



Step 3: Develop Characters

By identifying a character's personality type, strengths, and preferences, you'll sense how each fictional person approaches life, such as romantic relationships, career choices, and friendships.

Invest in Developing Your Characters

This step helps you develop characters who give readers a rich mixture of realistic behaviors and emotions.

- Like best-selling authors, you can create fictional people who linger in the minds of audiences long after your story ends.
- Through story characters, you help readers discover how people change to overcome life's challenges.
- With dynamic characters, you can engage readers in ways that shape the lives of young and old.

However, this requires finesse.

- People sense whether a character's emotions and behaviors portray realistic reactions to plot events.
- Poorly written or underdeveloped characters can lead to critical reviews and lost sales.

Learn how top writers develop believable characters and create fictional people who leap from the pages of your novel.

Development Tools Reduce Frustrations

You can reduce your writing frustrations by using the tools in this lesson to speed up character development.

For example:

- Create **Character Profiles** that define the story roles.
- Identify **Character Types** and their realistic traits and behaviors.
- Use the **Development Levels** to show changes in behaviors.
- Build **Character Arcs** that show a character's transformation.
- Determine the **Point of View** (POV) to clarify who controls the scene.
- Plan **Story Stakes** so readers care what happens to characters.

Use these tools to increase the likelihood readers will:

- Empathize with your characters, and
- Engage with your story.

Develop Interesting & Relatable Characters

The creation of interesting and relatable characters is no small feat.

This step guides your efforts, including the creation of characters' personalities, histories, and motivations. For example:

- Top writers go beyond physical appearances and introduce the inner person to readers.
- The audience wants to know about a character's attributes and backstories that drive thoughts, choices, words, and actions.
- However, character development is a balancing act. For instance, too much information, too few details, and too many characters can cause readers to lose interest and start skimming.

The nine character types guide your writing of realistic traits, behaviors, and emotions.

A Step-by-Step Approach to Develop Characters

In the course, the workbook and worksheet distill character development into five steps.

1. Identify the **Character Type** by pairing descriptions of characteristics from two tables.
2. Familiarize yourself with each type by reviewing the traits and behaviors shown in the **Character Type Descriptions**.
3. Select one of the nine **Character Development Levels** to introduce key characters to readers.
4. Complete the **Character Snapshot** section of the profile.
5. Add details to each **Character Profile** as your story unfolds.

Discover What Bestselling Authors Know

A mistake writers often make is basing their characters on the cliched roles often found in TV, films, and books.

In contrast, top writers:

- Find fresh ways to present characters who react to plot events with realistic thoughts, choices, conversations, and actions.
- They also create detailed profiles of characters to ensure consistency in names, personalities, and backstories.
- They follow principles, not rules, to make sure characters prove interesting and relatable.

Use the development tools in this lesson to create authentic and interesting characters who engage readers with realistic behaviors and emotions.

Avoid Developing Characters Readers Dislike

You can avoid disappointing readers by developing characters who engage readers at a visceral level.

Also, audiences want fictional people that fit within their expectations of their preferred genres.

Increase the appeal of your characters by using the techniques of top authors.

- The characters in bestsellers often struggle with external problems and internal needs.
- In most stories, the hero goes through a process of inner change to overcome the story's external problem.
 - First, the hero must discover what needs to change within to solve the external problem.
 - Next, the hero goes through try-and-fail cycles while learning how to make that inner change.

- Finally, after several tries, the character ultimately succeeds or fails, dependent on your vision for the story's ending.

Way Forward

Develop characters who leap from the pages of your novel to engage readers.

How?

- Give readers characters they want to know more about.
- Let the traits and behaviors of your characters shape the content and trajectory of your story.
- Create detailed character profiles to ensure the consistency of names, descriptions, traits, and behaviors.

Familiarize yourself with the materials that come with this lesson. Then read this step's workbook and complete the Character Template for each essential cast member.