

# -MY POOR NERVES -

## Checklist for Chapter One

We all know attention spans are getting shorter (and yet books seem to be getting longer?) so there's a lot of pressure put on the very beginning. Almost enough to make you afraid to start!

*Truth be told, all you need is four simple ingredients:*

- ✓ Create an existing situation
  - Whatever is “normal” for the main character
- ✓ Bring change to the situation
  - Use the age old story starters: start with trouble, start with a fight, or start on a different day
  - change can be both good or bad
- ✓ Who is the character affected most by the change?
- ✓ Consequences of the change
  - Consequences must be continuous, lasting well beyond chapter two

(These are techniques created by Dwight Swain, former professor at University of Oklahoma, who wrote a few books on creative writing.)

*If you're new to writing,  
avoid prologues.*

Prologues can come across as an excuse to info dump. They can be done well, but rarely and with great skill. If you're new to writing, simply have chapter two be a continuation of chapter one. Come back to prologues once you've had more time in the kitchen of storytelling.

### *Did you know?*

These are on the rubric I use for my editing services! You don't need an entire book written. Just the first three chapters is all I edit! Follow the QR code to my website, fill out the questionnaire, and I'll put the kettle on.

