

Scott Editorial

How to Write the Perfect Ending to Your Book

Here's how to make sure your story sticks the landing and leaves readers deeply satisfied.



The ending of a novel is the most crucial part of the journey for your reader. You can spend hundreds of pages putting them through heartbreak, confusion, and emotional chaos, but when they reach that final chapter, readers must get what they want: resolution.

Deliver a Resolution

By the end, your reader deserves a payoff for the emotional investment they made in your story. The central question you posed at the beginning must be answered. Who committed the murder? Will the star-crossed lovers reunite? Will Great Aunt Mabel find her glasses? Whatever it is, make sure your reader feels the emotional closure they crave.

Keep Tension High Until the Last Possible Moment

As you approach the end, it's tempting to start making things predictable. Resist this. Instead, heighten the sense of hopelessness. Your hero should seem on the brink of total defeat—even if readers trust they'll prevail. Don't reveal the "how" until the very last minute. Surprise is part of the satisfaction.

Master the Climax: Walk the Line Between Obvious and Bizarre

The climax should feel inevitable but not obvious. You want your reader to say, "Of course!" not, "Wait, what?" Stay grounded in the world and rules you've built. Avoid strange, out-of-nowhere twists that betray the emotional logic of your story (learn from the confusion caused by the *Lost* finale!).

Know Your Ending Before You Begin

You don't have to plot out every scene before you start writing, but having a clear idea of your ending helps maintain consistency. It gives you a direction, keeps characters true to their arcs, and prevents wandering subplots from derailing your main storyline.

Don't Leave Loose Ends (Unless It's a Series)

Unless you're setting up a sequel, every major plotline and character arc should be wrapped up. Unanswered questions frustrate readers and weaken the emotional impact of your ending.

If You Plan to Kill a Major Character, Set Expectations Early

If your protagonist might not survive, set that tone early—preferably on the first page. Readers need time to emotionally prepare for such a bold move, or else the ending will feel like a betrayal rather than a powerful payoff.

Use Your Outline as a Final Checklist

Throughout writing, keep an updated outline showing where each character is, what they know, and what questions have been raised. Before you write "The End," review this outline and ensure all plot threads are tied neatly.

Stagger the Endings of Subplots

Avoid wrapping up every subplot at the same time as your main climax. Start resolving secondary plots just before your story's peak moment. It creates a sense of momentum and keeps readers focused on the ultimate payoff.

Introduce All Players Early

No one likes a random new character showing up in the last chapter to save the day. If you need a character to play a critical role in the climax, plant them earlier in the story—even if it's just a mention or brief scene. That way, when they step into the spotlight later, it feels earned, not jarring.

Editor Advice:

The perfect ending should feel like a magic trick: inevitable in hindsight, but impossible to predict while it was unfolding. Respect your reader, reward their patience, and you'll create not just a good ending, but a memorable one that turns first-time readers into lifelong fans.

Need more help creating the perfect ending?

Get in touch today and we'll make sure all the boxes are ticked.