

7 Ways to Fix Slow Pacing

Keep Readers Turning Pages

A Free Guide from Boshers Publishing

Introduction

Have you ever read a book where nothing seemed to happen for chapter after chapter?

Or perhaps you've received feedback like:

- "The story starts too slowly."
- "I got bored."
- "The middle drags."
- "It took too long to get interesting."

If so, you're not alone.

Pacing is one of the most common issues writers face. The good news is that pacing problems are often easier to fix than plot problems.

Contrary to popular belief, pacing isn't about making everything happen faster. It's about making readers feel like something important is always happening.

Let's look at seven practical ways to strengthen your pacing and keep readers engaged.

1. Start the Story Later

One of the biggest pacing killers is beginning too early.

Many writers spend pages explaining daily routines, backstory, or world-building before the story actually begins.

Readers don't need to see every moment leading up to the important event.

Slow Version

Sarah woke up at 6:00 a.m.

She brushed her teeth, made coffee, fed the dog, checked her email, and got dressed for work.

Twenty pages later, she discovers she's being investigated for murder.

Stronger Version

The detective was waiting beside Sarah's car when she left for work.

"Ms. Reynolds," he said. "We need to talk about a homicide."

Notice how the second version immediately creates questions.

Readers keep turning pages because they want answers.

Ask Yourself

Where does the real story begin?

Could I cut the first chapter entirely?

Could I start closer to the conflict?

2. Give Every Scene a Purpose

Every scene should accomplish something meaningful.

A scene should do at least one of the following:

- Advance the plot
- Reveal character
- Increase tension
- Deliver important information
- Create a new problem

If a scene doesn't do any of those things, readers may feel stuck.

Example

Imagine your protagonist spends five pages eating lunch with friends.

If the conversation doesn't reveal secrets, create conflict, or move the story forward, the scene may not belong.

However:

If one friend accidentally reveals information that changes everything, the scene suddenly becomes important.

Quick Test

After each scene ask:

"What changes because this scene happened?"

If the answer is "nothing," consider cutting or rewriting it.

3. Cut Repetition

Writers often explain the same idea multiple times.

Readers usually understand more quickly than we think.

Example

Mary discovers her husband is lying.

Then she spends:

- Three pages thinking about it
- Two pages discussing it with a friend
- Another chapter worrying about it

The story stalls because readers already know she's upset.

Instead:

Allow her reaction.

Then move her toward action.

Better Approach

Mary discovers the lie.

She confronts him.

He lies again.

Now the situation is escalating rather than repeating.

Each scene should move forward, not circle the same emotional point repeatedly.

4. Increase Scene Conflict

Conflict doesn't always mean explosions or fistfights.

Conflict simply means someone wants something and something stands in the way.

Weak Scene

A woman buys groceries.

Everything goes smoothly.

Nothing changes.

Stronger Scene

A woman buys groceries.

Her credit card is declined.

The cashier announces it loudly.

She's already running late.

Now readers feel tension.

Even small conflicts create momentum.

Add Friction

Ask yourself:

- What can go wrong?
- Who disagrees?
- What obstacle exists?
- What pressure is increasing?

The more resistance a character faces, the more readers stay engaged.

5. Shorten Long Explanations

Writers love sharing information.

Readers love stories.

The trick is blending information into action.

Slow Version

Three pages explaining the history of a magical kingdom.

Better Version

A guard points to the ruined castle.

"That's what's left after the Dragon Wars."

Now readers learn history while the story continues moving.

Rule of Thumb

Whenever possible:

Show information through:

- Dialogue
- Action
- Conflict
- Discovery

Instead of lengthy explanation.

6. End Chapters with Questions

One of the easiest ways to improve pacing is to create curiosity.

Readers turn pages because they need answers.

Example

Weak Ending:

Tom went to bed.

Strong Ending:

Tom opened the envelope.

Inside was a photograph of his missing sister.

The chapter ended before he could turn it over.

Which version makes you want to keep reading?

Questions create momentum.

Answers create satisfaction.

Great pacing balances both.

Ways to End a Chapter

- A revelation
- A decision
- A surprise
- A threat
- A discovery
- An unanswered question

You don't need a cliffhanger every chapter.

But you should give readers a reason to continue.

7. Raise the Stakes

Pacing slows when readers don't understand why events matter.

The bigger the consequences, the more invested readers become.

Low Stakes

A student might fail a test.

Higher Stakes

Failing the test means losing a scholarship.

Even Higher Stakes

Losing the scholarship means leaving college and moving home.

The event didn't change.

The consequences did.

Readers become emotionally invested when outcomes matter.

Ask Yourself

What happens if my character fails?

Can the consequences become larger?

Can failure affect other people besides the protagonist?

Higher stakes naturally create stronger pacing.

Bonus Exercise: Find the Dragging Parts

Take one chapter from your manuscript.

For every scene ask:

What is the goal?

What is the conflict?

What changes?

Why should readers care?

Any scene that lacks those answers may be slowing your story.

Final Thoughts

Fast pacing isn't the goal.

Engaging pacing is.

Some scenes should be quiet.

Some scenes should be emotional.

Some scenes should be explosive.

The key is making sure every scene creates movement, tension, curiosity, or change.

If readers constantly feel that something important is happening, they'll keep turning pages long into the night.

And that's exactly what every writer wants.

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