

JESSICA BERG

Revise Your First 10 Pages

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A 60-second
checklist for
pages that earn
requests.

Agents aren't looking for perfection on page one. We're looking for control: a clear starting point, a character in motion, and pressure that makes the next paragraph feel inevitable. Use this to audit your first 10 pages for hook, stakes, voice, and scene tension. Then revise in the order that actually moves the needle.



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Questions to Ask Your First 10 Pages

THE HOOK (Page 1)

Does my first paragraph make an agent want to read the second?

Is there a question, tension, or stakes visible immediately?

STARTING POINT (Pages 1-3)

Does my story start at the moment something changes?

Or am I warming up for 2-4 pages before the story begins?

STAKES (Pages 1-10)

Can I articulate what my character wants, what's in their way, and what happens if they fail? Are these stakes visible ON THE PAGE or only in my head?

Questions to Ask Your First 10 Pages

VOICE (Pages 1-10)

Does my prose sound like a specific person under pressure?

Or does it sound like "neutral narrator" voice?

TENSION (Pages 1-10)

Is there at least one tension lever in every scene?

Am I resolving problems too quickly instead of letting them stretch?

BY PAGE 10:

Would an agent trust me to sustain this for 300 pages?

REVISION MISTAKES TO AVOID

MISTAKE #1: Revising in order

✗ Starting at page 1 and working through linearly

✓ **INSTEAD:** Fix your starting point **FIRST** Then layer in stakes and tension. Polish voice and hook last.

REVISION MISTAKES TO AVOID

MISTAKE #2: Explaining more

✗ "My agent feedback said it was confusing, so I added 3 paragraphs of backstory"

✓ **INSTEAD:** Confusion usually means you started too early or your stakes aren't clear. Add clarity through action and tension, not exposition.

REVISION MISTAKES TO AVOID

MISTAKE #3: Comparing to published books

✗ "But [bestseller] starts with a dream sequence/flashback/description!"

✓ **INSTEAD:** Published authors have leverage you don't have yet. Your job is to make me fall in love with your pages using EVERY advantage you have.



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Thanks for
grabbing this free
guide.

If you use this and go, “Okay, I see why an agent would hesitate here,” tell me. That’s the point of the exercise and it means you can fix the right thing first.

And if you want to share it, please send the link so they can grab their own copy too.

P.S. Which box was hardest to check honestly?

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