

FOR SERIES AUTHORS · A WORKING CHECKLIST

The 12 continuity checks *readers punish most*.

By book four, your series is a world too large to hold in your head, and the errors that cost you readers live in the gaps between volumes. This audit is the systematic pass most authors never run: twelve checks, each with the exact question to ask your own manuscripts, drawn from the failure patterns that show up in one-star reviews again and again.

380,000

Median words in a complete five-book series. No one holds that in working memory.

6 years

Median time from Book 1 to Book 5. Helen in 2020 becomes Hannah in 2026.

-30%

Typical series read-through drop after one review citing continuity errors.

How to run the audit

Work through all twelve checks against your own shelf. For each one, mark a box. Be honest: **Unsure counts**. An "unsure" means you cannot verify the fact without re-reading, and that is exactly the condition a continuity error needs to survive. Score yourself on page 4.

☐ **Clean** — verified, not remembered☐ **Unsure** — can't check without re-reading☐ **Found it** — there's at least one

What this is not. This audit never asks you to change a word. It shows you where to look; every verdict and every fix is yours. That is the same stance our instrument takes: **StoryHelm reads and analyzes. It never writes your prose.**

THE TWELVE CHECKS AT A GLANCE

01 Name & identity drift**02** Physical trait drift**03** Timeline arithmetic**04** The resurrection error**05** Setup → payoff ledger**06** World-rule consistency**07** Geography & distance drift**08** Voice drift between books**09** The knowledge ledger**10** Relationship & rank drift**11** POV & tense leaks**12** The publish-time pass

01

Name & identity drift**The most-screenshotted error in reader reviews****Ask:** For every recurring character, does the same name, spelling, and nickname appear in every book they enter?*Marcus's sister is Helen in Book 2. In Book 5 she answers to Hannah, and no one in the story notices.*☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

02

Physical trait drift**Tiny fixed facts, loudly noticed when they change****Ask:** Pick your five most-described characters. Do eyes, hair, scars, and handedness match in every appearance, in every book?*Gray eyes in Book 2 turn brown by Book 5. The scar over the left eye switches sides during a flashback.*☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

03

Timeline arithmetic**Readers keep spreadsheets; they will do the math****Ask:** Do stated ages, seasons, pregnancies, and "years since" references still add up in the latest book?*Book 1 sets the wedding in autumn, after the harvest. A Book 3 flashback remembers it in spring. A character calls a three-books-ago event "last year."*☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

04

The resurrection error**The error readers forgive least****Ask:** Has anything you killed, burned, broke, or banished reappeared without an explanation on the page?*A minor character who died in Book 2 answers the door in Book 4. The one-of-a-kind sword, shattered at the climax, hangs on a wall two books later.*☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

05

Setup → payoff ledger**Unpaid promises read as abandoned plot****Ask:** List every promise Book 1 makes: the locked drawer, the unexplained hint, the prophecy. Which are still unpaid, and is each one deliberate?*"He kept the drawer locked for reasons he would not say out loud, not yet." Five books and 280,000 words later, it has never been opened.*☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

06

World-rule consistency**One bent rule and the magic stops being magic****Ask:** State each hard rule of your world in one sentence: magic, technology, law, cost. Has any book quietly broken one when the plot needed it?*Book 1: healing magic cannot raise the dead, ever. Book 4: it does, once, and the series' stakes never recover.*☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

07

Geography & distance drift**Maps in readers' heads are unforgiving****Ask:** Do travel times and distances between your fixed places stay constant from book to book?

The estate sits one mile from town in Book 2 and across the county in Book 4. The harbor is east of the city until the book where it is west.

☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

08

Voice drift between books**Readers feel it before they can name it****Ask:** Read one page of your protagonist's dialogue from Book 1, then one from the latest book, back to back. Is it the same person?

The detective who spoke in clipped, eight-word sentences in Book 1 is delivering paragraphs by Book 5. Average sentence length grew 55%, and nobody decided that.

☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

09

The knowledge ledger**The plot hole readers argue about in forums****Ask:** For each secret in the series: who learned it, in which chapter, on the page? Does anyone act on information they were never given?

She hides the letter from everyone in Book 2. In Book 3, her brother references its contents at dinner, and no scene ever showed him learning them.

☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

10

Relationship & rank drift**Family trees and chains of command don't bend****Ask:** Do titles, ranks, and family relations hold steady across every reference: cousins stay cousins, the captain still answers to the colonel?

Her "uncle" in Book 1 is her "father's cousin" by Book 3. The sergeant gives orders to the lieutenant who outranked him two books ago.

☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

11

POV & tense leaks**Breaks the contract your first book signed****Ask:** Does every scene stay inside the point-of-view pattern your series established in Book 1, in the same tense?

A strict two-POV series suddenly spends a chapter in the villain's head. A past-tense saga slips into present for three pages and slips back.

☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

12

The publish-time pass**Continuity extends to the listing itself****Ask:** Before you upload Book N: do the series numbering, "also by" list, blurb claims, and front and back matter agree with the books already in readers' hands?

The blurb promises the answer Book 2 already gave. The back matter's series order skips a novella readers own. "Book 4 of 5" in a series that grew to seven.

☐ CLEAN
☐ UNSURE
☐ FOUND

SCORING

Count every box that isn't *Clean*.

Unsure and Found it count the same, because a fact you cannot verify without re-reading 380,000 words is a fact your readers are already checking for you.

0–2

A tight shelf. Your series holds. Protect it: run a verification pass before the next book ships, when the fix costs an afternoon instead of a review.

3–5

The bible has drifted from the books. Your notes describe the series you planned; the manuscripts describe the one you wrote. A full-series pass before Book N+1 is cheaper than the review it prevents.

6+

Readers are likely seeing this already. Check your recent reviews for the word "inconsistent." An audit before the next release is the highest-leverage editing money can buy.

THE MANUAL VERSION VS. THE INSTRUMENT

This audit by hand takes a weekend per book. There is a faster way to run it.

StoryHelm runs these checks, and the rest of a 20-analysis continuity review, across your entire series against one shared canon. Every finding arrives severity-ranked, with the exact book and chapter on both sides of the contradiction, quoted back in your own words.

\$99

Manuscript Audit · one-time

One book, the full severity-ranked read. No subscription. The fastest way to see what an instrument catches that a weekend misses.

14 days free

Series plan · \$59/mo billed annually

Every book in your series under one canon, cross-book contradiction detection, backlist audit. No card to start.

StoryHelm reads and analyzes. It never writes a word of your prose. The pen stays in your hand.

The instrument reads. The author writes. The byline never moves.

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