

Sample Short Story Writing Checklist

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Short story writing task: After reading *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon, write a short story from the perspective of an individual with a disability so readers get an inside impression of his or her thoughts, feelings, emotions, and struggles. Use this checklist to guide you while writing.

General

- My title is original or creative.
- I structure new paragraphs appropriately.
- I show awareness of task, purpose, and audience.

Story Elements and Narrative Techniques

- My beginning engages readers; a central conflict sets my story in motion.
- I introduce the narrator and characters and establish a point of view and setting.
- I sequence the events in a logical order. If I use multiple plotlines, flashbacks, or flash-forwards, readers can follow the story line.
- My dialogue is purposeful because it moves the plot forward by revealing feelings, interactions between characters, reactions to setting or events, and so forth.
- My story is well paced and developed.
- I build suspense to create tension that entices readers.
- My ending resolves the central conflict and answers questions readers might have.

Sentence Structure and Transitions

- My writing doesn't include run-on sentences or fragments.
- I include appropriate and varied transitions to connect sentences so my writing flows.
- I also use transitions to show sequence and connect paragraphs. (Example: *After Marshall awoke on the third day of exile, life didn't seem as daunting. Until then, the situation was insurmountable.*)
- I vary my sentence beginnings and use different sentence patterns for rhythm and stylistic effect.

Description

- I use precise words and phrases, figurative language, and vivid details to describe events, settings, and characters.
- I use strong verbs in dialogue tags along with descriptions of reactions, gestures, and movements only as needed, not overdone.
- I use dialect, as appropriate, to signify geographical regions, era, social status, and so on.

Voice

- My writing maintains a consistent first person point of view from the perspective of a character.
- I use tone appropriately to convey an attitude or perspective of a character. In doing so, I demonstrate awareness of the character and situations, interactions, motivations, and so forth that affect him or her.

Grammar and Conventions

- I have correct grammar and usage.
- I check mechanics for accuracy—spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
- My paper is formatted correctly with proper margins, headings, and font style, color, and size. If I handwrite, it's legible.