

Blurb

A blurb gives an indication of what the story is about, possibly setting the scene and mentioning some of the characters, but it does not give the full plot away. Sometimes a blurb ends with a question that prompts potential readers to want to read on.

Key features that could be included in a blurb:

1. The Hook

These are what they sound like--story elements that immediately grab a reader's attention.

2. The Conflict

List both the external conflicts (zombie attacks, rogue asteroids, disapproving mothers-in-law) and the internal conflicts (survivor's guilt, fear of failure, feelings of inadequacy).

3. The hint of emotion

Think in terms of the emotional state of your main characters (vengeful, determined, grieving), and the emotional tone of your book (a wild ride, a joyous romp, a gritty faery-tale).

4. The touch of danger

Something is at risk for your characters--emotionally, physically, socially, or whatever. Something important to them is endangered. This is the place to define what's at stake for your main character if they don't achieve their story goal, OR what is being put at risk *because* they are pursuing their story goal.

5. Characterization

Throw out lots of descriptive phrases for your characters until you feel you've got a combination that sums them up perfectly. The punchier and more immediately evocative, the better.

6. Setting

Define the geographic location (real or imaginary), but also the emotional tone of the setting: lush jungle, bleak moor, treacherous Fey court, sparkling Regency society.

7. Goals

What concrete object or achievement are your characters pursuing in this story? What are they fighting for? Defining the characters' story goals is a KEY aspect of creating a sense of the story stakes, which in turn, deepens the reader's emotional investment. In

8. Motivation

Define what it will MEAN to your character to fail or succeed.

9. Who/What is stopping them?

Who (preferably) or what is blocking your main character from achieving their story goal? This is another way of looking at internal and external conflict, with an opportunity to focus closely on your major Antagonist.

10. Will they overcome?

This is the question that summarizes the central element of tension or suspense in your story, the question that, once it has been answered "Yes" or "No" ends your story.

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Some tips to keep in mind:

1. Make it short

Blurbs range from a few lines to a few paragraphs, but they'll have one thing in common – they're not very long! The job of a book blurb is to whet the reader's appetite to buy/read the entire book. The book blurb should arouse curiosity, rather than provide answers. It should, if possible, press the reader's buttons. You want them to think "That's what I need to know!" or "That sounds just like me..."

- If your blurb is for a novel, it should promise a 'good read'.
- If your blurb is for non-fiction or self-help, it should appeal to the reader's self-interest.

In other words - whether it's fiction or non-fiction - it should answer the question: "What's in it for me?"... and it should do it very economically!

2. Make it punchy

Book blurbs tend to use emotive words. You'll read that a character's experience is 'spine-chilling' or 'devastating' or 'heart-wrenching'; or the blurb talks about a riddle to be solved.

Non-fiction books tend to promise answers and strategies: you'll see terms like 'packed with information'; 'provides strategies'; 'a treasure chest of xxx' or 'a blueprint for xxx.'

Work out what your reader wants, and write a blurb that shows that reader how you'll deliver.

3. End with a reason for the reader to buy/read the book.

This can be in the form of a statement or a provocative question.

Some examples extracted from the full-length blurbs below: "Don't be a victim - be wise to their tricks!"; "Who is the spy in Sunrise Avenue? Will the kids find out in time?"; "You will learn... How to outsource your life and do whatever you want"; "Tap into THE FIRE IN FICTION, and supercharge your story with originality and spark!"

4. Don't confuse a short book blurb with a short synopsis!

This is very important. The big difference is this: A synopsis is a summary of the whole story - beginning, middle and end. It tells the reader (usually an editor) what happens throughout the story - including what happens at the end and how everything is resolved. A back cover blurb does NOT give the game away! It stimulates interest and curiosity and therefore entices the reader to buy the book.

Marks are awarded as follows:

1. Process writing – planning & editing – **5 marks**
2. Structure: effective introduction & conclusion, use of paragraphing, development of ideas – **5 marks**
3. Content: main ideas and key words; necessary information included, own words used – **5 marks**
4. Sentence structure & vocabulary – **5 marks**
5. Spelling & punctuation – **5 marks**

Blurb

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Process writing: planning, editing	Excellent use of the writing process has produced a refined final draft. Proof reading has eliminated mistakes	Good use of writing process; evidence of progressive improvement in writing piece, mistakes still evident	Has used writing process but has not translated it into a well-developed piece of writing	Some use of parts of writing process (very basic planning or evidence of editing of first draft) but many errors still remain	Little or no proof reading or editing done: writing still has many uncorrected errors
Structure: introductory paragraph development of ideas	Effective introduction and conclusion. Excellent use of paragraphing. Progressive development of ideas	Coherent, good introduction and conclusion. Good use of paragraphing. Logical flow of ideas	Functional introduction and conclusion. Paragraphing adequate. Sequence of ideas can be followed	Poor introduction and conclusion. Paragraphing in essay poor. Ideas sometimes not sequential	No introduction or conclusion. Little or no paragraphing in essay (solid text). Ideas muddled
Content: main ideas and key words	Succinct summation of original text. All necessary information included. Own words used	Well-structured summation of original text. Finer detail missing or point not clearly expressed. Own words used.	Adequate summation of original text. 20% of points missed. Mostly uses own words	Poor summation of text. 50% of points missed and/or frequent use of original text	50%+ points missed. Original text copied. Summary shows lack or understanding of original text
Sentence structure and vocabulary	Excellent use of language; sentences correctly structured. Extensive vocabulary	Creative use of language; mostly correct sentences. Well-developed vocabulary	Most sentences are correct; some errors in language use. Good vocabulary	Sentence structure fair. Basic vocabulary; several errors in language use	Poor sentence structure; vocabulary below expected level
Spelling and punctuation	Punctuation and spelling correct. No errors in subject-verb concord	Few punctuation and spelling errors. One or two errors in subject-verb concord	Some errors in punctuation and spelling. Several errors in subject-verb concord	Several errors in punctuation and spelling. Has not grasped subject-verb concord	Many errors in punctuation, spelling and subject-verb concord; understanding compromised