

1 **10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU**

Not really, but these are things you're screwing up with your writing, and they will keep you from getting published, so you'll think I hate you, even though I don't even know you and we've never met except through a submission email and we'll likely never cross paths in the real world and I don't know what you look like so how could I hate you?

2 **#1 - COPULAS**

- What the hell is a copula?
- Why shouldn't I use as many as I want?

3 **#2 – SUBMISSION GUIDELINES ARE A SKILL CHECK.**

- If you follow the submission guidelines, you're ahead of 2/3 of the slush submissions at many publishers.
- There are reasons publishers create submission guidelines.
- No, we don't have to tell you.

4 **#3 – YOUR BOOK STARTS IN THE WRONG PLACE**

- I don't mean Hobbiton v. Elvandar.
- En Media Res is your friend.
- Staring down at a dead body is never a bad place to start a book.

5 **#4 – YOU USE TOO MANY ADVERBS OR TOO MUCH PASSIVE VOICE.**

- What are adverbs?
- Why do we hates them, my precious?
- When SHOULD you use an adverb?
- What is passive voice?
- Why don't we want to use passive voice?
- When SHOULD you use it?

6 **#5 – YOU REPEAT YOURSELF TOO MUCH**

- New writers repeat themselves too much.
- New writers often say the same thing over and over again, with slightly different wordings.
- Sometimes, new writers repeat themselves too much.
- Occasionally new writers will say the same thing repeatedly.

- Specifically a problem with weird words (Apparatchik).

7 **#6 – FOR GOD’S SAKE, WEAR A SLIP!**

- World-building is like your underwear.
 - It needs to be there, to create a foundation for your book or story.
 - I DON’T NEED TO SEE IT.

8 **#7 – YOUR BOOK IS TOO LONG**

- I don’t care that Brandon Sanderson writes chihuahua-killers. When you’ve sold a million books, you can write whatever monster tome you want to.
- There are financial considerations to book length. Page counts and word counts matter.
- Don’t get upset or attached if someone tells you to make it 2-3 books. Shut up and start cutting. Or don’t work with that publisher. But don’t get bent out of the frame about a fiscal decision. They aren’t Solomon chopping your baby in half.
- Don’t let people chop babies in half. That stuff never washes out of the carpet.

9 **#8 – YOU CAN’T SUMMARIZE YOUR OWN BOOK**

- If you can’t break your book down into a 15-second elevator pitch, then you don’t clearly know what your book is about and you can’t sell it to humans, much less the evil overlords of publishing.
- Nobody wants to hear about your plot. Tell me it’s a space western with a lovable band of rogues, or it’s a wagon train to the stars, or it’s a dude who just wants to stay home and smoke a pipe but gets dragged off by a bunch of dwarves and ends up the hero of an entire world.
- If you need more than 3-5 sentences to describe your book, you aren’t ready to sell your book.

10 **#9 – WHEN YOU HEAR “THAT’S A CLICHÉ, DON’T USE IT” – DON’T USE IT!**

- Every genre has tropes, and every genre has clichés. Clichés are tropes gone bad. Don’t use them.
- Research your genre and know what the clichés are before you submit.
- If you know it’s cliché and you use it anyway because your book is

that brilliant, then you're an arrogant jerk.

- If you don't know it's a cliché, then you haven't researched your genre, and you're an idiot.
- Don't be either.

11 **#10 – SAVE THE FREAKING CAT**

- Making your protagonist a jerk doesn't make them edgy. It just makes them unlikable. People don't want to spend hours on end with people they don't like. So don't write that.
- Even if your protagonist is a horrible person, find some redeeming quality in them that a reader can hook onto. Save the cat.
- Examples – Lies of Locke Lamora, Six of Crows, Ocean's 11, every heist story ever.

12 **#11 – (I'M BAD AT MATH) – START STRONG**

- When Falstaff was open to slush, we received over 100 submissions every month. We took on average one per year. One in 1,200.
- Only the best of the best gets published. Only the top 1% gets sent on to me.
- I took about 1% of 1% of submissions.
- If you can't hook me within the first paragraph, I'm never going to read the second one. Put your best words in the front.

13 **#12 - KNOW YOUR BOOK AND GENRE**

- You don't have to know every nuance of every genre and every sub-genre, but you need to be able to target your pitches.
- Don't pitch to people who don't care about your type of book. It wastes both your time.

14 **#13 – YOU DON'T HAVE READER EQUITY**

- Yes, I know Brandon/Rothfuss/Jordan/Tolkien did/do it. You aren't them.
- Yes, I know I do that all the time in my books. You aren't me, either.
- You are the new kid in school, and you need to be the very best kid on the playground.
- Do not assume you can break the rules just because someone who has ten books out broke the same rule. They've proven they can write and sell books. You haven't.

15 **#15 – IT'S A SMALL BUSINESS**

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- There aren't that many genre publishers and editors. If you don't think we talk to one another, you're an idiot.
 - If you're a jerk to Jason Graves at Prospective Press, I'm going to hear about it over dinner. And vice versa. So don't.
 - People like to work with people they like. If I have to choose between an amazing writer with all the talent in the world, but he's a jerk, and a slightly less talented writer who is an awesome person, I'm taking "awesome person" over "amazing writer" every single time.
 - Follow Wheaton's Law and you'll be fine.

16 **FIND ME!**

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