Want vs. Need: What does your character want and what do they really need?

A compelling character doesn't just have a goal. They also have deeper needs, fears, and beliefs that influence their decisions. This worksheet will help you explore what your main character wants to achieve (*Want*), what they truly need (*Need*), and how these two elements can create a believable character arc.

Character's name: _____

1. Want: What does your character want?

Want describes your character's conscious goal. It drives their actions and often moves the plot forward.

What does your character want to achieve more than anything?

Why is this goal so important to them?

What are they willing to do or sacrifice to achieve it?

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2. Need: What does your character really need?

Need describes a deeper emotional or psychological need. Often, your character doesn't initially realize what they truly need.

What does your character need in order to grow as a person?

What fear or false belief is holding them back?

Why is it difficult for them to recognize or accept this need?

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3. Conflict: When want and need collide

Stories become particularly compelling when a character's conscious goal conflicts with their deeper need.

How do your character's want and need conflict with each other?

What decision brings your character closer to their want but further away from their need?

What event could make your character question their existing beliefs?

4. Character arc: How does your character change?

Your character doesn't necessarily have to get what they want by the end of the story. What matters is that their development feels believable.

Does your character achieve their original want by the end of the story?

Do they recognize or fulfill their need as the story progresses?

What has your character learned, and how are they different from who they were at the beginning?

5. Character development checklist

Use this checklist to make sure your character's want and need are meaningfully connected throughout your story.

☐ My character has a clear, believable goal.

☐ I understand the deeper need behind their behavior.

☐ Their want and need influence their decisions and conflicts.

☐ The external plot and internal character development are connected.

☐ My character's transformation feels believable by the end.

Finally, complete these two sentences:

My character wants:

But what they really need is:

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6. Final thoughts

A compelling character doesn't always have to get what they want. What matters more is what they learn along the way and how those experiences change them. Use your answers to connect your character's want and need, creating meaningful conflicts and a believable character arc.

For more in-depth tips, see the related magazine article:
Want vs. Need: What your character really needs

For more useful tools and resources, check out our **newsletter** here:
https://www.grin.com/en/newsletter/