Note: All information contained within this document should be considered advice for writers that wish to submit their work to Equestria Daily. This document is neither a set of guidelines to automatically have your story accepted, nor a list of things that will get your story instantly rejected.

The Editor's Omnibus

Writing wisdom, wrung from the willing, wrought with wit and worry.

If you're reading this document, you've most likely been linked to it from Equestria Daily, or by one of the wonderful blogponies who helps manage the fanfiction submission queue.

What you'll find here is an attempt at general writing assistance, themed mostly around the sorts of things we see as pre-readers for Equestria Daily.

How Equestria Daily is Different

Before we get to the advice, we'd like to take a moment to explain why we feel this is necessary at all.

From the outset, all writers who submit their fiction to public venues (like FanFiction.net, FimFiction, DeviantART, and what have you) do so because they want an audience. There is nothing wrong with looking for a little attention. Perhaps you already have some, and you are building a base of loyal, supportive readers. If that is the case, congratulations!

You are probably here because you are interested in submitting your fanfiction to Equestria Daily. That's the idea — we want to publish your stories! That said, we also strive to maintain Equestria Daily's reputation as a source of high-quality fanfiction, and our standards of scrutiny are admittedly higher than those you may find somewhere else.

As a result, even stories that are well-received in other venues may not pass initial approval here. If your story does not pass screening, please do not be discouraged: this does not mean that your story is "bad". It just means that either your story is not what Equestria Daily is currently looking for, or that the pre-reader staff believes that your story could be significantly better with a bit of extra attention.

We do understand that, as fun as writing is, it is also a lot of work. And the amount of extra effort we are asking for is more than many writers are willing to give for something that is, after all, just for fun. However, at Equestria Daily, we feel that we owe it to the readers to offer the best possible writing, within reason, for their enjoyment. By submitting your work to this site, you are implying that you feel the same way.

The pre-readers of Equestria Daily strive to accept the fandom's best fiction for everypony to enjoy. That's why you're submitting here in the first place. You want to be among the best! The blog's standards are high, and our submission requirements rigorous. Most other sites do not have this degree of pre-post scrutiny. If you keep in mind that a rejection is not an attempt to exclude, but an attempt to help you improve, then you are doing yourself a great favor.

Self-Editing: Things to Watch For

(If you read nothing else, read this section)

To begin, we wish to establish a crucial point:

Do not rely on the Equestria Daily pre-readers to be your editors/reviewers.

Instead, you should take the initiative. Recruit other people to proofread your work, or send it to Ponychan (we'll cover this in a future update, Pinkie Pie Swear.).

We do not say this out of pettiness or a lack of interest in your work, but rather because **backlogs can dramatically reduce the quantity and depth of the feedback we can provide.** In addition, an author who presents a coherent, well-structured narrative is **much** more likely to secure a speedy review and post. Help us help you by helping yourself first!

With that said: **all stories should go through at least one round of self-editing** before you consider them complete, and preferably a second before you submit them to Equestria Daily. Dot that i, curl the q. Even the best authors will make mistakes, and it is your responsibility to locate and correct these flubs before sending your story out into the world. Some typical problem areas are listed here.

Attribution of Dialogue (Dialogue Tagging)

All examples assume American English conventions.
You may use international or British conventions, but you *must* be consistent. Some of these will be "wrong" by one set of conventions, so tread carefully. We suggest those selected as "correct" but we will not demand them changed if they are correct by one set of standards.

> ✔ "Hi there," the pink pony giggled. (She giggled while saying the words.)
> ✔ "Hi there." The pink pony giggled. (She said those words, then giggled.)
> ✔ "Hi there." The pink pony grinned. (The word 'grinned' isn't a 'speaking' verb.)
> ✔ "Hi there!" the pink pony shouted. (Exclamations and queries replace the comma.)
> ✖ "Hi there," the pink pony grinned. (It should be a period: 'grinned' isn't a 'speaking' verb.)
> ✖ "Hi there." The pink pony said. (This should be a comma; no capitalization should be used)
> ✖ "Hi there"! the pink pony shouted! (Punctuation of dialogue belongs inside the quotes.)
> ✖ "Hi there!" The pink pony shouted! (Don't capitalize "the"; treat the "!" as a comma.)

Capitalization

If you tell your friend you helped your Uncle Jack off his pony, you would be lauded for your concern for the well-being of your fellow man. Telling him you helped your uncle jack off his pony conveys something else entirely!

Formatting

When it comes to delineating paragraphs, you can insert a blank line between them as we do here, indent them like a school paper, or, ideally, do both. We care about your fic's readability, and readers *really* don't go for stories where both of the above are lacking.

