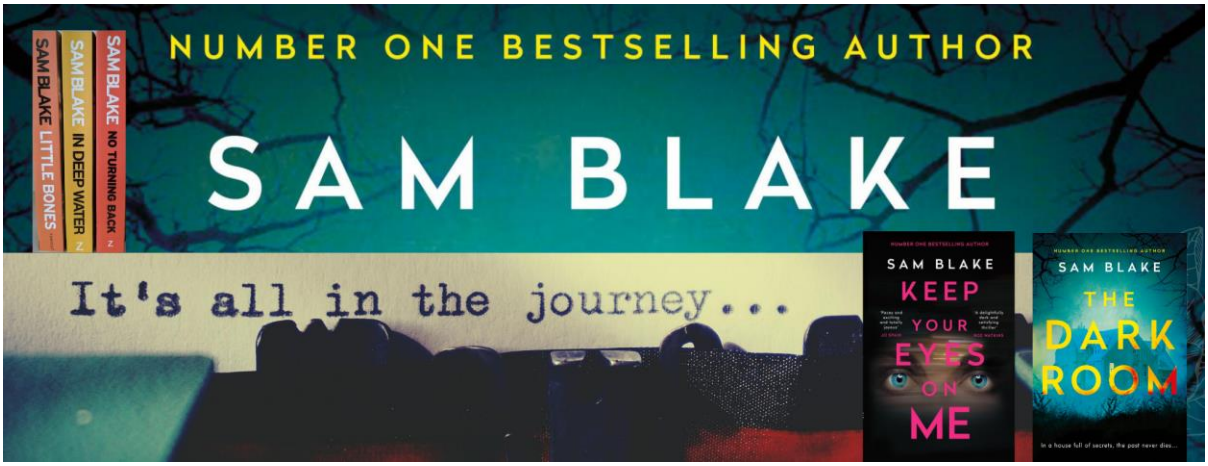


## Your Second Draft

First finish the first draft! Find your story, get to know your characters, then the work begins! Go through your document on the screen – make sure you have it all in ONE document, divided into chapters so you can read it uninterrupted from beginning to end.

Number the pages and make sure the lines are 1.5 or double spaced, and the font 12pts in something clear like Calibri or Times New Roman. This is the industry standard and will save you time later.

The revision process is vitally important as every pass enriches the text and adds detail. Personally I enjoy this second draft the most – the first draft is always like an uphill sprint, trying to get to the end and find the story, this second draft allows me to take a step back and see what I've got.

You will be reading over this draft many times, and with each pass it will become more polished, so don't worry if it's still very rough and ready.

These are the areas that I read over looking for once I've finished the first draft:

- I know I will be adding location description so we can see the picture clearly – for me location is almost a character in the story – it certainly is in The Dark Room where Hare's Landing, a country house hotel in West Cork, plays a vital part in the events that unfold. Remember your reader could live somewhere completely different to your location – they may have no idea what a housing estate in Swansea or Cork looks like. Help them see the picture.
- In this draft I'm making sure the timeline makes sense – I make a note of the time and day at the top of each chapter as part of the 'scaffolding' – both in my plan as I write it, but also in the manuscript itself. This is vital if I need to add chapters at the end or move them around. It's VERY easy to lose track of time.
- I'm adding character description and detail – can we see what everyone looks like/ is wearing? Is it needed? The reader needs some detail or they can't see the picture, so I'm making sure I've brought enough of the image in my head to the page, in order to form an image in the reader's head.
- I'm also looking at everyone's dialogue – does it sound real, is it needed, is it 'saying' the right thing? Does someone say something they couldn't know because it hasn't happened yet, or do they speculate about what's happening too early, planting ideas in the reader's head? (This

can be a good thing!) It's vital that one character doesn't say something to another character that they already know for the benefit of the reader – this feels staged and unnatural and will jar.

- I'm looking at character development in each draft – what is each character's individual journey? How are they changed as a result of the story? For me, it's the characters that resonate with the reader when they've finished the book – I want them to feel like they know Vittoria and Lily (in *Keep Your Eyes on Me*) or Rachel and Caroline (in *The Dark Room*), that each book is a window on those characters' lives, lives that continue after the book has ended. For anyone who has read the Cat Connolly trilogy, I plant little nods in my standalone books that you will recognise – I want to create an interconnected world in all the Sam Blake books that feels real.

- I'm looking at everyone's names and making doubly sure that they are different and memorable – I've just changed a Marc to Pierce in Book 6, as I had a Marcus in *Keep Your Eyes on Me*, I've changed the name of a company and several other names so they resonate better.

- The good news is that with each pass, the story is developing and I'm spotting new twists as I read through – in the next draft I'll find ways to develop/foreshadow those with the odd line to make them work better.

- At this stage, question your story. Is it 'original and fresh'? Are the stakes high enough for the main characters to engage us, to make us read on? If it slumps a bit in the middle, does something dramatic need to happen to keep your reader engaged?

Redrafting is all about developing the story – you might question the Point of View you are writing in and try rewriting a few chapters in first person rather than third. You may decide you've got superfluous characters – the test is, that if you can take a character out without the plot collapsing, they need to go. Every character needs to earn their place. If you've got too many, consider combining some of the minor characters into one person who does more than the two or three individuals who are cluttering up your text.

Make sure that you print off the document and read in hard copy at least once – it's worth it, you'll see SO much you missed. If you can listen to sections, either reading aloud or using the voice function in Word or on a Kindle, you'll quickly find sentences that jar. Imagine you are reading the piece to an audience – will it hold their attention?

© Sam Blake 2021