




## Format

Standard for most submissions is:

- Double-spaced
- Times New Roman
- 12-point font
- 1-inch margins
- Left alignment, not justified
- First line indented for each new paragraph
- Include Last Name, Title, and Page Number in all caps in upper-right hand header (ex. )
- Here's an [article on how to](#) format your manuscript for submission.

## Opening Line

*"Listen friend, I like you."*

- Intriguing first line. It could be stronger if you give the reader a chance to figure it out, rather than telling us Paulie's motive right away (money). I had a little trouble following the "Ten Percent Down" phrasing throughout the narrative, but I think this could be resolved by slowing things down and setting up the story a bit. Continuing the conversation in the opening (as you do in Scene 3) could help the reader get a bit more oriented with what's going on.
- Show who Paulie is (more on this under **Characterization**) and what Paulie is like through dialogue and interaction. Immerse your reader. This is especially important with a commercial thriller. Start us off with action. Get us biting our nails by the end of Chapter 1.

## Plot / Structure

- I'll refer to the scenes in this chapter by number for easier reference.
- **Scene 1:** A little tough to follow at first. There was a lot of description that made it difficult to know where to focus. This will greatly be improved by taking a moment to orient the reader a bit more and ensure they know what's going on. Because this is a thriller, we want to keep the reading pacy without too much lengthy description. I'll refer to this more when we discuss Pacing below.
  - Note: The transition between Scene 1 with Ryan and Paulie and Scene 2 with El was difficult to follow because of the foreign language exchange. But once I understood the overall context and reviewed it again, it made more sense. I put notes on this in-line.
- **Scene 2:** Interesting seeing what was going on behind the scenes with El and Cain. However, I wonder if this scene is necessary. It seems to be good for laughs, but unless the team being poor quality behind the scenes is significant later, I would honestly cut it and link Scenes 1 and 3. Another option, if you're looking to give El more of a role later in the manuscript, would be to tell the opening scenes from his perspective which would greatly cut down on the details in Scenes 1 and 3.
- **Scene 3:** This scene was intense, and probably one of my favs, but still had me looking for Emma. I enjoyed seeing Ryan in action, it just needs to be consistent with his description. More on this in **Characterization**.
- **Scene 4:** Really good twist here! Caught me off guard! ( I'm starting to wonder if this is all setup for what Emma's about to get mixed up in.) If so, yikes! Some really nice descriptions in this one. A great parallel to the darkness that occurs on the boat at the end.
- Ultimately, it comes down to determining the purpose of this chapter: showing how the forces behind Minley operate/Introducing Emma/Setting up the antagonists or other special characters of interest (El, Cain, etc.) This will inform the plot, dialogue, as well as the perspectives from which you tell the story.

## Characterization

- **Ryan:** We spent a lot of time in Ryan's head, only for him to "disappear" in the end. Learned a few interesting things about him, including him being into history and cutthroat when it came to getting the job done, but what was the purpose of learning this about him? Will it affect Emma's storyline later? If not, some (if not all) of his internal thoughts could be cut. I also would've liked to see more of the side of him that appealed to Paulie before he switched things up and started shooting people. (Perhaps more organic physical description?) At times, he came across as a bit older and mature than El seemed to view him. He never seems unsure of himself or his abilities.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Paulie:</b> Seems like an interesting character with a strong voice. Had some trouble following his other language and motivation clearly though. I think some more backstory and organic details about his mannerisms could help with this.</li> <li>• <b>El:</b> I had trouble sorting out El's voice. He came across as thoroughly annoyed in Scene 2 and flirtatious/bitter in Scene 4. I'm interested in learning more about who he is, his role in the overall story, and if there is more to him being in this chapter outside of being a sort of accomplice/hitman.</li> <li>• <b>Cain:</b> Blunt, gets the job done. Another interesting character with strong voice. He seemed to have the best physical description.</li> </ul>
<b>Dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of the lengthy descriptions, the dialogue wasn't always easy to follow.</li> <li>• It's essential to focus the dialogue on the most important details in order to serve the goal of the scene.</li> <li>• Tip: Try writing out a brief script with no narration or description and see how it flows. Keep it straight to the point.</li> </ul>
<b>Pacing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are quite a few areas in this chapter that felt a bit slow for a commercial novel. The good news is, cutting most of them will greatly reduce your word count. (Silver lining!)</li> <li>• Unfortunately, the focus on description significantly slows down your pacing. (More on this below under <b>Craft</b>.) A way to identify slow points is to read your manuscript aloud. When a scene is intense, does it sound like it's being slowed down as you read the descriptions? This is a sign to condense sentences and cut details.</li> <li>• Lisa Cron wrote this book on not giving your reader more details than they can handle. She focuses on this specifically in Chapter 2.</li> <li>• Condensing sentences to reduce redundancy could also help with pacing. See some of my in-line comments for tips on this.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Here's a vid with tips on how to avoid overwriting.</a></li> </ul>
<b>Voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surprisingly, it was some of the side characters who came across with the strongest voice in this chapter (Paulie, Cain, etc.) Their personalities really seemed to shine through in their dialogue. I think this was because you were forced to SHOW what they were like since they weren't the POV characters.</li> <li>• Think about how Ryan, El, or Emma would say or do something if we weren't in their heads. Then present the narration as they would say it. This will lend more uniqueness and complexity to your characters.</li> <li>• The most essential voice to nail is Emma's because she's the protagonist we'll be following for the rest of the series.</li> </ul>
<b>Tone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some great moments of tension here.</li> <li>• Strengthen that tone by focusing more on plot than characterization and tightening pacing. Too much description can pull readers out of the story.</li> </ul>
<b>Craft</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As mentioned above, at times the description could slow down the pace of your narrative. I would focus on the rule of not using more than 2 details, when necessary, 3 max. Be careful of this especially with clothing descriptions. Most of the time they don't matter. I've noted some examples of this in your in-line comments.</li> <li>• Watch for filter words: looked/saw/heard/felt. See notes about this in my in-line comments. <a href="#">Here's a link to a list of words to watch for.</a></li> <li>• I noted a crutch phrase or 2 as I was reading. <a href="#">Here are some tips on catching crutch phrases and words.</a></li> <li>• There are quite a few typos and missed words throughout this draft, so be sure to run past a proofreader or quality CP after revising for submission.</li> <li>• I got a little lost with the language Paulie went into or the significance of it. Perhaps styling this in a different format could help? I was distracted from the detail that El was passing the gun to Ryan because I was more focused on trying to decipher the dialogue. 😊</li> </ul>



## Conclusion

- Nice cliffhanger. Left us hanging, waiting to see what happens next. As I mentioned, I was ultimately waiting to see Emma be “forced” to go to the school. If you can achieve this by the end of the opening chapter, you’re guaranteed to keep readers wanting more.

## Final Thoughts

### Strong Points:

- High-concept idea.
- Interesting characters.
- Good builds of tension.
- Great action descriptions.

### Next Steps:

- Revise plot to present Emma as a stronger focus; focus on the “promise of the premise”
- Cut unnecessary descriptions and phrases to increase pacing
- Revise dialogue and mannerisms to present more complex characters with a strong voice
- Check for standard formatting guidelines and revise accordingly.
- Review for typos on your own and/or with a proofreader.