How you handle section breaks will vary on your editing program. Horizontal lines in editors like GDocs are one way to go. A center-aligned trio of asterisks (***), hyphens (---), or tildes (~~~) will also suffice. Feel free to deviate from these suggestions only if you feel confident your method is just as capable of saying "I'm a section break" as these do.

Homonyms

If you can't tell the difference between commonly confused words like to/too/two, their/they're/there, you/your/you're, its/it's, etc., take the time to get them straight. Though you shouldn't fret if one or two of these blunders slip through your proof-reading pass, we do urge you to banish such errors from your writing every time you catch one.

Em Dash vs En Dash vs Hyphen

Em Dashes are incredibly versatile—and can be used to replace pretty much any other punctuation mark. The function of the Em Dash is to create an appositive—much like this—or to indicate a sudden break in dialogue or narration:

> "Ohmygoodness, Twilight, have you ever because I have and if I have then you *must* have—" Twilight stuffed a hoof in Pinkie's mouth. "Shut your gob for once in your life, Pinkie."

En Dashes see little use with American authors, but are an effective replacement for Em Dashes in appositive structure. En Dashes have a single space on either side of them.

Hyphens are used to create compound words such as: rough-looking and light-blue. Do not confuse hyphens for Em or En Dashes. It doesn't work. Hyphens may also be used to show a stutter in dialogue: "I-I… d-don't know w-what to say here." Be wary; overdoing it is easy, and can quickly become jarring to the flow of your piece.

Ellipses

Ellipses can be a fickle matter for many writers. The first rule to bear in mind is that they should be used sparingly, lest they lose their poignancy. An ellipsis is used in fiction to indicate a trailing off of dialogue, and occasionally narration, though this is much more rare, and *never appropriate for third person omniscient*. Now, the biggest thing with ellipses is internal consistency. Different writing and style guides advocate differing usage. For example, the Chicago Manual of Style . . . employs this method, which can be confusing to some because it is primarily used for omission of quoted text—not something we generally do in fiction writing.

As an emerging medium, internet writing does not have a codified standard for ellipses yet, but the vast majority tend to use ellipses… like… this. Note the space after, but not before. The exception to this rule is when an ellipsis begins a sentence, and thus has no space following it. Again, the primary point is internal consistency. The following usages are acceptable:

> …Words words words.
> Words… words words.
> Words words words...
> Words . . . words words.
> . . . Words words words.
> Words words words . . .

Semicolons

Like all good things, semicolons can be used too often. What comprises 'too often' however, is frequently a matter of taste. Kurt Vonnegut says that the only reason to use a semicolon is to show your reader that you've been to college. Other authors find them very useful. If you do choose to use them, remember these four handy rules:

- A semicolon should be used only between two sections of text that can stand as sentences in their own right. This means they both contain a subject and a relevant verb.
- Using a semicolon implies a close link to two sentences. Your hat's color and its shape would be suitable descriptions to link with a semicolon. Your hat's color and the current temperature would not.
- When not separating sentences, a semicolon's other use is as a super-comma, separating listed objects that contain commas, such as names of state capitols.
- Any other use of a semicolon, and too-frequent use even when correct, is sure to draw the ire of a reader.

Spell Checking

Spell checkers are your friend. In fact, they are your *best* friend. A quick run-through with a spell check

program can turn hours of rifling through a dictionary into a thirty-second automated manoeuvre. If you're fortunate enough to have access to Microsoft Word, you will even have a rudimentary punctuation corrector. Both OpenOffice and GoogleDocs have spell-checkers and, best of all, are completely free. You have no reason to permit rampant spelling errors in your story.

In line with the homonym section above, be sure the word your spell checker offers up is the correct word for the job. Eyed fined sent in says like these my tea ember a sing two my pried as an aspire ring author. [Translation: I'd find sentences like these mighty embarrassing to my pride as an aspiring author.]

Tense

Do some words seem completely out of place in the story? Chances are they're in the wrong tense. Tense implies where, with regard to time, an action takes place. For example, the past tense would be "He got it." Present tense is "He's getting it." Future tense is "He will get it." Most stories are written in the past tense, although it isn't unheard of to write in the present, especially in the first person and, on the rare occasion, second person. Future tense is almost never used outside of speech or personal thoughts.

Variety & Precision

We all reach for the thesaurus from time to time when we think our writing's getting stale, but remember the primary goal of effective language is to relate ideas clearly. So before you start plugging in those thesaurus treasures, remember that **a longer word is not always the better one to use.** Developing authors often attempt to give their work a false air of maturity by using complex synonyms for simple words. Unless such vocabulary fits the tone of your narrator or speaking character (and to be blunt, it is a very rare occurrence for that to be the case), stick with words everypony can understand.

