

Roll the Dice Prompts

The following is based upon *The Story Catcher* technique developed by Nina Kiriki Hoffman, educator and author. Roll dice five times, one for each step. Note the number you roll in each section. Use these to inspire a writing prompt.

Protagonist: Roll the dice and circle number of the main character.

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| 1. Fairy | 5. Professor | 9. Banker |
| 2. Husband | 6. Witch | 10. Knitter |
| 3. Executive | 7. Farmer | 11. Painter |
| 4. Medical Worker | 8. Gambler | 12. Salesperson |

Other Character: Roll the dice and circle number of an other character or antagonist or both.

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| 1. Dragon | 5. Soldier | 9. Technician |
| 2. Father | 6. Fortune Teller | 10. Doctor |
| 3. Animal | 7. Journalist | 11. Scientist |
| 4. Servant/Slave | 8. Sailor | 12. Robot |

Setting: Roll the dice and circle number of the setting.

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| 1. Coffee shop | 5. Public | 9. Coast |
| 2. Cruise Ship | Transportation | 10. School |
| 3. Carpool | 6. PTA meeting | 11. Castle |
| 4. Bakery | 7. Police Station | 12. Graveyard |
| | 8. Bedroom | |

Obstacle: Roll the dice and circle number of the obstacle.

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| 1. Lost item | 5. Relatives visit | 9. You don't deserve it |
| 2. What hatched? | 6. Disability | 10. Telephone ringing |
| 3. A stranger wants you | 7. Weather | 11. Secret revealed |
| 4. Find magical item | 8. Money | 12. Mistakes in the past |

Goal: Roll the dice and circle number of the goal, twist, or quest.

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| 1. Financial Security | 5. Stop abuse | 9. Gain mastery |
| 2. Healing | 6. Forget | 10. Destroy |
| 3. Hope | 7. Revenge | 11. Change |
| 4. Survive | 8. Escape | 12. Retrieve something lost |

Instructions for Generating Random Prompts

By Lorelle VanFossen

The Story Catcher technique by Nina Kiriki Hoffman uses randomly generated prompts to stimulate the imagination and develop creative storytelling writing craft. This technique was inspired by the game Dungeons and Dragons where a roll of the dice transforms a character and their journey.

Considered a writing exercise like walking or lifting weights, randomly select 3-5 prompt elements with a throw of the dice, and write for a minimum of 15 minutes a day. By that time the writer may determine if there is something worthwhile for publishing or sale, or get on with the rest of the day. Save these writing exercises for future inspiration, character sketches, and reference.

Collect your own set of Story Catcher prompts. Experiment with dice featuring non-traditional sides like a 20-sided dice. Create numbered lists of prompt ideas covering character types, settings, obstacles/challenges, goals, quests, plot twists, and surprise endings.

Nina recommends carrying a small notebook with each page numbered and a minimum of 12 items on each page (for 6-sided dice totals). Write down any clever phrase, word, concept, character description, anything that catches your attention. She recommends good conflict words, noun plus adjective or noun plus verb combinations. Keep adding page after page of ideas.

When you need a prompt:

1. Roll two 20-sided dice to get the page number.
2. Roll two 6-sided dice for the word or phrase on that page.
3. Repeat 3-5 times.
 - a. Experiment with character, obstacle, and setting, then expand to character, obstacle, settings, goal, and another character.
4. Write for a minimum of 15 minutes inspired by those randomized prompts.

Another method is to create lists of twenty prompts, either sentences, magic spells, quests, or random words. Roll one or more times to come up with a randomized prompt, and write for a minimum of 15 minutes.

Using dice is just one way to randomly generate numbers. Select cards from a deck, pick numbers out of a hat, use a mobile app with virtual dice, or use a free online prompt or story plot generator.

In the Eugene Writer's Group, some writers compete to get the most words to add to their Story Catcher notebooks. One author collected almost 4,000 terms and phrases and uses them daily for exercise.

According to professional writers using this technique, it took 3-6 months to move from technical and craft to creative, saleable material. One author shared that prior to working these random prompts, he submitted 3-5 stories a month, selling 25%. After a year, he wrote 7 prompt-generated short stories a week in addition to his other professional writing, and submitted 3 per week for publishing. After a couple years, 70% are now accepted for \$100-500 per piece. These prompts not only improved his writing and editing technique, but gave him story ideas and conflicts he would have never considered, thus broadening his market.

The key is to keep flexing your creative writing muscles.

