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## **The writer's computer: Part 3**

Writers log long hours in front of computers and, as such, need chairs that will work with their backs to save them from fatigue and strain. So what should you look for when buying a new chair?

- Make sure that your chair is the right height (or is adjustable). Ideally, your thighs should be horizontal with the floor and both of your feet should be flat on the floor.
- The seat pan should allow your weight to be evenly distributed. Ensure that the front of the seat is rounded: a sharp edge can cut off circulation.
- The back should be adjustable to provide support for the lumbar area. It is best to have your back slightly reclined when you are sitting at your desk.

## **Fixing plot holes**

We all know a plot hole when we see one: even though fiction creates alternate realities and worlds for the reader to visit, those realities must have some kind of internal logic to allow us to suspend our disbelief and enjoy them. When something interrupts that logic, the illusion is shattered, leaving readers unhappy and frustrated.

The most common problems of this kind include characters acting “out of character” without any explanation or inexplicable events. As an author, you can never cheat your readers like this. “Red herrings” are fine, but deliberate misinformation is not. Never withhold information that the reader will logically need to follow the story, either.

You will have lived with your characters for months as you wrote your book. In draft after draft, you will refine their personalities, motivations, and reactions to events. But as the book goes through several revisions, be careful not to leave important details “on the cutting room floor.” Also, don’t leave your readers frustrated by wanton stupidity on the part of your characters. For example, if a logical person would use a phone to warn someone of danger, if that’s not going to happen, there has to be a reason.

Here are some plotting tips:

- Outline your plot before you start filling in story details. Leaps of logic or problems with motivation can stick out here.
- Know your characters well: think of the book as a visit with them, the events you are writing about as only part of their ongoing lives. This will help you to keep them consistent.
- Set up: introduce your characters, the setting, their concerns and problems. But think about how to draw the reader in right away.
- Dramatic tension: set up problems for your characters. Make the payoff worth the wait. Stretch the action with various obstacles, thoughts, and dialogue. What is the worst thing that could happen to this person in this situation?
- Know your material: think about your characters' lives, motivations, and activities. Do your research if you are writing about a kind of person, place, or occupation, for example, that's far removed from your own. Then, tuck the research away so it doesn't show.
- Conflict: it's always trouble that moves a plot forward. If you have an idea for a story or a novel, sum it up, then figure out how each character gets from point A to point B. Use index cards to sum up scenes, put them in order, move them around. Know what would happen if character X did something to character Z, and what would happen if they didn't.
- Sub-plots: Just as in real life we are never really doing or thinking about one thing at a time, so too in fiction: minor characters might come to the forefront briefly, to provide a distraction, to move the plot forward, to give the main character time to do something else while the reader waits. Sub-plots can help with the impression that this book is merely looking through a window into these people's lives.



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