This concept of not repeating a word too often holds true for characters as well. You do not always have to use a character's name when a short description or a pronoun will do.

> Rainbow Dash rocketed into the sky, her wings working hard to gain the speed she would need. Pinkie Pie applauded and cheered as Rainbow Dash trimmed her wings and tilted her head back, throwing herself into a spin. Pinkie Pie whooped even louder as Rainbow Dash began to spin, sending a spray of water droplets in all directions.

In the above paragraph, the name "Rainbow Dash" appears three times and "Pinkie Pie" twice. This gets repetitive and tiring to read. Try replacing some of these with a short description.

> Rainbow Dash rocketed into the sky, her wings working hard to gain the speed she would need. Pinkie applauded and cheered as the rainbow-maned flier trimmed her wings and tilted her head back, throwing herself into a spin. The pink party pony whooped even louder as Dash began to spin, sending a spray of water droplets in all directions.

In this paragraph, the proper names for our marshmallow cuties are used, and descriptions were sparingly mixed into the narrative. It's still clear which pony is doing what, and it breaks up the monotony of over-used repetitions. See the Lavender Unicorn Syndrome section below for further explanation.

Pronouns

This is not always the case with pronouns. When you have two females present within a section, using words like 'she' needs to be done carefully and unambiguously. Assume that the reader WILL mix up who 'she' is if it is at all possible. For example:

> Rainbow Dash rocketed into the sky, her wings working hard to gain the speed she would need. Pinkie watched as she hit her apex, and she tilted her head back and trimmed her wings. The maneuver threw her into a blaze of spinning colors, scattering water droplets everywhere, whilst the pink party pony cheered her from below.

Above, the subject of the sentences changes, and highlights correct but potentially confusing usage of multiple pronouns. Even with correct usage, it can get confusing. Having passages read back to you (or simply reading them aloud) will highlight such confusing parts.

Lavender Unicorn Syndrome

However - and this is the exception that proves the rule - there is such a phenomenon as "Lavender Unicorn Syndrome". LUS (for short) is when an author leans too far in the opposite direction to the above and proceeds to explain to the reader about the actions and activities of a never-ending stream of brightly coloured equines. As with over-use of alternatives to the word "said", over-use of alternatives to the basic names of your characters is just plain bad writing. It is the hallmark of an author who has committed the cardinal sin of *trying too hard*. For example, the following is how *not* to do it:

> The cerulean-winged flyer rocketed into the sky, her turquoise wings working hard to gain the speed she would need. As the sapphire pegasus with the rainbow-hued mane hit her apex, the cyan-tinted flying pony tilted her head back and trimmed her wings. Her maneuver threw the light blue creature into a multi-coloured blaze of spinning colors, scattering water droplets everywhere, while Ponyville's premier hot pink party pony cheered her from below.

You don't need to tell us, in increasingly imaginative ways, that Twilight Sparkle is lavender, or mauve, or off-purple. Neither do we need repeated reminders that Rainbow Dash is blue, cerulean or turquoise. Sometimes, quite often in fact, they are just Twilight and Dash, or Pinkie or Rarity.

As with everything in life, *a little of what you like does you good*. The same goes for your writing. By all means, inform us of their colouration to break up and spice your wordage, but over-eager use of the pastel palette will turn off your audience, and frankly sounds ridiculous.

Viewpoint

The viewpoint (or perspective) is how you narrate the story. There are three main **voices** of narration, commonly called first, second, and third-person.

First-person is signified by the narrator telling the story through their eyes, most often through the use of "I". This voice is good if you want to really get into the mind of your character, and is also the easiest way to introduce an [unreliable narrator](#).

Second-person is narrated directly to the reader, and is most often used in Sensual Fiction and Choose-Your-Own-Adventure novellas. It is denoted by its use of "you". "Lemony" or aware narrators work well with this, essentially making the story-teller an additional character in the story. Be aware that this perspective is exceedingly hard to do; it is almost impossible to write a character for the reader that the all readers agree with. In essence, you must write "in character" for any given reader: something that, due to the diversity of the MLP fanbase, is virtually impossible.

Third-person is far and away the most prevalent narrative voice in fiction, signified by the presence of "he/she/they/it". This voice generally follows two different paths: **third-person omniscient** and **third-person limited**. **At any given moment,** a third-person omniscient narrator has access to the thoughts and sensations of any character present in a scene. On the other hoof, a third-person limited narrator has access to only one character."Lemony" narrators can also use third-person, although it is more difficult to accomplish and lacks the ability to flesh out the narrator as in a second-person story.

