

# Creative Writing Tips: How to Write A Mini Saga



**Hints and tips to help you write a compelling story in just 100 words!**

Writing a mini saga might seem tricky, trying to translate your idea into a whole story that fits into just 100 words, but it can be done! This guide takes you through the creation of a mini saga from beginning to end, giving a few hints and tips on how to get your plot details across to the reader without using up too many words.

Our example will be in the crime genre, but the techniques we'll use can still be applied across all other stories.

## The Hook

Your first sentence is your opportunity to hook the reader in to the story. Make it intriguing and set up what's to come. Here's ours:

***She was killed on stage.***

5 words and we already have a victim, a crime and a location. Immediately the reader is drawn in – who killed her and why?

A great way to start a 100-word story is after the inciting incident, which is the event that sets off the chain of events in your story. Starting the story after this means you don't have to describe it in detail, or give a long explanation about what led up to it. **Mini sagas benefit from diving straight into the action.**

## The Beginning

***Alfie, the leading man, did it of course, but who'd swapped the prop knife for a real one?***

In this second line we find out how she was killed – stabbed by accident by the lead actor, because someone had swapped the prop knife.

Here are some things to notice about the beginning of the story that will help with your word count:



- No descriptions – what the theater and characters look like is irrelevant to the plot, so leave it up to the reader to fill it in for themselves – they know what a theater looks like!
- No last names – you might need that extra word later, so leave it out!
- Contracting words – using ‘who’d’ instead of ‘who had’.

## Characters

We already have 2 characters – the victim and Alfie. But for a crime story we’re going to need someone to solve it, and probably another suspect or two. Let’s see how we can introduce them:

***I arrived promptly, the body still warm, and gathered the suspects.***

By making the story a first-person narrative, we’ve created another character without having to introduce them. The narrator is our detective!

We’ve also introduced more suspects without having to describe any of them! By simply writing ‘gathered the suspects’, we are using the reader’s existing knowledge of murder mysteries – gathering the suspects to reveal ‘whodunnit’ is a classic trope so doesn’t need any more explanation. The reader will imagine other actors who were in the play, maybe the director or people working backstage.

## The Middle

The plot of the story is set up and we have the characters, so now we need to see what happens next:

***“Alfie, it was you. The victim had recently rejected you so you created this plan, hoping nobody would believe you’d commit murder in front of a live audience!” A police officer arrived and handcuffed him, ignoring his pleas of innocence.***



So here our narrator/detective reveals the killer – it was Alfie after all! A fourth character is shown, the police officer, but only as a device to make the arrest.



## The Ending

The murderer has been arrested so we could add a straightforward ending here about Alfie being sent to prison, but that wouldn't make for a very exciting story. Also this is a crime story and they usually have a red herring or two...

***I left, discarding the fake ID and mustache. He hadn't even recognized his own understudy! Now he'd never act again, and I'd be the star.***

A twist in the tale!

Alfie is innocent! It was the narrator all along! Remember, if you're using first-person narration they are a full character in the story too, which means they can have flaws, get things wrong, and even lie.

This ending makes the story much more compelling because it surprises the reader. You don't have to have a twist ending, but your ending should have an impact, or tie up events in a satisfying way.

## **Here's the story in full:**

### **An Act of Murder**

She was killed on stage. Alfie, the leading man, did it of course, but who'd swapped the prop knife for a real one? I arrived promptly, the body still warm, and gathered the suspects. "Alfie, it was you. The victim had recently rejected you so you created this plan, hoping nobody would believe you'd commit murder in front of a live audience!" A police officer arrived and handcuffed him, ignoring his pleas of innocence.

I left, discarding the fake ID and mustache. He hadn't even recognized his own understudy! Now he'd never act again, and I'd be the star.





## A note on twists



This twist works because it's plausible. The 'detective' arrived promptly – very promptly as the body was still warm. Almost as if he was already there...

An understudy would have had the means to swap the knives, being backstage, and the means to plant evidence. And how did he know she had rejected Alfie? As a reader you assume he found out from interviewing other cast members, but if he is a member of the cast he'd already know. Most importantly, he has a motive – he wants to be the star of the show.

### Now it's your turn:

- Pick a genre. Deciding this first will help you think about what elements you need to include.
- What is the inciting incident? What changes to kick-start events?
- Who are the characters in your story? What are they trying to achieve?
- Write down the outline of your story. What happens in the beginning, middle and end?
- Write out a first draft and count the words. It's likely you'll go over 100, so see what you can take out. What isn't necessary information or detail?
- Edit until you have 100 words!

### Mini Saga Top Tips

- Contract words: 'it is' can become 'it's'
- Dive straight into the action
- Use stronger vocabulary: 'he sprinted' instead of 'he ran really fast'
- Be specific: 'a pug' instead of 'a small dog'
- Avoid unnecessary detail or information
- Be ruthless with your edit!
- Don't use 4 words when you can use 1: 'suddenly' instead of 'all of a sudden'
- Don't include too many active characters - you don't have enough words to describe all their actions

