

# AFTER "THE END"--WHAT'S NEXT?

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You've finally finished the last chapter on your manuscript. Not only have you successfully plotted your story and done meticulous research, but you've worked out the internal and external conflicts for your characters. So what should you do next? Here's a checklist to make sure your masterpiece is the best it can be.

**4 Take a break.** Let your manuscript sit for a while. After a week or two, you can look at it more objectively.

**4 Back to work.** Read your manuscript from beginning to end. Remember, "Writing is rewriting." Things you should be striving for:

- : Correct grammar and spelling
- : Elimination of unnecessary or unclear words
- : Strong action verbs and minimal use of "ly" adverbs
- : Showing rather than telling the story
- : Avoiding POV switches within a scene
- : Using the five senses to involve the reader in the story
- : Story cohesiveness. No loose ends or details left unresolved.

**4 Take a deep breath and...** Your vocal cords might protest doing this, but reading out loud--perhaps one chapter at a time, is an excellent way to "hear" your story. You'll probably be surprised to find certain word combinations sound awkward when said aloud.

**4 Get another opinion.** Having a critique partner--someone you trust to make comments in a constructive way, is an excellent method to improve your manuscript. Another opinion or two helps weed out errors or problems you might have overlooked.

The end is in sight. What remains is to polish up your synopsis and to perfect your query letter. Easy said than done, I know, but your professionalism is also reflected in these other two items. Finished? Now comes the big moment. It's time to send your submission to the publishing house you've targeted. Don't forget to enclose in your package the material they've specified, plus a self-addressed stamped return envelope and postcard.

Exhale deeply, pat yourself on the back, then . . . get ready to start another novel!