Nota bene: Be wary of frequent shifts in perspective. Change perspective characters only when necessary, or you'll disorient your readers.

***Be exceptionally wary for the dreaded Casual Narration. This occurs when you deviate from your established choice of perspective for the story and lapse into another. This most often occurs in a 3rd person omniscient story, when the author slips into 3rd person limited in narration to a character's point of view.

Spit & Polish

After completing all of these previous steps, you should go through it one more time. Before they edit, many writers find it helpful to **step away** from a rough draft for a few days: if you're editing immediately after finishing a story, your brain will tend to gloss over your mistakes. Then, when you are ready to edit your manuscript and have access to a printer, **print it out** and read it again**.** Read it **out loud if possible,** from start to finish. Your ear detects awkwardness, artifice, and other assorted goofs you won't catch reading with your eyes, and what you catch on paper can yield so much more than what you'd find on the computer screen. Keep an eye out for common mistakes, such as verbs that are in the wrong tense or mis-conjugated, missing quotation marks, and/or any other small but significant omissions.

If this seems like a lot of work, remember: the pre-readers only want your writing to be the best it can possibly be for the rest of the world. **The more polish you give a story before submitting it for publication, the better chance it has of receiving a pre-reader's approval.**

Show vs. Tell

This is often the biggest obstacle to a well-written story, and thus deserves its own section.

When someone wants you to show, not tell, they want you to imply that certain things are going on rather than just informing us that they're happening. It's like the difference between watching someone build a chair from a pile of lumber, and walking into someone's workshop and seeing a newly built chair surrounded by wood shavings and fresh sawdust.

In both scenarios, the information passed on is the same: this person you know (Let's call her Xen, because apparently Jayson Thiesson gave his daughter that name and that's a pretty freaking sweet thing to be called IMO. Agreed? Good!) has just built a new chair. The difference in the second scenario, however, is that instead of us seeing Xen build the chair or having Xen tell us herself that she built that chair, we can *infer* from what we see that Xen built this new chair.

To give you another example of how that sort of thing might play out in prose, have a look at this random little blurb of a sentence:

> Twilight was tired because she had stayed up too late the night before reading an old astronomy textbook, and that was making her letter to Princess Celestia very difficult to write.

Sure, it got the necessary information across, but it just *told* it to you. There is no part of that sentence left to the imagination; the facts are the facts are the facts. As Pinkie Pie might say: "Boooooriiiiiiing." Now take the ideas behind that same sentence, add a bit of showing, and...

> For what seemed like the hundredth time, Twilight's head drooped towards the wrinkled yellow parchment lying on the desk before her. As her snout touched down with a painful thump, the purple-furred unicorn's head snapped back up, her eyes widening in shock for a second or two before crumpling into a scowl. She'd been sitting here for, what, twenty minutes now? And all she had to show for it was a splitting headache and a single line at the top of her paper: "Dear Princess Celestia..."
>
> Twilight snorted and brought a hoof up to her forehead, the air feeling thick as molasses as she tried to lift her foreleg all the way up to her frazzled maneline. This wasn't that hard. This couldn't possibly be that hard. She'd been writing these letters every other Friday for the past year now, and she'd never had one single, solitary problem with it. And now: nothing. Her brain was on lockdown, and her eyes felt like something had dusted them with sand overnight. She could almost hear Spike's gratingly disapproving tone: Serves you right for staying up so late with your horn stuck in some chemistry

textbook.

"First of all, it was astronomy," Twilight mumbled through clenched teeth at the reproachful baby dragon inside her head. "And second of all..."

A rogue beam of sunlight glanced off a nearby vase and flared out across the desk, sending Twilight's stomach into a tailspin. "...just shut up," she finished as her head fell onto her letter again. This time, it stayed there.

Contrary to what may seem like basic logic, the best stories are the ones that don't outright *say* anything. Ideally, the author is an artist just as much as a painter or sculptor is; he or she uses words to create an entirely separate world that we then visualize inside our own minds. When you show and don't tell, you give your readers a chance to determine all the little details of that world for themselves, which in turn allows them to immerse themselves much deeper into the text.

Why are people often disappointed when one of their favorite books is made into a movie? Because reading a book gives them the leeway to imagine the world however they desire, and a movie inherently has to pick just one version of that world. In other words, the movie, by its very nature, has to tell. And that's why the book is (almost) always better.

