

FIRST FIFTY PAGES CHECKLIST

By Jill Kemerer

1. First Chapter:

- a. Is the book starting in the right place? (Based on what is written, can you define the inciting incident? This is an event or decision that changes the main character's life.)
- b. If the book is a romance, do the hero and heroine meet in the first chapter (for category novels, within a few pages)?
- c. Is the opening line strong? (Does it hold a promise about the book?)
- d. Is the opening scene written in the main character's point of view?
- e. Is the main character someone readers will root for or admire?
- f. Does the main character have a clear story goal?
- g. Why does he/she want the goal?
- h. Why can't he/she have the goal?
- i. Are the characters coming across as full dimensional?
- j. Is the story hook clear?
- k. Will the resulting theme sustain an entire book?
- l. Do the characters make decisions?
- m. Is the reader emotionally engaged?
- n. Is the setting clear (Where is it taking place, what season is it, what time period, etc...)
- o. Any info dumps?
- p. Does the final line make you want to keep reading?

2. Plot:

- a. Is the plot logical?
- b. Are the scenes structured for maximum tension?
- c. Scene transitions: does the reader know what time it is, how much time has passed, whose point of view the scene is in, and where the scene takes place?
- d. If writing a romance, are the hero and heroine together at least 50% of these pages?
- e. Any areas that need fleshing out more?
- f. Are there any abrupt shifts that need padding?
- g. Do chapters start and end with a hook?

3. Pace:

- a. Slow/Fast?
- b. Balanced dialogue/introspection/narrative?

4. Tone:

- a. Is the tone appropriate for genre? (Example: If it's a suspense, it shouldn't be cutesy. It should be fast-paced and tense.)

5. Characters:

- a. Is the main character(s) actively working toward his/her goal?
- b. Is the main character(s) relatable (is the reader rooting for them)?
- c. Do the stakes feel high for the main character(s)?
- d. Are any secondary characters taking over or shifting too much attention from the main plot?
- e. Are there too many secondary characters?
- f. If writing a romance and the book is in third person, are the scene viewpoints alternating between hero and heroine?
- g. When in deep point of view, do the characters sound like individuals or do they sound alike?

6. *For romance novels* Romance journey:

- a. Is the romance journey believable?
- b. Are the characters acting like two people who are attracted to each other?
- c. Do both characters have compelling internal conflicts preventing them from loving each other?

7. Spiritual journey:

- a. Is the Christian aspect fleshed out properly or is it dropped here or there with little to support it?
- b. Is it clear to the reader how the main character's faith will grow over the course of the book?

8. Writing mechanics:

- a. Are there word or phrase repetitions?
- b. Do any sentences read awkwardly?
- c. Is the sentence structure mixed up so it doesn't sound sing-song?
- d. Is there more showing of emotion rather than telling? (Ex: Telling = She was sad. Showing = Tears pressed against her eyes.)