

*The Power of ChapterBuzz series*

# **How to Write the Perfect Novel (With the Help of Feedback!)**



*An insider's guide*  
**by Timothy Pike**

Copyright © 2020 Timothy Pike. All rights reserved.

## **This is a short guide, I swear!**

Do you remember in high school when you had to write a 20-page report, and there were those students in the class (I *may* have been one of them, ahem!) who got clever and dialed the font size way up, pulled the margins wayyyy in, and **used a lot of bold letters**, in an effort to make six pages look like twenty? While fooling exactly no one in the process?

Well, for this guide I pulled out some of those old high school tricks, only this time the goal wasn't to inflate the page count, it was to make it easier to read.

All this to say, don't be scared off by the number of pages in this guide. It's a very quick read, and I've done my best to be as brief as possible while still packing in all the tips I could muster—tips that will help you **use the reader feedback you get at ChapterBuzz to write an excellent novel.**

You're sure to breeze right through it and learn a lot.

Enjoy!

# How to write the perfect novel

It's a writer's worst nightmare: spending the better part of a year (and often longer) writing a novel, only to publish it on Amazon and find out that readers are underwhelmed and the reviews are tepid.



Hi! I'm **Timothy Pike**, and I created ChapterBuzz to help writers avoid this very scenario.

[ChapterBuzz](#) is a community of writers and readers who share their works-in-progress, offer friendly feedback to each other, and fine tune their chapters until their novels are highly polished and ready to be published.

In this short guide, you'll get all my insider tips and also learn:

- Why it's so important to receive feedback as you write, and how it can help you build confidence and write an excellent book
- How to build your Feedback Circle—a group of readers and writers who will read your stories and offer helpful feedback

- How to use the feedback you receive to improve your novel, and how to give feedback to other writers

...and much more!

If you haven't [joined us on ChapterBuzz](#) yet, now's the time!

Happy writing,  
Tim

## It's never too early to get feedback on your work

So you've written the first chapter of your novel and posted it on ChapterBuzz. Way to go!

Now, what do readers think?

*Wait, you say. Isn't it a little too soon to be asking readers what they think?*

Nope! In fact, this is the *best* time.

Knowing what's resonating with your readers—and what could use improvement—is critical in these early stages, when your novel is just starting to take shape.



"It was refreshing to receive so much feedback on my work-in-progress that I can't stop now. Thank you for creating this amazing opportunity."

—Dacia M Arnold, award-winning author

---

But don't just take my word for it! I'm always hearing from ChapterBuzz authors, like award winner **Dacia**

**M Arnold**, about how valuable their feedback has been.

Asking for feedback opens up a *direct line* between you and the minds of your readers, so you know what they're thinking.

Chances are they'll like what you've written. But now, they have the chance to ask questions, point out something that didn't make sense, or maybe even throw in a few ideas. Or just tell you how much they enjoyed reading it.

Sometimes small tweaks are all you need, and other times bigger changes are necessary. For example, maybe there's a character that readers aren't quite connecting with, and before long you realize the character is not even essential to the story. This gives you an opportunity to get rid of that character—and tighten up the plot.

Our community of writers love helping each other by reading each other's work and giving their insight. Over the years, many professional connections—and even friendships—have been forged through the discussions that have unfolded.

If you're like the rest of us, you'll find it highly motivating to write a book while surrounded by both writers and non-writers who are eager to help!

## **What is a Feedback Circle?**

Your **Feedback Circle** is a group of writers and readers who can give you feedback on your writing.

Every writer at ChapterBuzz has a Feedback Circle, and building yours is quick and easy.

To add anyone to your Feedback Circle, just click "+ Add to Circle" on their profile page.

Then, every time you post a new chapter, your Feedback Circle will be notified so they can read what you wrote and weigh in with their thoughts.

## **Add one person every day to your Feedback Circle**

My best advice: *add at least one person every single day* to your Feedback Circle. The more readers that can give you feedback, the better!

