

**First Dose: “What the Heck Do I Write?”**

We’ve all been there: staring at the blank page and wondering how to begin. Here’s where some basic structure comes in handy. These are the fundamental parts you’ll want to include in almost any blurb, long or short.

- **The Headline** -----  
*This is what you use to catch the attention of a reader skimming through titles.*

**Magic. Sailing. A murderer among heroes.**

- **The Lead** -----  
*Your opening sentence(s). This is where your reader is getting their first sense of what your story is like—your setting, characters, plot, and voice.*

Gravedigger Volke Savan wants nothing more than to be like his hero, the legendary magical swashbuckler, Gregory Ruma. First he needs to become an arcanist, someone capable of wielding magic, which requires bonding with a mythical creature. And he'll take anything—a pegasus, a griffin, a ravenous hydra—maybe even a leviathan, like Ruma.

*Focus on what is essential. You are not summarizing your story—you're giving the reader a delicious first taste.*

So when Volke stumbles across a nightmare, a creature made of shadow and terror, he has no reservations. But the nightmare knows a terrible secret: Ruma is a murderer out to spread corrupted magic throughout their island nation. He's already killed a population of phoenixes and he intends to kill even more.

- **The Closer** -----  
*Your final sentence(s). The emotional impact is what matters. If you leave the reader hungry for more, you've succeeded.*

In order to protect his home, his adopted sister, and the girl he admires from afar, Volke will need to confront his hero, the Master Arcanist Gregory Ruma.

- **The Coda** -----  
*This part of the copy is optional, but can be valuable. In this example, the writer is using a coda to help readers contextualize the genre by using comparison titles. Note how the coda uses a different voice. This writer has wisely chosen to offset the coda by presenting it in italics.*

*A fast-paced fantasy with magical creatures for those who enjoy the Furies of Calderon (Codex Alera series) by Jim Butcher, Unsouled (Cradle Series) by Will Wight, and Percy Jackson and the Olympians by Rick Riordan.*

**Second Dose: “How Much Do I Say?”**

You know your own story better than anyone. When writing your blurb, you’re not rewriting your story. You’re giving the reader a small, tasty sample of what they’ll experience when they read the whole thing. Here we have an example from a very old friend of what good sales copy can achieve.

Let’s pretend you’re unfamiliar with this book. Note how the copy uses minimal details to suggest a much larger picture in the following ways:

- **Setting**

*It only takes a few choice words to show us we’re in a high fantasy setting. We get a few unfamiliar words—like “Ringwraith” and “hobbit”—to let us know we’re in for some deep worldbuilding.*

- **Characters**

*Frodo Baggins, Sauron, and Sam. Those are the only named characters here. You might be tempted to rattle off your entire cast, but taking a judicious approach means you won’t be confusing your readers with a ton of names.*

- **Plot**

*Perhaps the most difficult impulse to avoid is summarizing. If you are writing your copy and find yourself going chapter-by-chapter to list all the important events... then take a pause, because you’re almost assuredly on the wrong track. Give the reader a sense of the underlying conflict. Mention only the events you absolutely need—even if you present them out of chronological order.*

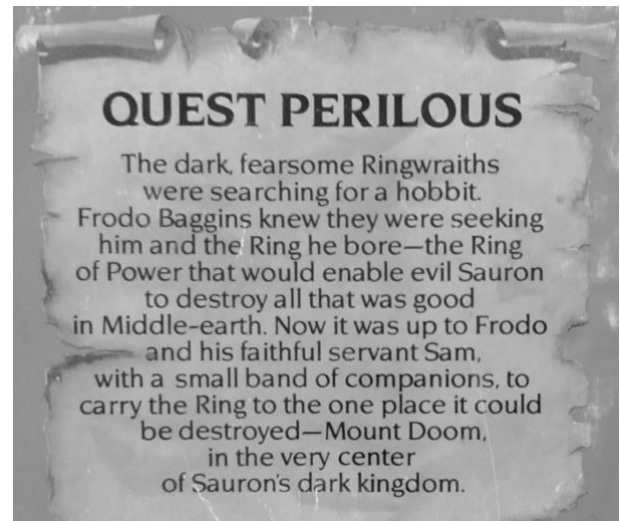
- **Voice**

*This blurb does not sound like it was written by the author—and it doesn’t have to. What matters is that it is congruent with the author’s writing. Note especially the word choice—“dark, fearsome Ringwraiths,” “seeking him and the Ring he bore,” “all that was good.” These evoke Tolkien’s style and tone. The blurb has a mood and a flavor that complements the story within.*

- **Emotion**

*Little touches throughout this blurb add up to a big emotional impact. Think about what makes people care about a story. For instance, an underdog story is naturally compelling, and the blurb gives us a strong sense that our “small band” is outnumbered and outmatched. Sacrifice, courage, and loyalty move us, and all these are hinted at in this copy.*

*Really consider what you want your reader to feel when they read your story. Describing the experience can work (i.e., “In this rich and sumptuous narrative,” “This hilarious and zany story,”), but evoking the feeling is usually better (i.e., “In the sultry nights of a tropical paradise,” “With only his wits, his pocket calculator, and his haiku-reciting goldfish,”). If you can get the reader to actually feel those emotions, you’ll be on your way.*



### Third Dose: I'm Not a Salesperson!

If you're stressing out because you don't know all the psychological triggers and "best practices" for manipulating people into making a purchase, then you can relax. You don't need tricks. You've already got everything you need.

- You know what your audience wants.  
*You don't have to guess. Your audience wants to dive into a good story. They want to be kept up at night turning pages. They even want it in exactly the genre you've chosen! You don't have to convince Hard SF readers to try out your Paranormal Thriller... there are mobs of Paranormal Thriller readers eager to find their next tale. You already possess the kind of intimate understanding of your audience that most professional marketers would give a right arm to have (maybe not their own right arm, but certainly someone's...).*
- You have a great story.  
*A professional copywriter writes for clients—and many clients produce garbage. So a pro often has to sell something they don't really believe in. You don't have that problem. You know the story you're selling is great, because you've personally worked hard to make it great. You don't need tricks when you've got quality on your side.*
- Gimmicks go in and out of fashion. Honesty is always fresh.  
*So many marketers end up chasing trends, desperately for the next hot trick that "hacks the consumer brain" (yes, someone really said that to me). You don't need to do that. Honestly represent your story for what it is and what it offers. As long as you're doing that, you'll be fine.*

And Always Remember...

**Information Informs.  
Emotion Connects.**

Don't just tell your reader about your story.  
Evoke their feelings, and you'll make a human connection.  
That's how you find your audience.