Hazardous Terrain

The following subjects can lose an author his or her audience. Each lesson here was learned—some with great pain—by at least one of the pre-readers in the past. We do not necessarily discourage or forbid these elements from appearing in your fiction, but you should **heed these warnings unless you are an advanced writer who knows what they're doing.**

Author's Notes

A/Ns placed above your story are distracting and often self-serving. Your readers open your story expecting, well, a story. Give it to them immediately. If you insist on leaving your readers a note, do so only after your story's conclusion, and be sure to thank those who've helped you write your story along the way.

Crossovers

Notoriously difficult to do well. By attempting to fuse two different established universes into one, **you're essentially doubling the chances that the reader will find your adaptation flawed.** Some crossovers, such as those involving video game characters or anime, are often dismissed by readers on the spot due to an overwhelmingly low Signal to Noise ratio. While this doesn't mean that they can't be done well, chances are you'll face an uphill battle trying to get noticed.

Try to gauge how accessible your crossover is to readers of different levels of familiarity with the source. A reader unfamiliar with the source universe is unlikely to patronize your story. A familiar reader, on the other hoof, may reject your story on the smallest deviation from canon. If your source universe is obscure or contains great depth, the lines you tread between not enough explanation, too much explanation, and incorrect explanation will be thinner than Twilight Sparkle after Pinkie Pie's "opening door" twitch combo. We encourage you to tread carefully.

Grimdark and Horror

Do not conflate these genres with gore. Equestria Daily does not accept stories of that persuasion. For your story to pass the pre-readers, the motifs of these genres must serve the story and not the other way around. The second we sense you are writing such stories to fulfill some repressed fantasy, out it goes—and trust us, stories of that nature telegraph themselves like a car alarm in a zombie-overrun Atlanta.

Mary Sue / Gary Stu

Don't. Just don't. Consider this: You've just met someone at the office. They do their job very well. They can also do the jobs of their coworkers without breaking a sweat. They drive a fabulous car, have a lovely home, and don't really **need** to work, they simply do so to keep themselves busy. Most people would consider such a person insufferable—he's too perfect—unless they **were** that person. A critical audience will feel the same way.

Common signs of a Sue/Stu:

Alicorn: These are generally, by mere virtue of their having both flight and magic available to them, Sues. Even if they don't use their magic or wings at all/often, they are still available as a plot device and thus their power remains. In addition, they fall under the auspices of 'Special Snowflake' due to their uniqueness alone.

Atypical Hue: This covers both manes and coats. There is a lack of black or deeply-hued / over-saturated coats or manes on the ponies of Equestria. Even more rare are multi-hued coats, eyes, and so forth. Rainbow Dash and the Princesses appear to be the sole exceptions to that rule for manes. Gradients are rarely if ever used, and this author can only recall them appearing on Celestia's extended mane. While an attempt to make an OC similar to a RL pony is admirable, such as with mottled coats or fetlocks of a different shade, taking it to extremes to make your pony 'different' is generally the sign of a Sue.

Better-Than: If at any time you make sure the character is faster than a fast character, smarter than a smart one, and so forth, you are firmly in Sue territory. Remember that the canon characters' traits are their defining characteristics, and they are considered exemplars of them by the fact that they hold the Elements of Harmony.

Celebrity Status:
It's often very tempting to create an OC with whom everypony immediately becomes very special best friends—or in some cases, is already friends or even family with before the story even begins.

This is understandable and a common fantasy most everyone shares; it is also entirely unrealistic and makes for a very bland character. Conflict can only occur when two characters aren't on the best of terms, and quite often it's only interesting when it's not always clear who's right and who's wrong. If your OC enters Ponyville and is immediately loved by everypony he or she meets, you've got a problem.

You don't have to make your character a total flankhole—in fact, everyone immediately hating your character doesn't bode well either—but try to, at the very least, make them work for the affections of their peers. Don't just say that Applejack trusts Sparklight Twixle implicitly the moment they first meet; have Sparky help AJ out on the farm for a day or two out of good neighborly spirit, and see if the two of them don't hit it off after that. A character who clashes with other characters has a personality, and a character

with a personality is exactly what you want to have.

Non-Pony Markings:

> This is related to Atypical Hue. A pony with distinct, non-pony markings, such as a tail with a black tip or (far worse) deer antlers or markings like scales is just plain bad. There is no way to sugar coat it. This is a very 'special' character who is designed to stand out. The closest you should EVER come to this is to USE a non-pony (zebra, buffalo, griffon, Discord, etc) as a character. Steer clear of these traits.

Memes

References to other stories (Luna's abacus), the show (20% cooler), or other memes (DOUBLE RAINBOW): We **highly** discourage using them. They must be deployed with skill, tact, and due diligence to ensure that you aren't swamping your story with them. Nothing breaks the reader out of a story faster than an abrupt outside reference. And that's how Equestria was made.

