

# Chicken Scratch Books



## Pacing Checklist

Pacing in middle grade fiction doesn't have to be mysterious. These four techniques will help you fine tune your manuscript, and get the pacing set to connect with your young readers.

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### Technique #1: One Scene/One Chapter

Any time your scene changes setting—either time or space—start a new chapter. Middle grade readers like to have their scenes encapsulated and divided by chapter.

- Each chapter in my manuscript is its own scene.
  - There are no lines of asterisks or hashtags across the page dividing a chapter (just make a new chapter).
  - When the scene has a natural break, I've started a new chapter.
  - I don't worry about the length of each chapter. It's more about the scene than the page numbers.
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### Technique #2: Chapters of Purpose

Each chapter/scene of the story needs to have a specific purpose. They should either cause a problem, or solve a problem. Scenes that don't do one of those two things will slow the pace of the story down.

- Every chapter/scene either causes a problem or solves a problem.
  - I don't have any chapter/scenes that slow the pacing down with no purpose.
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### Technique #3: Balanced Presentation

Every page of your manuscript contains a balanced presentation of thoughts, dialogue, and action. No page should be mostly filled with any one element. A balanced presentation moves the story along at a good clip.

- Each page has a balanced mix of thoughts, dialogue, and action.
  - Heavy dialogue pages have physical action and as well as thoughts mixed in.
  - Thoughts are expressed on every page, in small ways, or larger paragraphs.
  - Continuous action is broken up with tidbits of thought and dialogue.
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### Technique #4: Punchy Paragraphs = High Impact

In high impact scenes, a very effective tool is to use short single sentence paragraphs for punch. This works especially well in high tension scenes and at the end of chapters.

- Many of my chapter endings are paragraphs of single, short sentences.
- In high tension scenes, I've broken the paragraphs into shorter pieces, often with one sentence paragraphs.
- On high impact pages, lots of white space is visible around the words.

