

The Busy Writer's Book of Checklists

Checklist 7 – Setting

| Aspects of Setting | Your Assessment | | |
|--|-----------------|------------|------|
| | Works Well | Needs Work | Poor |
| Have you created a believable, interesting setting that interests the reader without boring them with long descriptions? | | | |
| Does your physical background evoke the right atmosphere and mood for your scene? (Note that the same background can look idyllic or threatening, depending on the weather, time of year, time of day, and mood of the viewpoint character.) | | | |
| Have you carefully chosen small details of the setting to bring it to life? (Technology in a hospital; expressions on the faces of staff, peeling wallpaper in a neglected house.) | | | |
| Have you gone overboard on the description because you don't want your research to go to waste? (Tighten it up. Use only details that the viewpoint character would (a) notice or (b) care about...if the viewpoint character doesn't see it, it doesn't count.) | | | |
| If your setting is brooding and threatening, have you got just enough to set the mood, but not so much it tips over into melodrama? (Too much, and your book can become farcical.) | | | |
| Have you used words that will evoke images in the reader's mind so they do a lot of the work in filling in details themselves? | | | |
| If your story is set in a specific geographic region or a real town, have you got the details right? (Flora, fauna, city streets, small towns, roads, airports etc. - unless you made up the town.) | | | |
| Have you researched the details of any background/setting that requires specialist knowledge? (Technology, weapons, terrorism, careers & jobs, antiques, cars, planes, etc.) | | | |
| If one or more of your main characters has a demanding job, have you given a realistic portrayal of the time needed to do this job? (e.g. Don't have your male lead the CEO of a multi-national company if you need to show him being available to the heroine at all times of the day.) | | | |
| Have you blended in details of professional settings (and convincing dialogue related to the profession) without boring the reader with too much jargon? | | | |
| Have you used Google maps or search engine capabilities to 'visit' countries, cities, houses, venues, etc.? (E.g. use accommodation directories to look inside rooms in hotels, to research lives of the rich and famous, and so on.) | | | |
| Have you got a handy research file to refresh your memory about your setting and background? (Have photos/brochures on hand or browser windows open; keep a setting information sheet beside you.) | | | |
| Do you vary the setting in different scenes, to maintain interest and give the impression that your characters are on the move? | | | |
| Have you got too many different locales and settings, so the reader constantly has to learn about somewhere new? | | | |
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