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5 Questions To Ask Before "The End" by @SuzanneBrazil

By Lucy V Hay On October 28, 2015 · [Add Comment](#)



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After a night of readings at a recent writing retreat, I heard the instructor lamenting that writers always ask *"Is it publishable?"* **before** asking, *"Did I get everything I can out of it?"*

She was right. We don't always drill down far enough into the story. As novelists and screenwriters, we all want to be published or produced. As writers, we want to finish something, anything. We want our stuff out in the world.

If we ask the right questions, we'll get better results.

Here are five things you should ask of every sentence, scene, or chapter, before typing "The End":

1) Who is my audience and did I make my point?

Unless you're journaling, everything you write is meant to be read. [Define your audience and what's in it for them.](#) You may have an exciting, action-packed scene, a brilliant monologue, or an emotional flashback; but unless you make someone care, feel, or think, it's just fluff

Once you know who you're aiming your flaming arrow of brilliance at, make sure you hit the target. Find someone new to the material and get their takeaway. If it matches your intention, congrats! But, if not, are you satisfied with their interpretation?

Recap: Define the point you're making, and then make sure your point came across. You don't want to knock anyone unconscious with it (unless that *is* your point).

2) Did I write something true?

[This is the gut-check.](#) Did you scratch the emotional surface or are you hiding behind clever dialogue and window dressing? Dig deeper or it's a wasted opportunity. Did you lay it on the line or are you being a coward? This applies to both comedy and drama.

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Recap: Ask yourself if you have more, ask if it can be stronger, ask if it bares enough. [Go. All. The. Way.](#)

3) Is this sentence, scene, chapter necessary?

[Every famous author as their take on this one.](#) Some make it a personal challenge to cut a certain percentage from a draft. Try one revision just for cutting. Take stuff out. Does it hold together? When the whole has many moving parts, all either add or detract.

Banish the detractors.

Recap: Practice cutting everything. When you think you're done, see if you can get rid of another 10%.



Have you gone ALL the way with your writing?

4) At my current skill level, is this the best I can make it?

Be honest. You know if something clicks or not. If not, do you know how to fix it? Assessing your own ability to meet a challenge is critical to the attempt. [Don't set yourself up for frustration and failure.](#) If you need a refresher or new skills, get busy. Try deconstructing or mirroring a piece you admire. Buy a mentor a

cup of coffee and ask for help. This isn't the time to give up.

Recap: Good enough is sometimes good enough (in the face of a looming deadline), but not always. Know the difference. Always be open to new tools in your tool box.

5) Do I like it/Am I proud of it?

You've answered all the other questions. If the answer to #5 is yes, then send it out. There comes a time when you're done with a piece or it's done with you. Maybe you realise this one isn't an award-winner but you did the best you could. You like it? Send it out.

We all want to see our work published and produced.

Implementing these five questions (or your own version) as part of your routine will help you get the most out of your efforts. When it becomes habit, you'll automatically ask and address them as you write.

Recap: Improve the process and the work improves. Assuming we're submitting, publishing or production will follow. Ask tougher questions, get better answers.



BIO: [Suzanne M. Brazil](#) is a freelance writer and editor living in a recently empty nest in the suburbs of Chicago. Her work has been featured in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Writer's Digest*, *The Chicago Daily Herald* and many local publications. She is a frequent blog contributor and is at work on a novel. Connect with her on Facebook,

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