Where can you find people to add to your Feedback Circle? Get started by exploring these 5 areas:

- [Discovery Feed](#). You'll find plenty of writers featured here!
- [Top Authors page](#). Here you'll find our most active and prominent authors.
- [Recently updated books](#). Many of our Newcomer Authors show up here as they post their very first chapters. They'd be thrilled to connect with you!
- [The 20-Year Novel Club](#). Can you write 10 words a day, every single day? If so, it will take about 20 years to finish your novel. You'll probably do it much faster, but regardless, it's a great way to connect with other authors also working hard on their novels, so join us!

- [10K Novel-Writing Challenge](#). Join us every March and October to write 10,000 words and connect with other writers who are participating in the Challenge. Be sure to add everyone to your Feedback Circle and give them lots of feedback!

By the way, you can get *even more feedback* when you open up your feedback section to comments from *any* ChapterBuzz member, instead of just those in your Feedback Circle. This can be done in your [account settings](#).

## **The Feedback Workshop: the power to write a great novel**

The [Feedback Workshop](#) is your hub for all of the feedback discussions about your book.

At a glance, you'll see all the members of your Feedback Circle, your most recent discussions, and a section where you can search and organize feedback comments, and save the ones you found most helpful.

I designed the Feedback Workshop to help you more easily connect with other members, use the feedback you receive to perfect your story, and write a *much better novel* than if you were going it alone.

[Visit the Feedback Workshop!](#)

# How to give (and receive) feedback



Learning to give and receive feedback takes some time.

But author **Liberty Henwick**, who won an award in the first-ever [10K Novel-Writing Challenge](#) for her novel, *P.S.*, has some advice:

How to *receive* feedback:

- Have a thick skin and *be willing to listen* to the suggestions your readers make with an open mind, so they feel at liberty to be completely honest. You don't want them to hide the painful truths!
- Don't take criticism personally. It's *not you, but your writing* that is being critiqued. It's not unlikely that your work will need improvement—it will hardly ever be perfect the first time.
- *You don't have to take all advice* on board. Sometimes you can stand by what you write if you feel strongly that there's a good enough reason for it.

How to *give* feedback:

- Highlight any *confusing* passages and language that doesn't make sense.
- Point out sections that are *boring*.
- Write down *questions* you have about the story so far that you'd like to see answered before the ending.

Liberty's tips take into account two big truths of writing: That **1) nothing's going to be perfect** at first—so don't get discouraged by criticism—and that **2) you can't please everyone**—so keep an open mind, but in the end, stick to what feels authentic to you.

[Check out Liberty's profile!](#)

## **We all think differently—and you reap the rewards**

At ChapterBuzz, it's not just readers and other writers who can give you feedback.

Professional editors, writing coaches, and book reviewers can weigh in, too—and each will have unique takes on what they've read. For example, an editor might instantly spot a grammar mistake, while a book reviewer might compliment your character development—and even offer a suggestion to further improve it.

But as valuable as this input from those with keen, trained eyes may be, remember: since the majority of your readers—over the course of your career—are not going to be industry professionals (such as writers, editors, and reviewers), *the opinions of everyday readers are every bit as valuable.*

After all, you don't have to be a writer to know that you're confused by a certain passage, that the middle of the book dragged, or that Michael's daughter was named Angela in Chapter 4, and—oops!—April in Chapter 5. Most every work-in-progress is going to have “growing pains” such as these.

## 5 tips for getting more feedback

You heard it first here, folks.



Here are my 5 best tips for getting more of that sweet, sweet feedback:

### **Tip #1: Comment as much as possible on other writers' chapters**

You'll find that most writers will return the favor. This is how you start great discussions and make connections that could last a lifetime!

To give feedback to another writer, simply scroll down to the bottom of any one of their chapters, and add your comment.

If you don't see an area for commenting, it could be because that writer is only accepting feedback from members of their Feedback Circle. In this case, go ahead and add the writer to *your* Feedback Circle. There's a good chance they'll add you to theirs, too!

## **Tip #2: Comment on your own chapter. Really!**

This is how you start a discussion on one of your own chapters, by posting a comment on that chapter. When you do this, everyone who has you in their Feedback Circle is notified so they can get involved.

The best way to start a discussion is to ask for *specific* feedback about that particular chapter. Ask yourself what type of feedback you'd like. Comments about grammar? Readability? Pacing? Reactions to the big plot twist? Ask and you shall receive!

