

Questions to ask beta readers

Provided by Kathleen Osborne

The opportunity to find out what readers think of your book *before* you send it out into the world is extremely valuable. If there are specific areas of your manuscript that you're not sure about, take notes and put them in a list. If your beta readers don't mention these issues their own feedback, you can bring them up yourself. Here are a few question ideas to get you going.

Pacing

- Are there any parts of the story that drag?
- Does each scene flow naturally into the next?
- Did you feel there were any areas that skipped over information?
- Does the pacing feel balanced — and are there any areas that are too slow or too intense?
- Are there any exposition dumps (places I over-inform the reader) you struggled to get through?

Worldbuilding

- Can you see the world clearly while reading?
- Can you see the action clearly while reading?
- Can you see the characters clearly while reading?
- Can you describe what the main characters look like?

Characters

- Was it clear who is talking?
- Does the dialogue sound natural and realistic?
- Does the character development feel natural?
- Are there any out-of-character moments?
- Do any of the characters feel cliché or stereotypical?

General

- Who is your favorite character and why?
- Who is your least favorite character and why?
- What's your favorite part and why?
- Did you have a least favorite part? What is it and why?

The more you tailor these questions to your book, the better. So instead of asking “Is there natural flow between the scenes,” look for specific scene cuts you're not sure about and mention them specifically.

What I'd like you to look for: Any scenes or dialogue that are confusing to you? Something I didn't explain well or something I didn't explain enough? Also, any plot holes as well as plot/character inconsistencies? And most of all--after reading this, would you want to read a full-length novel in this world?

No worries on grammar/punctuation. I plan to send this to a copyeditor plus a proofreader after the beta round. I'm notorious for typos, so I apologize for any.

If you think you can get the MS to me by the 19th, that would be great! If you need a few more days, that's fine too.

I get from multiples, most want flow, plot holes, any inconsistencies like eye change color, really whatever we notice. Some others I do that as well as proofread and Grammar. It's easier when we have guidelines, but I always figure more is better than less information

As I am not a writer but I have read beta, a letter stating what you'd like them to look for, as well as how to format their responses/corrections, may be well received?

Like, grammar vs plot holes. Plot suggestions vs spelling. Where to put their corrections (in the document, at the end of document, in a separate document). How to label the corrections (like spelling, grammar, unclear, etc.). I would have found that useful.