

HOW TO CREATE

compelling characters

Characters are the backbone of every story, and they should be fully-developed with their own set of quirks, values, beliefs, worldviews, insecurities, and flaws. The trick to making them memorable is to start out with two or three quirks for each member in your cast to stand out to the reader.

Let's take Harry Potter, for example. Harry has a lightning bolt scar on his forehead and comes from a terrible home, Hagrid is a half-giant and loves animals, Hermione is brilliant and has a pet cat, the Weasleys have fiery-red hair and are poor...can you think of traits among the other characters that make them different and memorable?

You can always go back and add descriptive details to your characters later, but this will get you started and on your way to fleshing out well-rounded characters!

Give your character:

- ❖ An identifiable physical feature
- ❖ A human or animal counterpart
- ❖ A specific rolemodel/mentor/figure in the story
- ❖ A dominant emotional state
- ❖ Their own body language or mannerisms
- ❖ A group or family connection
- ❖ Unique personality with an exaggerated trait
- ❖ An accent or specific way of talking
- ❖ A strength that is also a weakness
- ❖ A hidden secret that is revealed later in the story

Coach's Tip: Use a notebook or a binder and create a separate page for each character. You'll be able to keep track of their details for continuity, add descriptions, and refer back to your notes while writing without getting lost.

Now that you've picked out your character's traits, ask yourself these questions to give your character the conflict and stakes necessary to take shape.

- ❖ What does this character want?
- ❖ Why does he or she want it?
- ❖ What is motivating this character?
- ❖ What is standing in this character's way externally?
- ❖ What is standing in this character's way internally?
- ❖ What's at stake if this character fails to accomplish this goal?

The higher the stakes and the more internal/external conflict within, the more compelling your story will be!