

Checklist: Writing Conflict That Grips

Use this checklist to build and refine the conflicts in your story. Go through each question and mark *Yes* or *No* to see where your plot could gain more tension, emotion, or depth.

Cluster A: Before Writing

Question	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I know which types of conflict drive my story – inner, interpersonal, or societal.		
I understand each character's motivation and what puts them in opposition.		
Every character has something to lose when they make a choice.		
I've identified the emotions (anger, fear, shame, desire) that fuel each conflict.		
I avoid letting characters agree or resolve conflicts too easily or too soon.		

Cluster B: While Writing

Question	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Every scene includes at least one conflict that builds or escalates.		
I show conflict not only through action, but also through inner tension and unspoken resistance.		
I use a variety of conflict types (internal, interpersonal, societal, etc.) to keep things dynamic.		
My characters stumble, fail, or resist before they succeed – that's where growth happens.		
I create dilemmas where every decision comes with a cost.		
I use anger, fear, or frustration as emotional fuel for action and change.		
Conflicts clearly move the plot or reveal character development.		

Cluster C: During Revision

Question	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Each scene either creates or sustains tension, even in quiet moments.		
I ask myself: "Has my character truly risked or lost something here?"		
The progression of conflict feels logical and emotionally grounded.		
I avoid conflicts that fade too quickly or resolve without consequence.		
Characters react in contradictory yet believable ways that show depth.		
By the end, my characters have changed or grown because of what they faced.		



Evaluation

- **Many Yes answers across all sections** → Your story is driven by strong, believable conflict.
- **Many Yes while writing but fewer during revision** → Read your scenes critically: Where could tension or consequence be clearer?
- **Many No answers** → Deepen your conflicts through dilemmas, emotional stakes, and subtle undercurrents of resistance.

Finding the Right Balance

Ask yourself:

- Do my characters truly fight for something, or does everything come too easily?
- Can readers feel what's at stake?
- Does every scene hold tension, emotion, or moral choice?
- Do my conflicts lead to visible change in my characters?

Strong stories aren't built on perfection, but on struggle. For more in-depth advice, see the related article:

👉 [*Writing Conflict That Grips: How to Bring Tension to Your Story*](#)

