

THE IRRESISTABLE, BINGE-WORTHY SERIES



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WHY WRITE A SERIES?

- Readers don't like to let characters go. They want to know what happens when the book ends.
- You have more time to develop your characters throughout each book.
- Easier sales/marketing. Each book helps sell the others.
- Less research. Using the same "home world" allows you to use much of the same research for each book.
- It allows you to incorporate reader feedback. You can adjust based on what readers say they like. They might want to see a minor character's story or have the series continue.

WHAT MAKES A SERIES?

- An interconnected or continuous set of stories with common characteristics such as characters, theme, plot, or setting. It can be one main character who solves different problems in each book. Or it can be different main characters that are based in the same location, and may or may not be connected to other main characters.
- Can be prequels, sequels, interquels, and spin offs.
- Each book tells a complete story in itself of a main character solving a problem. It does not end in a cliffhanger (unless you want to make your readers mad).
- Different than a serial. A serial is a group of books that all together tell a complete story. So each book is only part of the story with a "to be continued..." type ending. Can end in a cliffhanger. Be very clear in your marketing copy that this is the type of story not completed in one book or readers will be upset.

When you write your series, you have to define what "home" you are returning to with each book. What's the common element or theme?

A Story Arc ends in each book.

A Series Arc is a long-term thread through every book, either defined or subtle.

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A Plant: something planted early that becomes important later. Must emerge naturally from the story, be believable, fit with the story and characters.

Wrap up major themes and threads, but leave pieces to continue through future stories, like secondary characters. Have enough connection to the books that come before and after to keep the reader interested in the series.

Give enough backstory to orient readers and to intrigue them to pick up previous books. They should be able to follow the current story without reading the other first, but pique their interest so they want to. Do not do this in an info dump. The reader is focused on the “now” in this book. Given them a chance to want to know what happened “before.”

Repeat characters need to grow and change, at least subtly in believable ways. They need to have new issues to work through or they can work through previous issues on a deeper level.

Consistency: Facts must match what you’ve established before. Planning and writing ahead allows you to go back and put things in you forgot or need to foreshadow.

Outline roughly the whole series, break down component books and outline individually. Know how each book begins and ends.

- Create a series calendar.
- Know that one change can make a ripple effect in other books.
- Create a series bible:
 - Δ What can and cannot be changed
 - Δ Foundational facts and premises
 - Δ Technology
 - Δ Character descriptions
 - Δ Timelines
 - Δ Unanswered questions or plot threads that carry through books
 - Δ Setting
 - Δ Research that carries through

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Series blurb:

- It defines the type of series and the premise
- Genre should be evident
- 1-4 sentences to convey tone and ignite interest

Story blurb for each book

Marketing:

- Make it clear the book is part of a series and what the series is. Put the series on the book and on your website.
- Always include the series title when giving your book's title. i.e-Protective Custody, Book 1 of the Hometown Heroes series.
- Brand the series with cover art and a logo.
- Create a printable list of series with book blurbs and series blurbs.

Resources: *How to Write a Series* by Karen Wiesner