

BUILDING THE ROBUST SCENE

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SCENE CONTENT

What does qualify as a scene?

A Scene is NOT SUMMARY. A Scene is drama in motion – it’s happening beat by beat in time, so that your readers can live it along with your characters.

What does a good scene do?

- Advance story
- Show conflict
- Introduce character
- Develop character
- Create suspense
- Give information
- Create atmosphere
- Develop theme

SCENE STRUCTURE:

Goal → Conflict → Disaster

Reaction → Dilemma → Decision

SCENE COMPONENTS

The elements of a scene

- **Character** - Do we **learn something** new about or improve our understanding of our characters? Are we giving our readers the right amount of “inside information”? Too close, too much? Too little, too distant?
- **Dialogue** – Does the dialogue serve a purpose, isn’t redundant, and sounds right and true to this world and these people?
- **Narrative Description**
 - **Setting:** Can we picture the environment? Do we see just what we need of it and not more? Does the setting help drive the action, establish the mood, support the theme?

- The **Five Senses** plays a big part here: sight, sound, touch, taste and hear. Are they all present? Lead with primary (see, hear), but don't forget the secondary (taste, feel, touch) info.
- **Inner Monologue (“Interiority”)**: Do we get a look at the character's internal thinking? And how they feel about the action taking place? Is there the right amount of interiority for your genre?

Ways to present Interiority:

- Thoughts in italics
- Thoughts *not* in italics
- Narrator Observations (“indirect interiority”)
- Is the **Tone** consistent from previous scenes? Does it adjust according to the action of the scene – for example, if this is a romantic scene, does the mood and word choice support that? Is the writer's **Voice** distinct but not distracting?
- **Summary**. Okay, I lied. Sometimes summary is an integral part of a scene. If summary is included, is the information crucial? Can we understand the scene without it? Is it a quick reminder of events that happened before, or a referral to something from the past that we need to know in order to understand what's happening (backstory or a memory/flashback)?

CRAFT TO ENLIVEN SCENES

1. Plot (Causality)
2. Character bits and pieces
 - Likes, dislikes, wants, desires
 - Motivation
 - Inner Monologue
 - Indirect Interiority
 - Responses: Emotional, Intellectual, Physical
3. Backstory
4. Senses—through your characters POV
5. List sensory details. Shape the according to character's POV
6. Descriptive – pretty, weird, ugly
7. Action words
8. Dialogue