However, keep in mind that while these discussions will keep your Feedback Circle engaged and wanting to read more, posting constantly and repeatedly could turn some readers away.

Here's how to avoid over-posting:

- **Not recommended:**

Posting "Feedback welcome" on every single chapter. It's vague, indirect, and can feel overwhelming to your readers when they get notified about that many conversation starters at once. Plus, posting repeatedly might cause the system to filter out what it perceives as duplicate content.

- **Recommended:**

Starting one or two discussions a day, and being specific in the feedback you're looking for. A question like, "Does Tom's response to Sara come across as down to earth or arrogant?" or even the slightly more broad, "Please let me know if the pace of this chapter is too slow," will get you much more focused, helpful responses.

### **Tip #3: Invite your friends and family**

This is hands down the most effective way to build your Feedback Circle. Friends and family will be glad to help you out—and as a bonus, they're people you already know and trust!

I've made it easy to invite people. The [Invite page on ChapterBuzz](#) will send e-mails to your friends, and when they join, you'll both be added automatically to each other's Feedback Circles. [Start inviting now!](#)

### **Tip #4: Join us in the 10K Novel-Writing Challenge!**

Every March and October is dedicated to making progress on our novels in the [10K Novel-Writing Challenge](#).

It's a fantastic opportunity for writers of all skill levels.

In addition to writing 10,000 words, we also give feedback on each other's works-in-progress, discuss ideas, and fine tune our novels.

It's the perfect way to jumpstart your writing career, connect with other writers, build your Feedback Circle, and come away with a strong foundation for an excellent novel.



"This 10K Challenge is the most rewarding thing that I have ever been a part of—the pivotal moment my novel needed.

If you haven't joined us yet, you should really consider it!"

—Author **Tiffany S. Doran**

---

[Learn more about the “10K” here](#)—and we’ll see you the next time it starts!

### **Tip #5: Become Author of the Week**

When you’re Author of the Week, we’ll feature you all over the place, along with your book and your latest request for feedback—and it’s as simple as [reserving a spot each week](#).

The more often you’re in the spotlight, the more readers you can attract, and the more easily you can build your Feedback Circle.

Now *that’s* powerful. Why not do it now? [Become this week’s Author of the Week](#)

## **Pro tip: feedback can save you money**

Did you know that all that feedback you got could actually save you money?

As you prepare your final draft for professional editing, a bonus benefit awaits: Since most editors will assess your manuscript before they agree to take it on, you want it to be as polished as possible before you submit it. Some editors might charge more if your manuscript isn't up to a certain quality standard, and on the flip side, other editors might even give you a break on the total cost of the project if it looks like your manuscript presents a smaller challenge. It all boils down to time; the longer it takes to edit your novel, the more it will cost.

## How can I thank those who helped me along the way?

You're more than welcome to stick an extra page into your book to mention the names of people whose feedback helped you the most during your writing journey. It's not required, but it's certainly a nice touch.

---



"I put a thank you in the acknowledgment section to everyone on ChapterBuzz who commented and helped improve my book."

—**Shirley Holder Platt**, award-winning author

---

Of course, the more Feedback Circles you belong to, and the more feedback you offer to other authors, the greater the chance you'll be mentioned in someone else's book as well!

## **Your novel is finished! You can be confident it's great**

At last, the day has arrived! Your book is ready to be published and made [available for sale on Amazon](#), and you have every reason to be beaming with pride.

At a time like this, any other author might be stricken with doubt and worry, with thoughts like, *What will readers think? Will anyone buy it? Will the reviews be good?*

But *you* can breathe easy; your ChapterBuzz novel is a cut above. You already know it's a hit—your Fans have told you so!

## **If I've done my job, you now understand the value of feedback!**

Many authors tend to write in solitude, emerging from their writing quarters only once their manuscripts are complete—and only then asking for anyone's opinion.

But that's risky.

Trying to write a great novel without feedback is like trying to construct a tall building without a foundation. When you spend time laying the groundwork, it will be much easier to build on.

And that's exactly what the Feedback Workshop at ChapterBuzz is for!

[Join ChapterBuzz today!](#)

Happy writing,  
Tim