## Feedback Organization Chart

Okay so you sent out your story for a beta read and now you have tons of feedback and you want to go hide under a rock. Yes? I get it. And guess what— you're normal. But eventually you'll get hungry or have to use the restroom so staying in the woods under a rock isn't going to work for too long. Once you come up for air, try using this organization chart to condense the feedback you get into little nuggets that feel less daunting to tackle.

I'm super type A, so any excuse to make a chart, I'm here for. And this chart is one of my favorite.

## WHEN TO USE

Before we dive into how to use the chart, let's talk about when to use it. I beta'd out my DVPit story that landed me several agent offers, 21 times—- yes 21. Is that normal? No. LOL so don't feel like you need to go harass 21 people. So why would I do that? #BcIAmASpaz. Okay, yes. But, also— because I like to compile trends in feedback. I like to see if half or 2/3 of my readers are going to stumble over the same confusion in a particular scene. If you have multiple readers pointing out similar issues then more than likely, it's something you should tweak. That being said, sometimes we only have 1-2 readers. Get more. If you can find peers you trust, get a few more. No need to go crazy like I did unless you like crazy writing goals LOL because I'm here for that too. :)

The one caveat I'll mention is, keep in mind the writing experience of your beta reader. Yes, their **WRITING** experience. Many betas tend to read like readers which can be super fun. Watching people immerse in our story is so cool! But, try to find a couple readers that are also writers. And the more experienced, the better! Why? Well, because they'll read your words for things like pacing, tension build up, character development, emotional resonance, placement of plot points, etc.

Readers don't always see those things. And while we love hearing all the great things our readers find, writers can be a bit more nit picky in their critiques—- which can be good! (I use the word "can" intentionally, fully aware some writers critique others work in a snotty way for the sake of being snotty. Boo!) Aim to get a few writer betas that will give you more writer-oriented developmental

feedback. And yes, even the kind critiques can hurt—AHEM— I mean, help. But seeing the things writers spot—from a well-intentioned heart of trying to help you improve—will only help your story <u>if you give it consideration.</u>

We don't take every edit that's suggested of course, just the ones that resonate. Sometimes, the vision a person has for your story is so far different from what you're trying to accomplish. That's fair. But **often** times, comments are solid feedback and welp—we don't really give them enough credence.

I encourage you to not be overly precious about your work. Burn it if you have to. I like to say I draft like a cheetah but, revise like a phoenix. My motto is—- make it burn. If you have a good critique team of solid writers, really listen and give their suggestions serious consideration.

Once you've gotten feedback, try compiling that data into this table and then use it as a game plan tackle revising.

## HOW TO USE

>>Finish your draft and send out your story to multiple betas at once with:

//1) an agreed upon deadline;
This can vary tremendously. Just be sure you discuss it, so that expectations are clear and you and your beta are on the same page. Be flexible as they may be reading several things and volunteering to do this is a big time commitment. But ideally, their reading wouldn't drag on for so long that your writing progress is halted for half a year.

// and 2) a clear indication of what sort of feedback you're interested in during this pass.
For example, you may say I want to be sure the development of the plot unfolds organically and things don't feel too rushed. Or, you might say, I'm really focused on character development and ensuring my arcs are clear and authentic. Etc. Setting clear expectations of what your beta should look for can be helpful. I don't usually mention that to betas that are not writers. But with writers, I always mention what I'm looking for. It helps them zone in on that specifically which is super helpful!

>>FEEDBACK's ROLLING IN, NOW WHAT?<<

>>As you start receive a piece of feedback, decide 2 things:

1// Is it a developmental issue or line edit issue?
Developmental issues are things related to the story itself, how it unfolds, how it builds, the wavelengths of tension, et cetera. Line edit issues are word choice, tweaks to the voice, where language is unclear, overused words, repetitive info, et cetera.

2// Is it a recurring issue or isolated?
Be really honest with yourself in that moment and if you know the issue is something that's recurring later in the manuscript, even if the reader didn't point it out every time, mark this edit as **recurring**.

>>RECURRING ISSUES—THE RIPPLE EFFECT<<

When you spot a **recurring** problem, mark each chapter that involves the build up to that problem in anyway. For example, the first item on the chart below refers to a kiss between two characters. [SCROLL DOWN AND PEEK—I"ll wait.] If they're kissing "too soon" then you'll want to mark all the chapters that involve their relationship development leading up to the kiss and even after. That way you have a quick way to spot the ripple effect of a simple change. Once you have each larger edit written out and you can clearly see, at a glance, all the places in your story that impact that one edit, you'll have a better grasp on how switching one thing impacts the others. Some changes will make small ripples, others—HUGE.

The other great thing about this chart is once you're done, you can read it vertically and see everything that needs tweaks in a given chapter. So using the chart below I know that Chapter 4 needs some major work to fix several areas. In that case, I may reoutline the chapter giving consideration to each item marked with an "X".

With the chart completely filled out, you can revise chapter by chapter efficiently, fixing each item impacted in that chapter.

Let's see this in action below!

## >>FEEDBACK ORGANIZATION CHART<<

|  | CH 1 | CH 2 | CH 3 | CH 4 | CH 5 | CH 6 | CH 7 | CH 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J & T kiss too soon. Seemed premature. |  |  |  | X | X |  | X |  |
| World rules are still unclear | X | X | X | X |  |  |  | X |
| The tension between antagonist & protag comes too late |  |  |  | X |  |  | X | X |
| Pacing feels too slow in the first act. | X | X | X | X | X |  |  |  |
| Magic system confusing—how does one get power? Can they lose it? |  | X |  | X | X |  |  |  |
| The death of the sidekick wasn't foreshadowed enough |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X |

TIP>> Add comments to each box with notes on ideas to fix this issue. //

## >>WHAT ABOUT THOSE LINE EDITS?<<

There is no point in fixing sentence structures in Ch 4 from the example above if you're just going to rewrite it. My suggestion is if you're seeing a bunch of developmental stuff, skip the line edit suggestions. Just move on.

>>Getting the story together **structurally** is priority #1.//

Tips by

## J.^Elle

# RECAP | For You Skimmers Out There

>>Write story.

>>Read through story and edit it as best you can. I use a modified version of Susan Dennard's scene flashcard revising technique. (Google It.)

>>Find Beta Readers (ideally 4+ with at least 3 writers) and set: 1) an agreed upon deadline; and 2) points to focus on while reading.

>>Take time away from the manuscript while betas have it.

>>Having **fresh eyes** is priceless! Future you will thank you.<<

>>As feedback comes in, focus on developmental suggestions. Consider them carefully and be sure to notate things multiple betas are noticing. Fill out your chart as you identify things to address when you revise.

>>Betas are done. Take a solid day or two or three or ten to wrap your head around the work ahead. Then revisit your chart, starting with chapter 1 and read it vertically, identifying each area that needs to be better developed in that chapter. Consider, re outlining the chapter if the changes are sizable. And dive in!

>>When you finish the entire story, send it to another beta reader or two and specifically see how they respond to how you've addressed the items on the previous revision, If this second round of betas come back pretty clean.

>>Then, start line edits!

>>When those are done, I like to beta it out once more. Only this time, when I get line edit feedback I take it, since all the structural things have been addressed.

## >>GOOD LUCK!!//
### And let me know how you're doing!
### Twitter: @AuthorJ_Elle