

CHARACTER CREATION

Guidance sheet

Creating characters that feel real

Readers connect with people, not descriptions of the weather or the setting, making character creation one of the most important factors in storytelling. To make your characters leap off the page, it's essential to go beyond surface details like appearance. Think about their everyday lives.

- What are their routines, quirks, and habits?
- What experiences shaped them?
- What are their strengths and flaws?
- How do those influence their decisions?
- What do they love?
- What do they absolutely loathe?

These small details bring depth and authenticity to your characters. A well-rounded character is more than just a name and a backstory, they're a mix of traits and history that make them feel like they could step into the real world. Some writers like to compile detailed character profiles, exploring everything from their favourite childhood memory to the way they react under pressure. The more you understand your character's motivations and personality, the more naturally they'll come to life in your story, engaging your readers and driving your narrative forward.

The importance of conflict in character development

To create truly dynamic characters, think about how they respond to conflict. Conflict reveals personality and the way a character handles challenges can say more about them than pages of description.

- Do they confront their problems head-on or do they avoid them?
- Are they quick to feel triggered or quite level-headed under pressure?

Exploring how your characters navigate difficult situations adds complexity and helps your readers connect with them on a deeper level. The way your characters speak can also bring them to life. Pay attention to their voice. Do they use slang, formal language, or humour? Their choice of words and tone can reveal their background and education. Dialogue is a powerful tool for showing relationships between characters and conveying their unique personalities without explicitly telling the reader.

Great characters don't remain static, they grow and change as your story progresses.

A character's arc can be subtle or dramatic, but it should feel authentic and earned. Whether they overcome a fear or perhaps learn a new truth, their journey should reflect the themes of your story. Sometimes, characters will evolve in ways you didn't expect. As you write, you might discover that a character's personality leads them in a direction you hadn't planned. Embrace this! Allow your characters to guide the narrative, as this can deepen their complexity and make them feel even more real to your readers.

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Have a go at creating your own character profile. Here's an example to get you started:

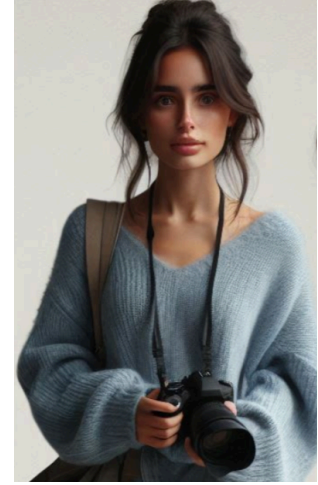
NAME: Marisol Vega

OCCUPATION: Freelance photographer

AGE: 29 years old

SPECIAL SKILLS: Exceptional at capturing candid moments; expert in photo editing software; fluent in Spanish and French; excellent at navigating unfamiliar cities

FRIENDS: Clara, a travel blogger; Marcus, a barista with a love for poetry; Tia, her childhood best friend who's now an environmental lawyer



PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: Petite with a lean build; long, wavy dark hair often tied in a messy bun; prefers wearing oversized sweaters, jeans, and sturdy boots; always has a camera slung over her shoulder

LIVES IN: A small, cozy studio apartment filled with vintage decor and framed photos from her travels

HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT WHERE THEY LIVE: Loves the charm of her space but dreams of a bigger studio with natural light and a rooftop garden

FAVOURITE FOOD: Spicy fish tacos from a food truck near her apartment

LEAST FAVOURITE FOOD: Anything overly sweet, especially desserts

VICES: Overworks herself to meet deadlines; forgets to eat during busy days; has a habit of comparing her work to others

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHILDHOOD MEMORY: Watching her mother develop photos in a darkroom and being mesmerised by the images coming to life

HANDLES BOREDOM BY: Wandering through city streets with her camera; sketching ideas for future photo projects; flipping through art books for inspiration; listening to indie music playlists

DEALS WITH FRUSTRATION BY: Taking long walks by the waterfront; venting to Clara over coffee; indulging in an impromptu solo dance session to her favourite songs; reorganising her workspace

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

LIVES IN:

HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT WHERE THEY LIVE:

FAVOURITE FOOD/S:

LEAST FAVOURITE FOOD/S:

VICES:

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHILDHOOD MEMORY:

HANDLES BOREDOM BY:

DEALS WITH FRUSTRATION BY:

