

## On Writing SFPs

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In essence, writers' (published or aspiring) view those in the world of medicine, science or law as a higher level of intelligence. Naturally I speak generally, but from my own experience I find a career as a writer raises more eyebrows than it does praise to the tongue, than those in deemed admirable fields of work. However, the Creative Science movement, because it is indeed a movement – new and bettering the world – bridges the path between these two worlds which had previously been pockmarked with holes for ignorance and distaste. The concept of SFPs (science fiction prototypes) is a pacifying way of moving forward within two different worlds. I personally could not tell anyone how to create an electronic circuit, despite a rudimentary teaching in Physics, but I could help anyone find a synonym of a word in less than ten seconds. Different skills, different areas, but both contain a worth which is only intensified when joined together. The world of literature, though more abstract than that of concrete facts, contains a system which can be learned and put into practice, like a template of sort. Often, from a writer's point of view, none of the techniques are consciously implemented and usually flow like silk over glass. In my opinion, this fluidity can be taught through clarity and step-by-step reminders.

I have several friends, future doctors and engineers, who claim 'they could not write a story' which is relevant when you consider the fact that most people's initial problem is developing a plot. A simple way of imagining with an idea with a futuristic base is to use your technological language. This is the one point in writing this SFP that you will be able to entertain a great deal of *gadget language* so I would suggest drawing on it in depth. Consider what is impossible? Logically you know that if you link wire X to wire Y you cannot possibly end with a bracelet that detects cancer cells three and a half seconds after their evolution, right? Well imagine a world where it is possible, because writing simply isn't logical, and that is key. What would the weather look like in such a world? Would the school system be the same? How different would you be at the age of nineteen, twenty or fifty if you lived in a world where such inventions were as real as airplanes are to us now? The likelihood is that you will need a methodology so map it out. Your work does not have to be ordered at first, or even just before you revise what you've done. Writing is relatively chaos based so it is perfectly okay to dabble in the world of disorganised creativity at first. Create a word map, brainstorm, or simply a scattering of words to think. Whatever works for you is the correct path to take.

Every story, even bad ones, has one component which transcends the details of imagery, dialogue and tone – a character. Of course your story will more than likely have more than one character, depending on length. If you are working on a microfiction, I suggest that you introduce one character, two at most; where as a short story can have any number! But remember, that you must only have a max of three main people to move your plot; otherwise a reader will lose interest very quickly. The key to making an interesting character is not their hair colour, or knowing when their birthday is – though that won't hurt

to know - it is the finer details which are personal. Think of the things that you yourself would not tell strangers. You may share your star sign or your favourite song, but would you really share how much you are attracted to people with freckles, or would you tell of the mole you had removed at the age of seven that left a scar shaped like a strawberry? Once you know those details, find another character which your protagonist might just trust enough to tell those details, and another they might fear enough to hold those secrets tight to their chest. Vulnerability and strength should be a push and pull, not explicitly obvious throughout the story.

A vital, but often, overlooked fact is how to implicate your own 'voice'. Voice can roughly be defined as the way you tell your story to a reader. Are you animated and full of gestures? Or are you direct, always maintaining eye contact? No human is devoid of feeling, or personality, so this is where you pour some of your own blood into your character and story. If you, yourself in real life use quirky words or speech literally and misunderstand sarcasm frequently, then drop it into your story. Just a flick of personality here and a droplet of the unique there make all the difference. Work yourself in in moderation, and the uniqueness of your voice will translate to a smooth thread, looping your story consistently.

Admittedly sentence length, as a topic, does sound innately boring, but it cannot be ignored. It's rather like when learning a new language one must grapple with the pronouns and adjectives before sentences come to life. There is no particular rule of thumb for sentence length, but you will know from your own reading that if an author uses consistently long sentences, things get weary. Your brain simply cannot focus for that long. While it may be fiction, you are taking in facts relevant to the story and facts take brain power. The key is to let the reader take in your work without feeling like it is taking an exhaustive amount of energy. To achieve this, your sentence length needs to mirror and work with, your plot. For example, if you are writing pages upon pages of action you need medium length sentences littered with short, well punctuated statements. Observe;

*The knife that the king threw seemed to move painfully slowly, inch by inch moving towards the mental-clad knight, it did not slice to air, but embrace it. Soon after, it embraces the knight's chest, nestling there.*

Note how clearly the second sentence is just shorter than the one beforehand. You may not notice this consciously while reading but it creates a pace, introduces tone and moves plot, efficiently. I appreciate the difficulty involved in incorporating each of these techniques consciously – it would be like me making a conscious decision to wear glasses before approaching an electron microscope – obvious to some, obscure to others. The difference it will make to any story you approach to write, SFP or not, will be invaluable as it will transform you from person-with-a-pen, to a writer.

The methodologies which I have explained are nothing more than essential tools in any writer's toolbox. They need to be frequently honed and executed. While keeping the phrase *practice makes perfect* in mind, remember that there is nothing as imperfect as the art of writing, so embrace the illogical nature of the work. Try not to place barriers in front of yourself. Those self-induced limitations are the most difficult to overcome, but more worthwhile than tethering the side of caution, especially when words can be rewritten, edited and revised.