



EMOTION

Are your characters
in a dark moment right now?
If you're empathetic, you may
not be able to move forward
until you're in a brighter place.
Take a break and walk away.
Come back tomorrow, prepared
to face that moment with them.



QUITCAST

STUCK LIST

- SHUFFLE
- DEAL
- BREAK YOUR BLOCK

THE
BETTER-PASTER
ACADEMY
with BECCA SYME

THE AUTHOR STUCK LIST

BECCA SYME



QUITCAST
FOR WRITERS

INSTRUCTIONS

When you are stuck in your manuscript, you can draw a card at random, or you can use this deck with the customization options.

There are six types of stuck. Each type is labeled with a different color. Different icons represent each type as well.

Clarity, Progress, Environment, Resource, Emotion, and Surprise.

If you typically get one type of stuck, look for the cards of that color and sort through them for the best advice. But don't forget, any cards with that type's icon should also help (the advice can work for more than one type). Find The Author Stuck List companion book on our website or on Amazon.com.

<http://betterfasteracademy.com>

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CLARITY

Get out a journal and
hand-write about why
you can't make
progress on this work.



CLARITY

Read the last chapter
or the last 2000 words
you've just written.



CLARITY

Too many characters, Stacy. Put some back.

(This is the obligatory "do you have too many people to keep track of?" card. Even just asking the question... is everyone absolutely necessary? What would happen if you took one of them completely out of the story?)



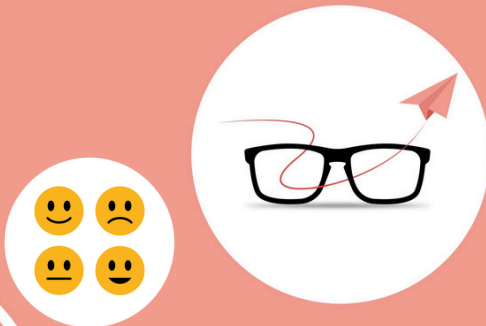
CLARITY

Close your eyes and imagine the 360 view your character is seeing right now. What would they interact with in their immediate environment?



CLARITY

Who is in the scene with your POV character right now? How do they feel about that person?



CLARITY

What does your character want right now? In this next scene? Can you give them something to want? Or skip to a place where they want something?



CLARITY

When was the last time your plot changed trajectory? Is there any tension on the page you're currently writing? Do you need to change direction?



CLARITY

Is there someone off-stage (or off-camera) who wants something contrary to your current POV character? What are they thinking or doing?



CLARITY

What matters to your character right now? What can they not stand to lose? What would they do to protect that?



CLARITY

Do you know what your POV
character was like at the age
of: Five?
Ten?
Fifteen?
Twenty?



CLARITY

Open the manuscript and ask, "Can I write the next sentence?"

If you can write the next sentence, write it. If you can't, pull another card or go think about what will happen next until you can see it.

Thinking = working.



CLARITY

What trope is your story following? (I know, Steve, I know, you're so unique, but there's a trope of some kind in every story...)



CLARITY

Take out a piece of paper and draw your current scene layout.

Where are your characters?
Where do they need to go? How
will they get there?



CLARITY




QUITCAST
FOR WRITERS *with Becca Syme*

SURPRISE

Chris suggests:

Change your
manuscript to a
ridiculous
comic font.



SURPRISE

Throw an obstacle in the character's path that makes them unable to get what they want right now.



SURPRISE

Open your manuscript and,
wherever your cursor is, type one of
the following sentences:

And then everything changed.

And then the murders began.

And then she saw someone she never thought she'd see again.

And then the dragons came.

And then she heard a loud pop behind her.

(It's just a prompt, Janet, you don't have to keep it...)



SURPRISE

Give your character a
secret sibling.
Someone they didn't
even know about.



SURPRISE

Kill someone.

(A character, Lexi... kill a
character.)



SURPRISE

What if you erased the entire chapter you're currently working on and started over?



SURPRISE

Give your character a
secret past.

Something they have
never told anyone.



SURPRISE

Give your character a tool. Something they have to hold in their hands that they didn't have before.



SURPRISE

What if you skipped a
month in the scene
you're about to write?
A year? Ten years?



SURPRISE

That thing your character is about to do... what if they did the exact opposite thing? Make them do it and see what happens.



SURPRISE

Go watch a movie,
Maya. Extra points if it
reminds you of your
book. I'll wait.



SURPRISE

Ask a friend for a word
to use in your next
sentence.



SURPRISE

Roll dice.

Count on your bookshelf to that
number.

Roll dice again.

Open the book to that page.

Roll again.

Count the words from the top of the
page and use that word in your next
sentence.





SURPRISE




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FOR WRITERS *with Becca Syme*



RESOURCE




Do you know your
POV character's Top
Five Strengths?






RESOURCE




Open a book from a similar genre to the same page you're on in your manuscript and read that book for two pages.






RESOURCE




Has someone read the
book? Are you expecting
yourself to find a problem
you can't find? Do you
need perspective?






RESOURCE




Do you need a hard
deadline? (Not everyone
can meet deadlines they
set for themselves, Jillian.
Question the premise.)






RESOURCE



Read an old poem, and
insert a line from the
poem right into the
manuscript where you
are right now.




