

# START TO FINISH:

## NOW FOR THE SKIN:

### WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER THIS

Article by: Whitney Rines

You're finally there. You've gone through the hard stuff of building a plan for yourself and your idea, and executing it into a full story. We should be done right? Not at all, we've gotta add the skin...and make sure it's thick too. After all, not all of what this entails is going to be something you like, or even want to do. In this article, we're going to be naming our story, talking about refining and editing, taking that story for a test drive, and talking about how to take criticism and turn it into a good thing. Let's get going.

## Now For The Skin: What Should I Do After This

### Highlights:

- Give your story a name
- Refine and edit
- Taking it for test drive
- Taking criticism and working over it

### Next Article:

### What's It Called: Giving Your Story Its Name

So here we are. That moment where you've become the proud parent of a new story. This is nothing to sneeze at, you created something epic, entirely off a single or couple ideas you had. It was hard work so Congratulations! You'd think you're finally done at this point but, there's still more work to do. You gotta name it. Yeah, plenty of us name our stories right when we begin writing them. There's nothing wrong with this but, you have to take into consideration that as you work, the story changes. It evolves, and the name you gave it at the beginning, likely doesn't do it justice anymore. This is pretty normal since you watched, and participated in shaping that story. Your ideas and writing probably switched track a dozen different times, and may have even ended up in an ending location you didn't even plan on. Don't panic. This is only another stepping stone to helping your story grow, and it's a good thing. It's just like naming a child, except you gave that child their characteristics and life story. You want to take into consideration the personality of your book, this is something you want to take your time with because some flare in a name is a good thing. When naming a story in my own personal experiences, I take a step back from it, and try to think about what the key part of it is. What is something you'd be grabbed by in a book title?

For example: in any bookstore, you pick up a book and see the title. It's either interesting or it's not and that determines whether or not you open it and read a little bit, or check out the synopsis on the back. The title is the very first contact you get with a book so, its name should reflect the book's best quality. It's not really difficult but, it does take time to pick out what that best aspect is. You also don't want the title to be too long. Short and sweet, with words most people have seen before.

### **Putting on the Skin: Refine and Editing**

So here's where that enduring spirit of patience and stubbornness you've been cultivating all this time, comes into action. Those abilities known simply as the "love of reading" and "the ability to handle monotony". These two things are very important to the refining and editing process, in fact they are the main parts of it. I will be totally honest, you will read that story a lot...and I mean a lot over this process. You'll know it like you know all the songs in your favorite musical or movie. This story may frustrate or even annoy you by the time you're done. Personally, I have stories I could live without reading ever again, I've done this process so many times. That doesn't mean I don't love them...just that I'm excited to write a new book when I finish my work on the previous one. So back on track, I'm going to break these two all important steps down even though it's totally obvious what they mean.

**Refine:** reading your story and adding or subtracting things that may fit in better there.

**Editing:** The process of combing through the story to find any errors and, yep you guessed it, fixing them up only to go through it many more times, and do the same thing.

By the time you finish, you'll likely have done these over a dozen times before it's right. I don't mean right as in textbook style, but when it feels right to you. Or at least right enough. This is a very monotonous task, but somehow it manages to be fun...probably because it's you getting to redesign what you've created, and make it blossom even more. If that inspires you, great you're on your way to the land of re-reading and corrections. If it doesn't however, maybe the editing process of making that story sparkle like fresh snow will get you going. The only other thing I could think of to inspire this process to get started, is you taking it as a personal challenge, or turning the process into a goal to reach. Any of these are excellent motivators, and as long as you can get started...you can finish. As an aside though, never work yourself to burnout. You need to give your mind time to reset and recover from this massive task, or your story might start haunting you to finish it. I've had that happen.

### **Hairy and Scary: Taking it for a Test Drive**

This part is very important to the Refine and Edit process, whether you do it before or afterwards. This is where you have people that you trust, and may even be friends with read your work. It's nail-biting time because you've worked hard on this story, and now you're introducing it to a small group of readers who have never seen it before. It's time for the opinions to roll in, and with opinions being like hair-where not everybody has the best kind. So you're sure to get some soul-crushing answers about your story. Don't worry, this happens but it shouldn't stop you from handing it to other people to read. This will get you more comfortable with talking about your book to others. A lot of people are more likely to be interested in the fact that you wrote a book, than to trash it right off the bat. Ignore those assholes. You may want to hear only the praise for your super awesome book but, the truth is you need the criticism just as much. That's something that helps you out in the long run.

### **This May Sting A Little: Taking Criticism and Working With It**

Here comes that part that nobody likes, no matter what you do. Criticism. You can't escape it no matter what profession you have, and it's not always constructive but it's still valuable. In writing it's of extreme value. Whether it's negative or positive feedback, it still means you got feedback on what you worked hard on. When someone criticizes your work, as people are likely to do after reading it, they are giving you their opinion of what they thought. Here is a golden opportunity to ask questions that you wouldn't be able to ask yourself. Questions like:

- What did you like or dislike about it?
- How did the flow work for you?
- Can you tell me what you think can be improved...why?
- How about (XYZ)? Did you feel like you could connect to the characters?

They may also just tell you straightforward what they felt could have been better. Take this criticism in stride and don't let it get you down. After all, you showed your book to several people so your pool of response would be decent. If the same thing comes up a lot, then consider reworking it. If it's just one person's opinion however, maybe take a look and highlight it for review anyway. You may find you like something else as an alternative. Let's deal with that negative criticism now, the type where it's destructive rather than constructive. These people seem to have nothing but bad things to say about your story after reading it...if they read it at all. It's very important to take their opinion in stride if they are few and far in-between. As long as they are not the majority, you should be fine. Though you should take into consideration their complaints, you shouldn't feel bullied by

their words. The truth is that not everybody will like your work but, there are over 7 billion people on this planet and it's highly unlikely that every last one of them isn't going to like what you've written. So don't worry about those who give you trash answers for inept reasons, take the criticism serious of those who have given you constructive feedback and go back to your story. Look at it, add things in without erasing your original bit, and see how it compares. You might just be surprised. So don't fear criticism, use it to make your story stronger and flourish more. Every writer could use a little outside help after all.

*The next article and final article is a little advice about exposing your work to the world and to yourself. Being outside your safe space and still making the story thrive. **Dressing Up: Taking Critiques, Reviews, and Criticism***

Love to see you there,

Whitney Rines