



Dialogue 3: Flow

Welcome to your Dialogue for **FLOW**.

Directions / Best Practices:

If someone is reading this out loud to you, please give them permission to ask their own follow-up questions and press if you're being vague! The more specific you are, the better. See if you can get through each dialogue in fifteen minutes or less, so that you stay on track.

Writer: Please have a notebook to write down notes. I also highly recommend recording this session – it happens quickly and there's a lot you might miss the first time around. A recording app or recording a zoom call is sufficient.

Don't dismiss anything out of hand! And if you need to pause the recording to think a little bit to journal or write notes, that's fine.

Think rapid-fire, stream-of-consciousness.

Let's begin.

We'll start with what happens once you've oriented in your story.

- Are you flowing from the moment you begin writing a scene, or do you find that you have to write your way into flow by way of orienting?
- If you are someone who flows from the get-go, then the way you orient is also the way you flow—but be sure to do the rest of this Dialogue, because you'll discover a lot more about your process by doing so.
- For everyone else: Once you've oriented yourself in story, what is the next thing that you do?
- For example, if you orient with setting, that would mean that you start your story describing the setting.
- So, after you start with setting—or in whatever way you orient—what is the next thing that you do?

- Does your character begin talking to somebody? This would mean that after you orient yourself in scene, the next thing you do is begin getting people talking to each other. This may or may not be how you write yourself into flow, but it does mean that once you've oriented and aren't sure what to do next, you know that getting people talking—or whatever it is—works for you.
- Does the action begin immediately after you have oriented?
- Or maybe some sort of action is happening already as the scene begins? If that's the case, what comes next, once you've oriented with action?

FLOW

- At what point do you start to feel like the story is humming along?
- Would you say that this is the point that you begin to flow on the page?
- Take a moment to think about this for a bit: Do you *always* flow in this way, meaning that you know you're flowing when you do this, or does it depend?
- For example, you might flow one way in a scene with an argument or high stakes, versus a love scene or quiet moment. There could also be external factors: your mood, how you slept, what kind of day you've had.
- It might be helpful to draw a quick mind-map for the different kinds of scenes you write – you might write yourself into flow the same way every time...or maybe not!
- Let's keep looking at the page: Once you've begun to flow, what do you do? Walk me through your writing.
- Again, if you're not sure, then you can always go back to scenes or chapters you've previously written and track when you began to flow. Then you can work your way back to determine how you wrote your way into flow.
- I'll repeat the question again: Once you've begun to flow, what do you do? Walk me through your writing.
- Okay, so you're flowing....Do you consider yourself to be channeling, what Anne Lamott calls "the designated typist?"
- Do you feel like you know what's going to happen next?
- Do you have no idea what's going to happen next, and you just ride the flow wave to the shore?
- How much of this scene is usually planned out before you began writing?
- Are you playing the scene like a movie in your head?
- Did you visualize the scene before you wrote it?
- Did you talk through the scene with someone?

CONDITIONS FOR FLOW

- When you're flowing, what is your physical posture?
- What does flow feel like in your body? Get really specific here.
- Does it always show up in your body this way?
- Are there degrees of flow for you? A spectrum of flow?

- Is there a certain emotional state that you have to be in in order to flow?
- Can you flow if you're feeling physical pain, stress, or experiencing acute challenges in your life?
- Do you have to feel well-rested in order to flow?
- Do you need to have a lot of time to flow, or do you flow better when your writing time is limited?
- Do you flow best when your life is busy or slow?
- Can you flow in a project even if you've experienced difficult critique, rejection, or any kind of doubt in the book or your ability to write it—whether that came from an outside source or your own inner critic?
- When you're in flow, does your temperature change? Do you get hotter, colder?
- Do you notice anything about your craft—increased pacing, more white space, longer or shorter sentences?
- What else comes up for you when you think about the times you're in flow?
- What time of day is it usually when you're flowing?
- If you think back to times that you've been in flow, see if you can reconstruct what the environment around you was like. Were you always in the same room, the same chair, drinking the same beverage...etc.
- Is there a certain time of week you flow better than others? Perhaps the weekend?
- Is there anything in your environment that is most conducive to flow?
- Do you have to be alone to be in a flow state or can other people be around you?
- Do you need to shut the door to wherever you're working?
- Is there a place you flow better than others? It could be a specific space in your home, a place you like to go on vacation, a certain kind of landscape...
- Are there seasons of the year where you have more flow than others?
- Do you tend to flow in more active or quiet scenes?
- What sorts of scenes do you have the most flow with?
- Does your flow come in fragments or in one long burst?

GETTING STUCK / TRICKLING FLOW / RE-ORIENTING

- Does the flow run out before the scene ends, or does it carry you through to the end of the scene or chapter?
- If it does run out, what's going on there?
- Do you need more information?
- Feel like you took a wrong turn?
- Lose connection to your protagonist?
- Running out of ideas?
- Or did the flow simply run its course and you have to re-orient to find your way back into flow again?
- Is there anything you do when the story feels stuck?
- What tools help you best when the flow runs out?

- If you do need to re-orient to get back in flow, do you use the same kind of orientation as when you begin a new scene, or do you use something else?
- Can you be in a flow state more than once a day?
- When you're actively working on a story, how often do you flow?
- Are there certain parts of a story, certain drafts, where you're more likely to flow than others? For example, do you flow a lot at the beginning and end, but rarely in the middle?
- What does flow feel like for you in revision versus drafting? [We'll be getting into our revision processes later, so you'll have another chance to think about this in the course.](#)
- Does the writing of others help you flow? Like reading a poem or quote?
- Do you need to re-fill the well in order to flow again?

INHIBITING FLOW

- What are some of the things you know will inhibit your flow? This list can be as long as it needs to be!
- Tell me about the relationship between tech and your flow: this includes email and social media, as well as all digital media, your phone, notifications, online shopping—the whole lot of it!
- Do you find that listening to a lot of podcasts, audio books, or talking on the phone inhibits flow?
- What about TV and flow?
- How does reading the news impact your flow?
- Are there environmental factors that inhibit flow, such as a noisy neighbor or needy pet?
- Tell me about the relationship between alcohol, drugs, or other substances and flow—do they hurt or help?
- Does your to-do list impact your flow?
- Are there medications you can't be on, or need to take a lower dose of in order to flow?
- Can you flow on a day when you know you have a lot of things to do after your writing session?
- Do you notice that you don't flow as well if you haven't left your house much, switched up things in your environment, or not gone outside?
- Do you need to exercise to flow?
- What routines impact your flow—as in, if you don't do them, you won't flow as well?
- Are you someone who needs a lot of structure in order to flow?
- Or, do you need to be spontaneous in order to flow?
- How do others inhibit your flow?
- How do YOU inhibit your flow?
- [As you're being a process detective, look at your mindset when flow subsides:](#)
- At some point, does your mind turn to market?
- Do you find yourself beginning to think about your career, what people will say?
- What about pressures? Often, thinking about a deadline or what we hope a book will accomplish for us can turn the flow right off.
- What kind of support do you need in your life in order to flow? This could be a helpful partner, a coach, a therapist, or certain habits or lifestyle choices that help you flow.

If you feel like you don't know the answers to these questions, that's okay. Just keep being a process detective. When you feel the physical sensations of flow, quickly note down what you were doing just before you got into flow and make any notes of anything that is significant in your outer or inner environment. Then look over the past few chapters or scenes that you've written and note the place where you began to flow.

It could be helpful to print out the past few chapters you've written and make notes. How did you court flow with that chapter? How did you orient what is the point in which you had flow? And anything else you think might be relevant to anything that is showing up consistently that you might be able to point to and say, I think that might be a habitual aspect of my writing practice, in which case it is likely part of your process.

Remember, whatever you do is welcome if you're not hurting yourself.

No matter how strange or quirky or weird, your process might sound to you, if it's what you do, and it works, then that's great.

When you're ready, take some time to be process detective and once you feel like you've figured out how you flow, you can point to specific strategies you use to flow, throw them on your mind-map and move on to our next stop: ANCHOR.