
Suggestions for Creating A Graphic Short Story

In order to create a successful final piece, there are many planning steps you can take to guide you there. The following is just one way that many in the publishing world follow to create a final graphic short story or novel.

While there are many elements to consider like panel layouts, images, lettering--don't feel bound by the following planning steps. You'll certainly need to do planning of some sort, but you'll only be required to submit your final art for Rising Earth's Graphic Short Story Contest.

Step 1. Write a Manuscript

Write your story out in a graphic novel manuscript format. This format lays out the order you want the reader to read the narration and/or dialogue, as well as your original vision and intention for your visuals.

There is no one official way to write a graphic novel manuscript, but [here](#) is one guide for how you can format yours. You can also do your own research online for other examples.

**Note--you may be someone who comes up with images before words. So you may bounce back and forth between Steps 1 and 2 before you come up with your final idea.*

Step 2. Sketch Storyboards

Storyboards are a much rougher and simpler draft compared to your final art. Storyboards should be very basic sketches that show the general idea of:

- Layout
- What's happening in each panel
- Text placement

Storyboards are a space for *you* to work out your ideas. They can be as simple as stick figures and hand-written text. You may also find yourself doing a few rounds of sketches to refine your idea. Similarly, you may want to revise your manuscript after you see how the images and text come together.

You can use whatever medium you want that is easily accessible to you (pencil, pen, digital, etc.).

Step 3. Get Feedback + Revise

At this point, we **strongly recommend** you share your manuscript and storyboards with at least one person who can give you feedback. This can be a teacher or person you trust to be an “editor.” It’s even better if you can get a few people to review your work.

You can ask them if there are any parts that are:

- confusing in the narration or dialogue.
- unclear in the layout of panels.
- unclear in the order they should read the panels or text.
- areas that they liked.
- areas that could use improvement + suggestions for how to improve.

Feel free to share the contest **Judging Criteria** with them too so they can give you feedback on those categories, too.

After you gather their notes, take what you want and revise your storyboards how you’d like.

Step 4. Draw Final Art + Write Out First Draft of Lettering

After you feel good about your layout, art, and text-- complete a polished draft first. Then it’s time to illustrate your final art and add color! Refer to the contest **Guidelines** for more information on final art.

If you’re creating your final piece by hand (vs. digitally), we recommend you write your text out in pencil and continue on to the next step before finalizing the lettering with a pen or marker.

Step 5. Have Someone Proofread the Text + Check Accuracy

Ask your same editor(s) or someone new to proofread your text, whether written in pencil or typed digitally. They’ll catch things with their fresh eyes that you won’t!

Besides typos, you will want to double check for yourself that any facts, numbers, names, etc. you’ve included are accurate. Refer to your cheatsheet.

Step 6. Write Final Lettering

Correct any errors in your text. If hand lettering, go over your text with a pen or marker.

Step back and admire your work!