

8-Step Process for a Solid Scene

Worksheet

#1. Identify the Purpose of the Scene. In one sentence, explain what you intend to accomplish with this scene:

#2. Identify the High Moment. What is the key moment your scene is going to build toward? Describe in one sentence what will happen and why it's important to your story:

#3. Conflict: Inner and Outer. Describe the inner and outer conflict that will permeate this scene and what this conflict will accomplish:

#4. How Your Character Changes by the End of the Scene. Describe how your character will change by the end of the scene. Explain how this change helps advance your plot and/or complicates things for your character:

#5. Determine the POV. Who is the best character to experience this scene in POV. Why? Be sure that every line in your scene reflects the voice and mind-set of the POV character.

#6. Leave Out the Boring Stuff. Go through your finished first draft and eliminate boring sections. Work on both a macro and micro (words) level.

If you have a lot of backstory, distill down to a line or two. Take out lines of description of character or setting that reveal nothing that matters.

If your scene has dialogue, look for extraneous speech tags you can delete. Ensure your narrative tags are helpful and revealing (instead of phrases like “she sipped her coffee”).

#7. Work on Your Beginning and Ending Hooks. Spend time making the opening of your scene engaging. Aim on starting your scene in the middle of something happening and stay in the present action to quickly build to the climax.

End at or right after your high moment with a strong hook that will make your readers dive right into the next scene.

#8. Add in Texture and Sensory Details. Be sure the first paragraphs of your scene establish the setting. Think about weather, time of day, time of year, sights, smells, sounds, the feel of the air or room, lighting. Include details that will help transport your readers into your story.

Each new character stepping “on stage” in your scene needs to be described through your POV character’s eyes.

Choose intriguing settings that will add texture to your scene, where possible. Try to avoid defaulting to placing your characters in restaurants and coffee shops. List the places and characters you’ll need to describe in your scene: