

# RUTHLESS EDITING WORKSHEET

For each of your characters, ask:

What role does this character play?	Hero/sidekick/villain/mentor/comic relief/love interest/other:
What do they want (from the story)?	
How do they help the protagonist?	
How do they hinder the protagonist?	
What would happen to the plot if they died on page one?	
What would happen to the plot if they were never born?	

If the answer to either of the last two questions is “nothing much”, then consider deleting the character or merging them into another character.

For each of your scenes/paragraphs/sentences, ask:

Does it drive plot? How?	
Does it develop characters? How?	
What does each character in the scene want to achieve?	
If there are characters that want nothing present, why are they there?	
What would happen to the plot if any given character wasn't there?	
What would happen to the plot if the outcome of the scene was the opposite of the way you wrote it?	

If the answer to the last question is “nothing much”, ask yourself why the scene is really there. Could any important information from it be moved to another, more purposeful scene?

For each of the “quest items” your characters gain, ask:

Why has the character acquired this?	
How does it serve the plot?	
Could they achieve their goals without it?	
If so, does it <i>really</i> need to be there?	

These questions are designed to help you remove any unnecessary bits of plot/character from your story. No one wants to remember the names of hundreds of minor characters or keep track of who is holding which colour of crayon, especially when it has no effect on the outcome of the story!