Original Characters

We are **not** biased against OCs. There are many stories on the blog that use OCs extremely effectively: Antipodes and Fallout: Equestria spring to mind. However, we will not pull any punches when we see **bad or under-developed** OCs. If your own characters are to interact with characters from the show, especially those characterized as deeply as Twilight Sparkle and her friends, your characters must be able to stand apart without losing depth or relevance to the story.

Spin-Offs

Stories based on existing fan-fiction are often regarded (fairly or not) to be of lesser quality. While there are plenty of spin-offs that are far superior to their source material (such as in The Conversion Bureau universe) these are usually passed over for more original stories. Like crossovers, there are some spin-offs that shouldn't be attempted, most notably the infamous "Cupcakes".

Shipping

Serious business. Star bombers abound with this genre just from pairing preferences alone. Before you submit that ship, you'd better make damn sure your characters are in… well, *character*. If they aren't, they'd better have a good reason. Your story will be torn to shreds by the regular populace if you toy with their beloved ponies' hearts.

Weather Reports

If your story starts off with any version, variant, or drunken misinterpretation of the phrase "It was a beautiful day in Ponyville", you need to go back and come up with a new hook. It's generic, it's tired, and it doesn't launch the reader into the story in any interesting way. If we had a bit for every story we've seen that began in this fashion, we'd each have our own personal portal to Equestria, and a real moon cannon instead of a wooden trebuchet built out of Cereal's coffee table.

Don't tell him we did that, by the way.

How to Submit to Equestria Daily

All right! Your fic's been written, edited, and thoroughly vetted of any pitfalls that might torpedo its performance on the blog. There's only one thing left to do, and that's to let the pre-readers know your story exists! Taken straight from this post, here's what we want to see in your submission. (Note that we no longer take fanfic submissions by email. Please use the handy-dandy submission form.)

1. **Tags.** Always tag your story as correctly and truthfully as possible. That said, try not to pair opposing tags. A story tagged as **[Grimdark] [Normal]** does not work; the two genres represent opposing narrative goals (hopeless struggles against the universe versus the nifty stuff you'd see in a FiM episode).

    If you are writing a multi-part [Normal] fic that will eventually dip into [Shipping], go ahead and include all of your story's relevant tags up front so the reader knows what he or she should expect in the future. This is good manners. [Grimdark] aliens arriving to disembowel our favorite cartoon ponies in the middle of a [Comedy] birthday party **will** suffer a poor reception unless you alert the reader in advance.

    If you are writing a [Crossover] story, we have a special request for you in Section 7: 5 Words.

2. **Title.** You should think hard about what you put here. Two years from now, how would you want your readers to refer to your story in conversation with others?

3. **Description.** Perhaps the most important of them all, this one section hamstrings more fanfictions than we'd care to admit. A good, **error-free** description is the difference between someone looking at your story, and that someone actually clicking through to read it. Take a deep breath, and don't feel bad if you're nervous. Every writer struggles with this part! Keep it brief, and use it to highlight the "irritations" or "conflicts" that set your story into motion.

4. **Links. Don't post the text of your story in the form itself!** How will a reader get to it that way? Post it online instead. Google Docs, FimFiction, deviantArt, where-ever — just ensure that an average reader can access your story. Fics requiring mature warnings should probably go up on Google Docs: not everyone is a member of dA or FimF, and may not be interested in creating an account solely for accessing your story.

5. **Characters.** List **major** characters here, and nopony else. If somepony mentions Princess Celestia in passing in just a single chapter, it's a safe bet to leave her out even if her words set your story in motion. It is a good idea to include the protagonists and antagonists here.

    If your story contains OC ponies, **credit them as "OC Ponies".** The only person who knows who

Strawberry Kaboodles is without reading your story is you and you alone. Readers will have plenty of time to get to know your character once they're reading your fic.

If you wish to introduce a character later in your story, you are free to leave that character out of this section until your story reaches the appropriate point to incorporate them into the action.

6.   **Incomplete or Complete.** Be forewarned: many readers will not touch a multi-part story until it has achieved **Update: Complete!**, as the author attrition rate is quite staggering — especially if a fledgling writer is at the helm. If you are submitting an **Incomplete** story, we highly recommend you **send at least the first two or three chapters** for this reason. We also suggest you give us an estimate of how many chapters you think your story will cover.

7.   **5 Words You Would Use to Describe Your Story.** This is just as hard to measure as your story's description. Instead of repeating the tags, however, give the reader some indication of what he or she is getting into. Is the story Short, Medium, or Long? Are you pairing Flutterdash or Appleshy? Should the reader expect History or an Alternate Universe? Use these words to answer the questions your description does not.

