

A blurred background image of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The person's head is visible in profile on the left, looking down at the keyboard. The laptop is open, and the keyboard is visible. The overall tone is warm and focused.

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# WRITE YOUR OWN MYSTERY

GUIDE TO WRITING A  
CAROLE MARSH MYSTERY

GALLOPADE

# THE BEGINNING



Start your story with a strong first sentence! Make the reader want to read your book!

Use the first sentence and paragraph to “invite” the reader into your book. If they like what they read here, they will keep reading!

You can start a book right in the middle of the “action.” [He opened the door of the haunted house and walked right in.]



You can start a book by setting the mysterious mood or tone of the book. [It was a dark and stormy night. The thunder boomed and lightning zigzagged every which a way.]

Use the first chapter to set the “setting” of your real place. Make it come alive in your reader’s mind by describing it vividly. [The old mansion had 250 rooms. Each one had a mouse.]





# IN-TRO-DUCING!...

Use the first chapter to introduce your characters. Give their name and age. You can add descriptions later, if you wish. [Ginny was 13 and had freckles on her nose. John, only 8, was taller than us all.]

Have you thought your story through, or are you writing it as you go along? Either way is ok. Just try to have a beginning (start the story), a middle (where a lot of the action is), and an end (it can be short, but where all is resolved and figured out and explained).

Here are the kinds of writing techniques you might use:

● **Expository**

writing=just telling the story=We were just walking along minding our own business when a ghost jumped out at us!

● **Dialogue**=letting the characters talk=  
"We were just walking along minding our own business, when a ghost jumped out at us!"  
Amanda said.

● **Thinking**=when a character thinks thoughts in their head=I wonder what would happen if we were just walking along and a ghost jumped out at us, Amanda thought to herself.

*Remember, you can use all three kinds of writing in your book!*



# KEEP MOVIN'!



In chapters 2, 3, and 4, you want to keep your story moving along.



## Tip!

Write a short outline of your story on a separate piece of paper so you can have a "plan" to follow.

## Character

**development:** Give each of your "real" characters a different personality. Perhaps one is silly and funny, one is serious, one is a big grouch, one is a real scaredy cat! Over the course of your story, they might change, which is how they "develop" depending on what happens in the story.

## Character description:

You don't have to describe everything about a character. If you say a character is a bookworm, the reader will picture a serious, smart, quiet person. If you describe a character as wild, the reader will picture someone a little crazy and out of control.

**Place description:** You can describe your "real" location best by using just a few special words. Readers can picture what run down, dark and forbidding, or covered in snaky vines looks like.





# THE PLOT THICKENS!

**Action!:** Keep your story moving along. Let the characters keep moving, keep clues coming, help everything lead to the resolution of your mystery by the end of Chapter 5.

**The mystery?:** Do you know what your mystery is? Keep it simple. Drop hints and clues. Give “red herrings” (things that may make the reader think one thing is true when another thing is really the truth.) “Foreshadow” by giving hints of what might happen.

## Mysterious words you might like to use:

vanish, skull, curse, skeletal, stark, magical, invisible, ghost, creepy, eerie, tombstone, secret, goblin, nightmare, kidnap, graveyard.

**Clues:** You can use clues in your mystery. Your characters can find them anywhere. Keep them short. Each clue should be a “hint” to help solve the mystery.

**The protagonist:** That’s a word that just means “the good guys”—in your book, your “real” characters. They are the kids the mystery is happening to.

**The antagonist:** This is the bad guy or gal (the villain) in the mystery. He or she can be a nice-looking person just as much as a mean-looking, evil person.

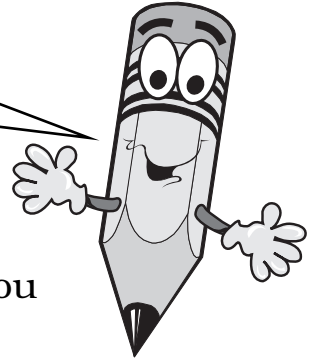


# FINISHING UP!



You can add a “trick” ending, if you like.  
[Grant was so glad the mystery was over. There was no ghost after all. But as he walked away from the spooky house, an invisible hand moved the curtain.]

I can hardly wait to read your book!



Now, your story is finished! If you would like to, you can “edit” your story and make any changes.

When you are finished with your story, you may want to try it out on a “reader.”

Perhaps you can swap books with a classmate. They could write a book review about your mystery! You can do the same for theirs. Tell what you liked and what you think could be better. Use this information to improve your mystery book writing. [That’s what I do!]

The  End

