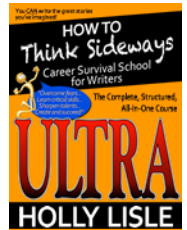




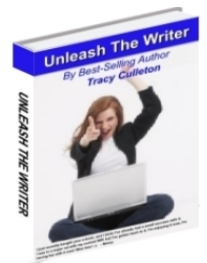
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If you're serious about your fiction writing, you definitely owe it to yourself to check out Holly Lisle's

[How to Think Sideways ULTRA: Career Survival School for Writers](#)



Beat Writers' Block Forever
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- Writers Block
- Books For Writers
- Catch Those Cliches
- Good Links

☐ Home

Information:

- Your Writing Career
- Writing Process
- Plots
- Character Creation
- Description
- Point of View
- Dialogue
- Writing Mistakes
- Writing Definitions
- Literary Devices
- Editing Secrets
- Creative Writing Ideas
- Getting Published
- Writing Quotes

Housekeeping:

- My Novels
- Short Stories
- Newsletter
- About Me
- Contact Me
- Site Map
- Disclosure

Creating Believable Characters

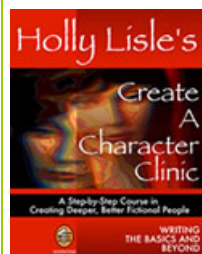
Creating believable characters is very important. Your reader has to totally believe that your characters are real genuine people.

You want your reader to feel like I did after reading Daughter of Lir by Diana Norman. It was set in real places, and the first time I went to one of those places, I found myself thinking, Ah, so this is where Slaney sailed away from Ireland, before shaking myself and reminding myself that it was fiction!

If your reader feels like that, then you have absolutely succeeded in creating believable characters.

Now, the reader herself is part of the process - she willingly chooses to believe in these people, even though she knows deep down that they're not real.

But it's our job as the writer to fulfil our half of the bargain and make it easy for the reader to do her bit.



If you're serious about getting your characters right, then you absolutely need Holly Lisle's [Create A Character Clinic](#). Nearly 200 pages of specific, easy-to-follow tools and techniques on coming up with fully rounded and intriguing characters - all for only \$9.95. I also absolutely recommend her [Create A Plot Clinic](#), also only \$9.95.

Or buy them both, along with Create A Language Clinic and Create A Culture Clinic, as [Holly Lisle's Writing Clinics Bundle](#) for a discounted \$34.95.

So, how do you go about creating believable characters?

First of all, bear in mind that creating believable characters doesn't, funnily enough, necessarily mean creating realistic characters. People read stories, in part, because of how they're so different from real life. Stories are more logical than real life. They have happy endings - or, at the very least, they have satisfying endings - in stark contrast to real life, which often has no proper endings at all, least of all satisfying or happy ones.

What we like about stories is that they're about real life with the messy bits tidied up. And that includes the characters, because in real life, people are often inconsistent and arbitrary. They do things for no obvious reason - sometimes they don't even know themselves why they're doing them.

But readers would have no patience whatsoever with such characters. Fictional characters have to behave consistently and logically. This doesn't mean that they cannot do stupid things, or illogical things, or ill-advised things. They can, and frequently do! But they should do those things for consistent and logical reasons.

Let's take an absurd example - the cliché of the heroine who goes into the spooky attic. That has become a cliché simply because it's such a stupid thing to do. (And as such, it's

(that has become a cliché simply because too many people think so, and as such, it's less-than-satisfying for the reader.)

But if, for the sake of your [plot](#), you need her to go into the attic, then you have a number of options. Either give her a compelling reason (see [The Crucible](#) for more on this), or make it part of her personality - part of her character so to speak. Maybe she's courageous to excess, or maybe she's stubborn and needs to prove something, or maybe she's curious - again, to excess. Whatever it is, it is essential that that you have shown examples of this before, as [foreshadowing](#).



The second rule to creating believable characters is to avoid extremes. In other words, don't have a [protagonist](#) who's 100% good, or an [antagonist](#) who's 100% bad. They would be caricatures, not characters, and that is definitely not conducive towards creating believable characters.

Having said that, the third rule for writing characters is to make them slightly, but not absurdly, more than ordinary people. This is back to what we were saying about being believable but not realistic. Readers don't want to read about ordinary people - they have enough of those in their real lives.

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So, make your heroine a little bit more witty, a little bit more sparkling. If she's ditzy, make her a little bit more ditzy than the average ditz. (Is 'ditz' even a word?! If not, and I suspect not, it should be.)

Check out the [list of character traits](#) for a whole shopping list of characteristics you can use to create dynamic characterization. And check out the page on [Character Sketches](#) for information on practising creating characters. And finally, the [Character Personality Chart](#) will help you create your very own believable character.

[Return from Creating Believable Characters to Character Creation](#)

[Return from Creating Believable Characters to Home](#)

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