[Crossover] **authors:** this is a good place to let readers know what you're crossing over. More than a few crossovers have languished in our queue for a week or more because we had no idea what to expect from your description and title alone.

8.   **Author Name.** Pick one that won't get you laughed at. Other than that, pretty simple.

—   **Cover Image.** We understand that cover images can be hard to come by, but the effort you put into securing one goes a long way with the blogponies. Custom, commissioned / requested images from a famous artist are but **one** way of several to get what you need. **PM an artist for permission** to use a piece of theirs if it suits your story; if it's a **commissioned piece**, ensure you have the permission of the **commissioner** to use it, too. If that fails, screencaps from episodes work better than you might expect! If that doesn't fly — no matter what you've told yourself before: try to draw it yourself. If Twilight Sparkle enjoys learning new things, you can, too!

A word of caution: Novice writers tend to use **generators** to design characters/images with "flashy", "unique", or "powerful" appearances, but often lapse in developing their personalities in-story. As a result, the pre-readers have come to equate pony generator images with fics of lesser quality. We know — this sounds unfair to us, too, but we crave your indulgence on this one point. Look somewhere else for your cover image.

Still with us? We'll bet that pretty piece took a while to put together! But hold on for a moment. We're not quite done. If you so wish, you may relay a few comments to the pre-readers along with the material above. Do, however, pay due diligence to how you present yourself in these comments. **Respect and humility are always appreciated**; arrogance, rage, and despondency are not.

Also, **leave off any references to how high your story's been rated elsewhere, or how many positive comments you've received on it.** It's to your advantage to realize that a good score on FimFiction — nothing more than an airy number upon reflection — does not affect your chances of publication whatsoever. The quality of your writing alone determines that.

We're almost done! Now is the time when you **go back and proofread your email** for typos and other silly errors. We're quite serious here — your submission email is the first contact a pre-reader will have with your story. If your email is all mangled up with mistakes, fair or not, the pre-reader will expect those mistakes to show up in your story as well. You do not want this to happen. We mean it when we want to see nothing but the very best from you, and that means seeing it in your email, too.

It's been a long and strange trip, without a doubt. But, if you've kept with us so far, and have given your story your utmost effort to perfect, your chances of getting published are better than you might think. **Send** that email, and go off and relax for a bit while we take care of the rest. You've earned it, soldier.

Receiving Critique: Gallant

You've written, formatted, edited and submitted a story that will surely capture the hearts and imaginations of every being that lays eyes upon it! You've written a synopsis which could stand as a work of haiku to wow the ancients. Your title is an act of brevity and wit so severe, it gives Oscar Wilde nosebleeds. You decide to send it to EqD - if only so that you can attach quotes of praise to it.

Being a modest, upright sort, you remain respectful as you post your story. You avoid the pitfalls, and neither brag nor gloat, for you have heard the rumors of the one who lurks, and few are seen alive after his attention is drawn. The link is posted, the die is cast... and you wait.

It's been ten whole minutes! Two hours! TWELVE! Don't send that follow-up email just yet. The blogponies may be working through a backlog. I suggest waiting at least a day or two before bumping your initial submission.

What's this? You've just received an email, and your story is in the queue! You wait eagerly for the inevitable response, the shower of praise...

Huh. It's been a while. A whole day, in fact. You decide to give 'em two more just in case real-life has intervened, and then send a polite nudge in the form of an email.

Ah! A response! Wait, what? The plot is confusing? The canon cast is out of character? Your writing is full of mistakes!? There's only one thing to do!

Rage? No, silly. It's time to take their comments into consideration, followed by another round of editing. Also, make sure to thank them for the time and energy they spent reviewing your story and for bringing its flaws to light. Only through these efforts will you be able to refine your story to make it the best it can possibly be.

You may be lucky enough to find a reviewer who will walk you through, step by step, what needs to be done to improve your work. Treat this person like the gem they are. If they give you editing advice, or provide edited work in their reply to you, consider a blood pact or marriage. Pledging your first born is, however, considered a faux pas.

Repeat editing your work, followed by additional review, until the desired quality is attained.

Is it up to par? Great! Now you're ready to send it back to Equestria Daily. Cross your fingers (or your hooves) and hope for the best!

Receiving Critique: Goofus

You've just submitted your story. A day later, you've heard nothing. So you submit it again. By the time you get a response from the blogponies, you've submitted it three times. Meanwhile, you submit the same link to three other fiction sites, demanding that someone take a look. After a whole thirty minutes, you gripe about how nobody will give you the time of day.

