

SIX MAGIC WORDS
RWA National workshop presented by Susan Elizabeth Phillips
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(Not to be reproduced.)

KEEP THE READER IN THE STORY: The Six Magic Words that lead to publishing success.

\$\$\$ = “Million Dollar Tip” A concrete method of making the theoretical practical

What are our goals?

Write the compelling book, not the perfect book.

Focus on the Six Magic Words to produce a great book:

Keep the reader in the story.

What elements can make a book a bestseller?

- Riveting plot
- Care so much about characters we don't want to part from them
- Author takes us into an unfamiliar world
- Author's voice

4 TIPS TO KEEP THE READER IN THE STORY

TIP #1: KEEP THE READER IN THE STORY BY MASTERING GOOD CRAFT

- What takes reader out of the story? Poor grammar, awkward sentence structure, repetitive words and phrases, etc.
- Know the difference between external and internal conflict
- Understand internal vs. external dialogue
- Have a basic understanding of POV (without going nuts about it.)

People with good craft can break the rules. If you don't have a solid grounding in craft, you probably can't.

TIP #2: KEEP THE READER IN THE STORY BY CREATING DAZZLING CHARACTERS

5 Keys to Great Characters

- Sympathetic but not perfect
- Realistic, but still larger than life
- Well motivated
- Develop and Grow through the story
- Strong, Individual Voices

\$\$\$ Million Dollar Tip—Checking in on your characters

TIP #3: KEEP THE READER IN THE STORY BY WRITING A FAST MOVING PLOT (Well, duh... Leave out the boring parts!)

HOW TO:

- Handle prologues

Flashbacks

\$\$\$ Million Dollar Tip—Making flashbacks seamless

- Seamless use of research
- Make descriptions count
- Use internal dialogue.
- Tell, not show

\$\$\$ Million Dollar Tip—Creating chapter breaks that keep the reader in the story

Subplots: Envision a smaller box within a bigger box. That's subplot.

- Starts after the main plot and is resolved before the main plot
- Beginning, middle, and end
- Relates to main plot. At some point they come together.
- Complicates things for hero and heroine

\$\$\$ Million Dollar Tip—Handling Subplots

Six Magic Words (Phillips)

TIP #4: KEEP THE READER IN THE STORY BY WRITING INTO YOUR STRENGTHS, NOT JUST THE MARKET

Don't get brainwashed by what's hot in the market.

Feedback helps you identify your strengths

Use critique groups carefully

- What are person's biases?
- Not all feedback is right. Trust your gut
- Don't be pigheaded stubborn

Martha Beck in O Magazine: *“Successful writers show up at the blank page. What makes them writers is not the instant excellence but the sheer dumb repetition of showing up.”*