

Drafting

“The first draft of anything is shit.”

—Ernest Hemingway

“The beautiful part of writing is that you don’t have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, a brain surgeon.”

—Robert Cormier

What is the best way to draft a story? Pansters start with an idea in their head and bang away at the keyboard not knowing what the next paragraph, scene, or chapter will look like.

Potters will use an outline. They already have a general idea or a sketch of their entire story.

It does not matter if you are a panster or a plotter. There are two common approaches to drafting a story.

Method One:

Method one is the most common approach. A writer analyses every sentence, every paragraph, and every page until it is near perfect. And will not continue writing the story until all the issues are resolved.

This method works for some seasoned writers but it does not work for everyone.

Why?

Not everyone can do detailed multi-tasking. The writer focuses on too

many things at once. Not everyone can wear a creativity, a structure, a technical, and a self-editing cap at the same time.

Everyone is different. You may have more brain power than other writers.

For me, trying to do it right on the first pass slowed my writing and bogged my creativity and imagination. Self-editing as I go slowed my word count per day/week. At times, my writing came to a screeching halt. I spent a lot of time on a sentence, paragraph, or a scene only to rewrite it later.

Method Two

This method is done in two stages and requires a different mindset. Mastering this approach to drafting is difficult at first, but with practice you will learn a new discipline.

Stage 1

Stage 1 is about creativity. Start writing your story and disregard the structure, technical, and self-editing side of writing.

Tasks:

- Put on the creativity cap and write non-stop.
- Focus on the story's essence and nothing else.
- Forget about showing, not telling, adverbs, filter words, and all the other writing principles.
- When you encounter a question, an issue, or need to research something, just add a place marker. Type a brief note about your issue. Bold, red, text stands out.

Finishing your story will depend on your writing discipline and schedule. It might take you days, weeks, months or years.

I am still tempted to stop writing to analyze my last sentence or paragraph, but I am getting better at ignoring those tendencies.

Stage 1 is considered a story summary. It is not even a rough draft but at least the story is complete from start to finish.

The more you write, the cleaner the first draft will be. Your first and second novels will be slow-going, but your third will develop faster. The more you write, the more experience and knowledge you will gain.

Stage 2

At this point your story summary is complete. Stage 2 is about reviewing structure and technical issues. This is a time-consuming process for several reasons. There are a lot of parts you must watch for, but you cannot spot them if you do not know what you are looking for. I am not talking about spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Style and writing craft is what you are perfecting.

Stage 2 is where you look for structure and technical issues. The following section digs deeper of the things you must look for.

In Summary:

Of the two methods, method two approach to drafting has an advantage. Since you are forced on creativity you will finish the story faster. No doubt full of issues but the story is complete.

Spotting plot gaps and other issues is easier with a completed story.