Someone finally gets off their lazy arse and reads your story. The laundry list of criticisms he produces demonstrates that he's an idiot who clearly does not understand your magnificence. You send it in again, demanding a more intelligent reviewer. You do not bother to edit your story - why mess with perfection?

Another critical review. They must all be against you. You post it again. You are ignored. Ah, so that's how it is.

You let 'em have it with both barrels, letting them know exactly what you think of them, their mothers, and their little dogs, too.

Then you write the EQD fools back a line by line retort to their critique, rubbing your genius in their faces. You can't change any of this, it would ruin the sublime humor and refined skill of your masterpiece!

You write an angry blog with your story and rail against Equestria Daily, laughing at the plebes who just don't get it. Thing is, the visitors to your blog don't like it either. They go the extra mile, and generously point out the flaws in your story, which were the same flaws the reviewers pointed out.

You've had enough, so you quit writing, and never submit again. That's a shame; the reviewers thought your work had promise, it just needed a little nudging in the right direction.

Writer's Tools

Daily Writing Tips / dailywritingtips.com
A great first stop for new writers. Throw your junk e-mail address at them and receive a free ebook on basic English grammar. The ebook is extremely basic, but it's a good primer on the ins and outs that you'll need to master before tackling further writing.

The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) / http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/
Pretty much THE canonical reference for all issues pertaining to mechanics, grammar, and punctuation. Relevant guides can be found in the middle of the page.

The Elements of Style / http://www.bartleby.com/141/
This legendary, punchy compendium of stylistic advice by Strunk and White has helped many a writer in its day, and its points are still valid in the 21st century. Purchase a copy of this book and carry it with you in your pocket (with the intention of reading it cover to cover, multiple times!).

The Chicago Manual of Style / chicagomanualofstyle.org
The 500 lb. gorilla of style manuals; their site comes with a 30-day free trial. You can get a lot out of those 30 days.

TVTropes / http://tvtropes.org
"There are no new ideas", it has been said. This site helps the writer (or just the curious) follow the threads of their favorite tales and see how they work. **WARNING: The site is aware of its own influence on the lives of us mere mortals. They call it 'TVTropes Will Ruin Your Life'.**

Online Thesaurus & Dictionary / thesaurus.com & dictionary.com
What it says on the tin. These are invaluable if you don't have a copy on your desk already.

How to Plot a Novel / http://www.novel-writing-help.com/how-to-plot-a-novel.html
Pretty straightforward, folks. What you see is what you get.

Writing World (Dialogue) / http://www.writing-world.com/fiction/dialogue.shtml
A site designed on proper punctuation and pacing of dialogue and monologues.

Composition Software

(by no means a comprehensive list!)

Google Docs / https://docs.google.com
Since this document was originally published using Google Docs, you most likely are familiar with the software package. Despite a limited dictionary and a lack of some of the more advanced features to be found in traditional, offline word processors, GDocs is free, easy to use, and easy to share and/or publish. It is also a GREAT way to allow an editor/reviewer/collaborator to work with you and/or comment on your story.

Microsoft Word / http://office.microsoft.com
The king of word processing applications, Microsoft Word can do most of your basic editing and grammar reviews on the fly. It's not perfect, and its dictionary is limited, but it's a great tool. Currently being offered with a 60-day trial.

OpenOffice / http://www.openoffice.org/
The competition to Microsoft Word. Its plug-ins are not as robust, but the third-party flexibility is unparalleled. Review and composition tools are included, but require more a delicate hand. Free.

LibreOffice / http://www.libreoffice.org/
An alternative office suite to OpenOffice to those who object to the former. Free.

WordWeb / http://wordweb.info/
An extremely robust thesaurus / editing application that has been reviewed more thoroughly above. Its abilities to guide an author to the right word, and only the right word, are unparalleled in the realm of free software. Similar paid applications cost several hundred dollars.

Additional Writing Guides

We do not imagine that we hold all wisdom to be known on fanfic. Take a look at these other guides:

The Sithicus Helpicus / http://bit.ly/ovOXpn
Attempts to tell you what you might be doing wrong through several takes on the same paragraph of text.

CV's Writing Guides / http://bit.ly/pP8OzY
This overview attempts to guide you on your spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Escher's Hints / http://bit.ly/o8voUF
Another take on a rough guide in a similar vein to CV.

Crossing Over - The Right Way / http://bit.ly/w2bDcz
A short guide on how to properly write a crossover fic.

How to Disembowel a Pony / http://bit.ly/ufjBzI
When and how to use gore and its kin without upsetting the audience.