

SEX & VIOLENCE

PUTTING ACTION ON THE PAGE

The Goals of Action Scenes:

- Show character change through conflict
- Move plot
- Raise stakes
- Have meaning within the story

In other words, the goals of actions scenes are the same as the goals of any scene. Action scenes are just scenes with action in them, not a different kind of construction. **The importance of the action comes not in the action itself, but in the meaning it has for the protagonist.**

Things to ask when revising your action scene:

- What does the action mean to the protagonist (and antagonist)? How does that meaning **motivate** or push the protagonist to take that action, to pursue that **goal**?
- What is the cost to the protagonist (and antagonist) of not getting that goal?

What are the **stakes**?

- How do the protagonist's and antagonist's pursuits of their goals cause problems? How is the conflict created and what does it mean?
- How does the conflict escalate through physical action? How do the characters escalate their **actions** to get what they need?
- How does the physical and emotional conflict change the characters and advance the plot during the scene? How does the **meaning** of the action change/deepen as the scene escalates?
- How does the **setting** enhance the action in the scene and raise the stakes?

Things to remember about writing scenes with sex:

- It's not the sex, it's what the sex means to the characters.
- Avoid generic boinking; this scene could only happen between these two characters at this time in this situation.
- If it's perfect, it's not real.

Things to remember about writing scenes with violence:

- Keep the violence realistic so that it means something in the story.
- Violent action happens fast in real time, slow in mind time.
- The plan lasts up to the LD/LC, aka, things go wrong in real life because there are people involved and people act irrationally.

Revising action scenes:

- Cut anything that doesn't evoke a sensory reaction in the reader. Deepen the sensory response whenever possible.
- Cut anything that makes the reader say, "Can human beings do that?"
- Cut anything that slows the action down; hone your language so that it captures the physical moment, not the physical paragraph.
- Cut anything that doesn't escalate both plot and character arc, that doesn't have meaning specific to this scene.