

THE ART OF REVISING

Presented by Thao Le
Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency

What is R&R? It means Revise and Resubmit.

Exclusive Revision

- **What does granting exclusivity mean?** Only the agent with exclusivity has your work (just ONE agent)
- **Time line?** If unsure, ask. Usually around 2 weeks.
- **Why give exclusivity to an agent?** It's like a trial run before you both commit. You get to see if the agent is a good fit editorially with you.
- **Be selective and make sure there's a time limit affixed.**

Researching Agents

- Make sure they are good fit and are reputable
- Resources:
 - Writer's Digest, Publisher's Weekly, Publisher's Marketplace, QueryTracker, Absolute Write
- **#MSWL:** stands for Manuscript Wish List
 - Agent's twitter/website
 - <http://manuscriptwishlist.com/>
 - <http://www.mswishlist.com/>
 - <http://agentandeditorwishlist.tumblr.com>

What Does It Mean to Revise?

Literally means "to see again". It is NOT proofreading (fixing grammar and spelling mistakes). It's looking at the entire piece as a whole.

10 Tips for Revising:

#1 Taking a step back and let it breathe

Consider the feedback you've already received, either from agents, beta readers, or critique partners. Let the ideas stew in your head, think about the big picture. Don't dive in immediately.

#2 Read your entire manuscript, start to finish, in the mindset of a "reader" not a "writer"

Consider reading aloud.

#3 Ask Questions About Your Own Work

Are there reoccurring feedback? Try and think about the problem areas.

Key Questions:

Characters - Do they have agency? Character growth? Are their motives and goals clear?

Plot - Does it make sense? Are there enough dramatic moments?

Structure - Is it starting at the right place? Do the scene flow?

Market - Is the voice right for the intended audience? Think of comp titles and why they are successful.

Common Issues That Make Agents Hesitate

- Can't connect with characters
- Confusing plot
- Unclear motivations
- Info-dumping
- Too much backstory in first few pages
- Clichés

#4 Revise GLOBALLY first, then locally

Once you identify your problem areas then you can start editing that manuscript.

Before you do, if you need to rearrange scenes, consider using index cards or outlines to help you organize the plot structure. If you need to work on character development, consider creating character profiles or character worksheets to help you figure out motivation, goals, and obstacles. Try different things, go outside your comfort zone, and find out what works for you.

#5 GET FEEDBACK!!!

- Get/use critique partners
- Have multiple! Use new ones!
- Resource for beta readers/CP's
 - Conferences and workshops, writing groups (i.e. SCBWI, RWA, etc...), book clubs, online writing communities
 - AbsoluteWrite, Critique Circle, FictionPress, Scribophile, Twitter and other social media
- What to look for in a GOOD critique partner?
 - They read and write in your genre
 - They tell you what works *and* what doesn't work
 - They tell you WHY things don't work
 - There is mutual respect

#6 Work on bite-sized pieces. Don't try to do everything all at once!

Now that your story structure is in the general shape that you want it to be, go back to work on each chapter one by one. Don't try and do it all at once. Give yourself a break in between editing chapters.

#7 Kill Your Darlings

- Are all of your scenes essential? How about the characters? Think about the purpose of every scene and character.
- Don't repeat the same information over and over.
- Check to make sure that scenes make sense and flow well.

#8 Tighten the language

- Don't use six words when four will work.
- Be specific. When you are too vague you end up sounding generic or cliché.
- Use vivid verbs.
- Is there too much prose?

#9 Choose a good title, but do it at the very end

Query tip: *Put your title in the subject line of your email*

#10 GET USED TO IT!

When is my manuscript ready for submission?

- If you can't read your own MS without feeling like you have to fix something then it is NOT ready.
- Make the edits and rewrites.
- Repeat Tip #1 and #2.
- Once you can read through the whole book without itching to edit, it's ready to submit.

When to follow up?

- Check submission guidelines!
- If you get an offer from another agent/editor
- If agent requested partial
 - Nudge around a month+ after.
- If agent requested a full
 - Nudge around 2+ months after