RESOURCE

Do you know your
POV character's
archetype?






RESOURCE




Go to YouTube and type in
the job of your main
character and the words
“how to” and watch a
video on their job.





RESOURCE




Listen to the “Wish I’d
Known Then For
Authors” podcast on
Spotify or iTunes.






RESOURCE





When was the last time
you read a book, Keri?
You might need energy
pennies that only reading
can provide.






RESOURCE

Go to your favorite course on craft. My favorites are at the Margie Lawson Academy. I always recommend the Dialogue Cues class first.





RESOURCE



Turn on Pandora or
Spotify and build a
playlist for your main
character's life.





RESOURCE


Pippa suggests:

Go wander around
in an art gallery.






RESOURCE



Pick up your favorite
craft book. Turn past the
first few chapters
you've already read and
go deeper.



RESOURCE



QUITCAST
FOR WRITERS *with Becca Syme*

PROGRESS

Take a shower.
You think I'm kidding.
Go get in the shower,
George.



PROGRESS

Is your outline (if you have one) wrong? Do you need to diverge or abandon?

(This is perfectly normal and you can still write great books, even when you diverge from your outline!)





PROGRESS

Go for a drive. Just get
in the car and drive
somewhere and let
your mind wander.



PROGRESS

That part you want to skip... can you skip it? Just try making a new copy of the book and taking it out.



PROGRESS

Play a video game. It's not procrastination, Jason, it's thinking time. Just do it.



PROGRESS

What if you killed a side character right now?
Sometimes, murder is
the answer, Jen.



PROGRESS

What's the thing you want to do
but you think is stupid?
It's not stupid. Just do the thing
your intuition is telling you to
do, no matter what it is.



PROGRESS

Alex suggests:

Side load your WIP to your Kindle and read through it in a comfy chair as if you were a reader. Let your brain make predictions and form ideas of where to go as you read.



PROGRESS

Have you tried moving on to a new project for a time? Just to see if this current work needs to percolate?



PROGRESS

Stop writing for the day.
Tonight, before you go to
sleep, write on an index card
where your story should go
next. Ask your sleeping brain
to help you.



PROGRESS

Have a one-minute
dance party. Come on,
Cammy! Dance!



PROGRESS

Call a friend and explain
where you are in the story
and why you can't proceed.

You don't have to take their advice, Joe.
And you can thank them for the chat even
if you don't take their advice.



PROGRESS

Is there a different part
of the story you know
and could write? Move
to that part.



PROGRESS

Do you need to move
a preorder? I know, I
know. But... do you?



PROGRESS




QUITCAST
FOR WRITERS *with Becca Syme*

ENVIRONMENT

Go for a walk. Listen to music or don't, but don't listen to podcasts or news. Let yourself think.



ENVIRONMENT

Are there people in
your space? Do you
need a closed door?
Even a closet.



ENVIRONMENT

Go eat something.
Honestly, make a snack
and come back to the
manuscript in a hot
second.



ENVIRONMENT

When was the last time you had a glass of water? You're not a cactus, Aidy.



ENVIRONMENT

Is something off about
your environment? Do
you need to fix/clean
something?



ENVIRONMENT

When was the last time
you left the house?

Maybe leave the house
right now, Harry.



ENVIRONMENT

Where is your current scene set? Can you go there? Or go somewhere that reminds you of the place?



ENVIRONMENT

Take a nap. Yup.
That's the whole
card, Kevin.



ENVIRONMENT

Are there people interrupting you?
Try putting a white board on your door and closing it. That way, people can write what they need on the board, and not have to bother you, and still get their needs met!



ENVIRONMENT

Switch the direction
you face when you're
writing. Try a different
room if you're able.



ENVIRONMENT

Travel.

I know, Ali. I know.

But you may need to
travel. Post hasty.



ENVIRONMENT

Go outside.
Don't take your
phone or computer.
Just go outside.



ENVIRONMENT

How long have you
been sitting down?
Can you stand up?
Lay on your back?



ENVIRONMENT




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EMOTION

What is your POV character feeling right now? How would a person act who is feeling that way?





EMOTION

Have you checked in with your positive outlook? Do you need an infusion of positive thinking?





EMOTION

Are you expecting too
much from yourself?

Do you need to ask
for help?





EMOTION

Are your characters in a black moment? Some writers get stuck when their characters are in rough places. Check in with your empathetic nature.





EMOTION

Are you sick or tired?
Do you need rest or
space or care?





EMOTION

Have you seen a character in a book or movie who feels similarly to your main character? What did they do?





EMOTION

Are you in trauma? Or
recovering from trauma?
Would you benefit from
therapy, coaching, or
time off right now?





EMOTION

Do you like the book
you're writing? I know,
Courtney, I know. But at
least ask the question.





EMOTION

Alexis suggests:

The American Lung Association used to have a slogan, "If you can't breathe nothing else matters." Sometimes, we get so wrapped up in everything going on around us, we forget to breathe - to pause and allow our brains (bodies) time to catch up or simply settle. So, breathe, my friend. The "3-2-4 Breathe From Your Core" The technique not only rhymes but is a simple, easy to follow way to sneak in a quick pause in your day.





EMOTION

Is someone around you in trauma? Do you need to tend to them before you can get some space for your manuscript?





EMOTION



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