**

**THAT EVENT WILL
ILLUSTRATE THE THEME**

RAISE A QUESTION THAT THE READER WILL WANT ANSWERED

**THIS NEEDS TO BE DONE
IMMEDIATELY, RIGHT AT THE
BEGINNING OF THE STORY**

**READERS OF FLASH FICTION
WANT SOMETHING TO READ
QUICKLY, THEREFORE, THEY
NEED TO BE INVESTED IN THE
STORY FROM THE FIRST LINE**

USE ONE FOCAL THEME IN THE STORY

**SINCE THERE IS NO ROOM
FOR SUBPLOTS IN MICRO
OR FLASH FICTION, IT
SHOULD FOCUS ON ONE
THEME OR FEELING**

**IF THE AUTHOR USES ONE
OVERALL FOCAL POINT OR
FEELING, IT WILL GIVE THE
STORY CONTINUITY,
INSTEAD OF IT BEING A
DISJOINTED ACCOUNT**

**THE STORY WILL BE A
SNAPSHOT OF AN EVENT IN
TIME, WITH ALL THE PARTS
FITTING TOGETHER**

DON'T HAVE TOO MANY CHARACTERS

**EACH NEW CHARACTER
WILL BRING A NEW
ELEMENT TO THE
STORY**

**FOR A SHORT STORY TOO
MANY DIFFERENT
DIMENSIONS (OR
DIRECTIONS) WILL
WATER DOWN THE
THEME**

**USE ONLY ENOUGH
CHARACTERS TO
EFFECTIVELY
ILLUSTRATE THE THEME**

MAKE EVERY WORD COUNT

**IF A WORD IS NOT WORKING
TOWARDS GETTING ACROSS
THE THEME AND MOVING THE
STORY ALONG, DELETE IT**

**A LONGER STORY IS NOT
NECESSARILY BETTER**

MAKE THE ENDING A SURPRISE.

THE ENDING IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE BEGINNING. THE ENDING MAY BE A TWIST, A SURPRISE, OR A SHOCK. WHATEVER THE AUTHOR CHOOSES, IT SHOULD BE SOMETHING THAT THE READER WOULD AGREE WAS THE LOGICAL THING TO HAPPEN

EVEN WHEN IT'S A TWIST, IT MUST MAKE SENSE TO THE STORY. THE ENDING SHOULD RESULT IN A PAY OFF TO THE READER FOR STICKING WITH THE STORY ALL THE WAY THROUGH. WHEN THE ENDING TIES UP LOOSE THREADS, ANSWERS QUESTIONS, AND GIVES AN IMPACT, THE READER WILL FEEL SATISFIED

SHORT STORY WRITING TIPS

HAVE A CLEAR THEME.

COVER A SHORT TIME SPAN.

DON'T HAVE TOO MANY CHARACTERS.

MAKE EVERY WORD COUNT.

FOCUS

MAKE THE ENDING A SURPRISE!