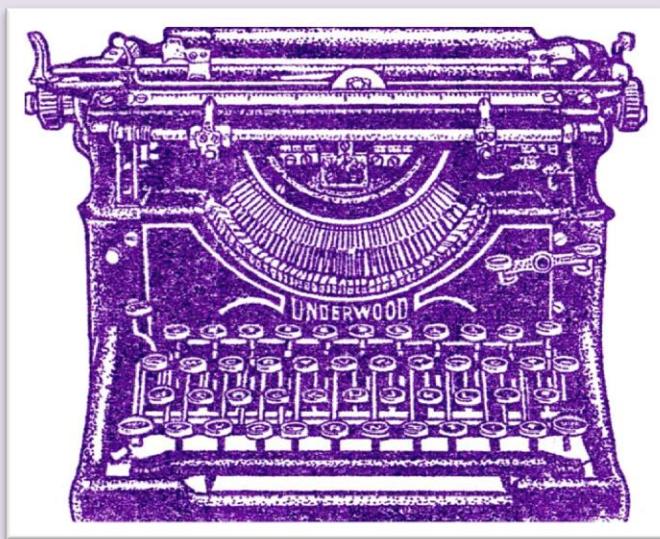


# How to Write the First Draft of a Short Story in 60 Minutes or Less!



Learn the Fast Fiction  
Technique

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**You don't need to know the story when you start writing. You write to discover the story. Just begin.**

## Introduction

I used to fill notebooks with fragments of ideas for stories. I'd jot down one line summaries of plots, bits of dialogue, descriptions of characters, or scenes. Then time would pass and when I eventually reread these random scrawls I couldn't remember why I'd been so excited about the idea in the first place.

The problem was I was letting too much time go by and that first spark of inspiration was getting extinguished. But I often didn't have enough time to write a full draft. Clearly, I had to do something though. My notebooks were starting to look like graveyards for story ideas.

And so I developed the Fast Fiction technique. It was a way for me to take that initial spark of inspiration and develop it into a rough draft of a short story in an hour or less!

Before we get started I want to explain what I mean by a rough draft and how it differs from a first draft. Think of it this way: a rough draft is like a

sketch, whereas a first draft is like a drawing. A rough draft doesn't have every word of the short story in it, like a first draft does. In a rough draft you discover who is in your story, where it takes place and some (but probably not all) of what happens. A rough draft is your starting point. It is where you first commit your story to the page and begin to develop it.

When I started using the Fast Fiction technique I began finishing far more short stories. I've also found this technique useful for writing essays, blog posts and articles. It has even helped me outline novels. I encourage you to experiment with it and make it your own.

All your potential awaits you on the white page. Do  
not hesitate – write.

## How This Works

In the next section I am going to give you a series of writing exercises to do. Some require you to jot down only a few words, some require a sentence, and for others you'll write several paragraphs. I often create my rough drafts using a timer, so I've provided suggested time limits. Try to do each exercise as quickly as possible without thinking too much. You're trying to bypass your inner critic and directly access your creativity. Moving fast allows you to do that. Your Muse like speed. Don't worry about spelling or punctuation. We're only concerned with generating ideas and getting words down at this point.

**Write first drafts quickly. The Muse loves speed and  
favours the fearless.**

I prefer to write in longhand. There is something about my hand moving across the page that helps my creativity flow, but if you prefer writing on a computer, please do so. What matters most is that you are writing.

**And one last thing: there is no wrong way to do this.**

When your fingers can't keep up with your words, you  
know you're on the right track.

### Rough Draft In Zero to Sixty

1. Describe your story in one sentence. (1 min)
2. Make of list of 5-10 words that describe the mood of your story. (2 min)
3. Describe the main character. Who is telling this story or who is this story about? (10 min)

4. Describe the setting of the story. Where does the story take place? Indoors? Outdoors? On this planet? Try to use all your senses when you describe it, not just your sight. Your story will probably have more than one setting, but stick to describing the main one, or the most important one for now. (10 min)

5. Every story needs a conflict. What is the problem that needs to be solved in your story? (5 min)

6. Describe a second character. (5 min)

7. Write a scene in dialogue between your main character and this second character. (10 min)

8. What happens in this story? Write the plot in point form.

Don't worry if you don't know the ending yet. (10 min)

9. Write the first paragraph. (5 min)

10. Make a list of 3-5 possible titles for the story. (2 min)

Congratulations. You did it! You have a rough draft! But what exactly do you have?

**Writing is the best writing teacher.**

## What You've Got

The most important thing you've got is words on paper (or saved on your computer). This is way better than just having a vague idea floating around in your head or a languishing fragment in a notebook. You've just taken the most important step in actually writing a short story.

Broken down, you now know a bit about your story. You know who the main character is, and who, at least, one of the other characters is. You've got a conflict, or you know what is at stake. This is a seriously big step, many stories sputter out at this crucial point. Without a conflict there is no drama to develop. You also know the general arc of the story.

*(Hint: Don't worry if you are not clear on all these things at this stage. You've made a start which is the most important thing. My stories often start off vague, like I am trying to remember a dream and slowly they come into focus with each consecutive draft. Also don't worry if things change as you keep*

*working on your story. That's normal, too.)*

At this point you've got a:

**A Road map of the story**

- **#10 (Title)**
- **#1 (One Sentence Summary of Story)**
  - **#2 (Mood of Story)**
  - **#5 (Conflict)**
  - **#8 (Plot Outline)**

You've also got an:

**An Outline of the story**

- **#9 (First Paragraph)**
- **#3 (Description of Protagonist)**
  - **#4 (Setting)**
  - **#6 (Second Character)**
  - **#7 (Scene in Dialogue)**

**Write with the curiosity of an explorer, the courage of a  
warrior and the compassion of an angel.**

## **What Happens Next?**

After writing your rough draft you can either start on a first draft right away or wait a few days. Sometimes creating a rough draft is like planting a seed. You may need to give your story time to sprout. Other times, writing a rough draft is like building a fire and you want to touch a match to it right away to get it burning.

**Forget what everyone else will think. Write to  
please your 95-year-old self.**

Whichever approach you take I hope you continue to work on your story, through draft after draft, until it is finished because you are the only person who can write it. You are the only person who can breathe life into these characters and situations.

And I want to read your story.

Happy Writing!

*Lori*



For more inspiration, or to sign up for my newsletter, visit:

[www.loriannbloomfield.com](http://www.loriannbloomfield.com)

Lori Ann Bloomfield is author of the novel, "The Last River Child" (Second Story Press). She has published dozens of short stories, poems and essays in literary journals in Canada and the USA. When not at her desk writing, she teaches writing, coaches writers and practices yoga.