

Beta Reader Questionnaire

25 core questions + 9 optional genre prompts. Use the pages that fit this draft.

Start with a manuscript that is ready for reader reactions. Choose a focused set of questions, identify the draft version, and agree on a return date and response format.

Book / working title

Draft version

Author

Reader name or alias

Genre / intended reader

Agreed return date

How to return feedback

Finished, or stopped at chapter...

Author: what are the one or two questions this draft most needs to answer?

Before you send or start reading

Author: keep 10–15 core questions if you want a shorter round. In the Word file, delete questions that do not fit, then renumber. The 25-question bank is a menu, not a completion requirement.

Reader: note your spontaneous reactions as you read. For useful feedback, describe the experience and point to a chapter, scene, or short quotation. Skip prompts that do not apply.

If you stop reading, say where and what affected the decision. You are not being asked to proofread every sentence or supply a public review.

Opening & characters

Record the reading experience first. Include the location of the passage you mean.

Opening and reader expectations

1. At which point did you feel curious enough to keep going? Identify what created that curiosity.

2. In the opening, what did you assume about the place, time, and viewpoint? Note any assumption you later had to correct.

3. What problem did you expect the story to pursue after the opening? Did that expectation remain useful as you read?

Characters and relationships

4. Describe the protagonist's aim in your own words. Where did the manuscript make that aim easier or harder to understand?

5. Choose a character decision that stood out. What made it feel consistent with, or surprising for, that person?

6. Which relationship changed most convincingly? Where did a change in trust, affection, or loyalty need more support?

Plot & pacing

Look at what caused events and what changed between scenes.

Plot and cause and effect

7. Trace one major event to its cause. Where, if anywhere, was that connection difficult to follow?

8. Which revelation or reversal caught your attention? What earlier detail prepared you for it, or what support was missing?

9. What question or story thread were you waiting to see resolved? Describe how its resolution, or lack of one, affected you.

Pacing and scene movement

10. Mark a stretch where your attention dipped. What was happening on the page, and what were you waiting for?

11. Which scene felt hurried? What did you need time to understand, imagine, or feel?

12. Where did information or an emotional beat seem to repeat? Would removing a passage change your understanding?

Dialogue, viewpoint & setting

Describe moments of clarity as well as moments that made you pause.

Dialogue and point of view

13. Pick a conversation that sounded convincing or strained. Which line or exchange created that impression?

14. Where did you have to stop to work out who was speaking, thinking, or observing?

15. Did a viewpoint shift change your involvement in the story? Identify the transition and describe its effect.

Setting and story rules

16. Name a setting detail that helped you picture a scene. Where would one more concrete detail have helped?

17. Which rule, timeline detail, or physical arrangement was difficult to keep straight? Point to the passages involved.

Voice, emotion & ending

Point out strengths the author should keep while revising.

Voice and clarity

18. Where did the wording make you reread to understand the meaning? Explain what you thought the passage was saying.

19. Which passage sounded especially distinctive? What part of the voice should the author protect during revision?

Emotion and the ending

20. Choose a moment that produced a strong reaction, or one where you expected to react but did not. What did you feel, and why?

21. Compare the ending with the expectations you formed earlier. Which payoff worked, and which expectation remained unmet?

22. What made the final outcome feel supported or unsupported by earlier choices and events?

Overall response

Finish with the strongest feature, the most useful next question, and anything we missed.

Overall response

23. What is the manuscript's strongest feature? Identify a scene or passage that shows it.

24. If the author could investigate only one issue in the next draft, what would you choose? Explain its effect on your reading.

25. What else should the author know about your experience that these questions have not covered?

Additional chapter references or reactions (optional)

Thank you for reading. Specific praise helps the author preserve what works; specific concerns help the author investigate what needs attention.

Optional genre prompts

Choose the relevant group. Add these to the core questions only when they help this draft.

Romance

1. Which action first made you believe these two people could build a relationship?
2. Where did attraction, trust, or commitment change? Which change needed another step?
3. How did the ending meet or miss the relationship outcome you expected from this kind of romance?

Notes and scene references

Mystery or thriller

1. What explanation did you suspect at the midpoint, and which details led you there?
2. Where did suspense rise or fade? Was the uncertainty interesting, confusing, or both?
3. After the reveal, which earlier details gained meaning? Which part still needed an explanation?

Notes and scene references

Fantasy or speculative fiction

1. Which unfamiliar term or world rule was hardest to understand from its context?
2. Where did a world rule shape a character's choice or consequence clearly?
3. Which solution or limitation seemed to arrive without enough earlier support?

Notes and scene references

Turn feedback into a revision

Author worksheet. Complete one copy for each issue you decide to investigate.

Keep the reader's observation separate from your interpretation. Check the passage before committing to a solution. Similar comments can point to one issue; a single clear continuity error can also deserve attention.

Issue / location / draft version

Reader observations and feedback IDs (use the tracker if helpful)

What might be causing this reading experience?

What change will you make or test?

What should remain intact: voice, meaning, strength, or genre promise?

After revising, what will you reread or ask a fresh reader to check?

Free for your own writing projects and for sharing with your beta readers. Please link to Publish Smarter when sharing the blank resource.