

FORESHADOWING

Think of foreshadowing as “breadcrumbs” in a story. Foreshadowing is a literary tool that hints to the reader what is coming later in the narrative. Not the outcome. These literary “breadcrumbs” help create tension, suspense, and curiosity. Using “breadcrumbs” also works great for setting up plot twists. Foreshadowing can be subtle or obvious. How subtle or obvious depends on your writing style and plot.

Remember to give the reader a few breadcrumbs, not the entire loaf.

Several ways to toss out bread crumbs:

Chapter title:	A chapter title can provide the reader with a hint.
Dialogue:	Using the characters’ dialogue is a great way to toss out some breadcrumbs. You can give subtle or obvious hints.
Metaphor or simile:	This is another excellent literary tool to foreshadow.
Changing scene or setting:	A change in scene or setting can hint at something to come.
Character’s behavior:	A change in the character’s behavior can hint to the reader something will happen sooner or later.

FORECASTING

Forecasting is a popular tool used in Omniscient POV writing, but it is the evil twin of foreshadowing and violates limited and Deep POV. Do not do it. Forecasting (foretelling, projecting, or telegraphing) is when you, the writer, tell the reader something important is coming.

This is also the author's intrusion, hooking the reader.

Picture this:

Joe is the POVC. Bad guys stole his 1966 classic Mustang. He finds out where the bad guys hide it and sneaks into a warehouse to recover his car.

Issue:

Joe guessed it was around two in the morning. He stepped out of the shadows and scanned the surroundings. No sounds came from the old warehouse. He wedged the crowbar into the doorjamb and pried the old metal door open. Maybe he should've called the cops. He snuck into the dark warehouse, blinked, and waited for his eyes to adjust. If he knew what would happen next, he would never have gone in.

♠ The last sentence is forecasting and has two issues. First, the sentence violates limited and Deep POV principles. It is the author's intrusion hooking the reader. Second, it is head hopping because Joe does something and the author says/thinks/tells/explains something in the same paragraph.

Fix:

Joe guessed it was around two in the morning. He stepped out of the shadows and scanned the surroundings. No sounds came from the old warehouse. He wedged the crowbar into the doorjamb and pried the old metal door open. Maybe he should've called the cops. He snuck into the dark warehouse, blinked, and waited for his eyes to adjust. His gut tightened and his legs weakened. Maybe coming alone wasn't a good idea. What if the bad guys were inside waiting for him? He tightened his grip on the crowbar and stepped forward.

♠ This example reads better using inner thought instead of forecasting. This reads smoother and eliminates author intrusion.

Other Forms of Forecasting

Forecasting can sneak into writing in other ways, like telling the reader something the character already knows or describing the result before it happens.

Example:

Her voice cracked. "Why did you do that?"

♠ Forecasting is also describing how the character speaks before speaking.

Example:

Sue kneeled and reached for the gun's recoil spring on the floor.

♠ Sue knows nothing about guns, so she cannot know the names of the gun parts. Forecasting also is describing something the character knows nothing of.