

## Story Notes based on Linda Peterson's story, "The Amazing Maizey"

1. **Create a personal editing checklist.** Use these story notes as a basis to build a personal editing checklist. Add other items you often overlook and use these sheets to check your future stories *before* submitting them for review. Included a blank editing checklist that you can fill in and add to.
2. **Paragraph openings** – Pay attention to where your paragraphs start, because that extra little bit of white space creates more impact. Start your paragraphs with an important line and don't bury them at the end of the previous paragraph. Sometimes, making an important line a paragraph of its own causes it to stand out that much more. The same suggestion also holds true for your paragraph endings.
3. **Quantify.** Wherever possible, quantify your descriptions in terms of size, amount, number, etc. If you don't know the exact number, qualify it somehow, but still provide a specific point of reference.

*We've been best friends for a long time.*

*We've been best friends for more than thirty years.*

4. **Use a comma after an introductory phrase or clause.** If you write a sentence that includes an introductory phrase or clause, it must be followed by a comma.

*If you decide to attend, you must submit your payment by March 2, 2025.*

*After a long work week, Joe treated himself to a movie and popcorn.*

It is grammatically correct to omit the comma *if* the introductory phrase is short. But what is short—two, three, four words? It's a good idea to get used to adding it. Then, you won't have to determine if the phrase is short enough to omit the comma.

5. **Italics to show a word used as a word.** I know that sounds confusing, but when you are using a word as an example rather than a way to communicate meaning, it should be in italics.

*Embarrassment* is a word that's often misspelled.  
I love the word *specificity*.

6. **Pronouns.** Unless there is only one person being talked about in a story, it's best not to start paragraphs with a pronoun. It can make it difficult for the reader to know what *she* or *he* you are talking about. You don't want to force the reader to finish the sentence before learning *who* the pronoun represents.

7. **Then isn't a conjunction.** Then most often serves as an adverb but can also be used as an adjective or noun. But it is *not* a conjunction like *and*, *but*, or *or* and should not be used that way. You may see it sometimes in text, but it is not grammatically correct.

*We came home from the concert then went to sleep (incorrect)*  
*We came home from the concert and then went to sleep (correct).*