Elements of a Good Scene  
by Jami Gold

Good scenes need to avoid many pitfalls. Information dump or backstory scenes falter not only because of bad structure, but also because they fail to be relevant to the overall story. Every scene needs to have multiple reasons to exist, and some reasons are more important than others.

This checklist summarizes the elements a scene should contain and breaks them down into categories of Essential, Important, and Bonus. All together, every scene should have *at least* **three** of the following reasons to exist.

Scenes should reveal *at least* **one** of these **Essential Elements**:

a plot point

a character’s goal

action to advance the plot

action to increase the tension

Scenes should also reveal *at least* **two** of these **Important Elements**:

character development

a cause of character conflict

an effect of character conflict

how stakes are raised

a reinforcement of the stakes

character motivation

Scenes can also reveal these **Bonus Elements**:

character backstory

world building

story theme

foreshadowing

the story’s tone or mood

Above all, decide what you want the scene to accomplish from the reader’s perspective, and use the elements that will best meet that goal.

Note: This checklist takes the list from my post ([http://jamigold.com/scene](http://jamigold.com/2012/06/how-to-make-the-most-of-a-scene/)) and breaks down elements along the same lines as Janice Hardy’s post (<http://bit.ly/Nwizph>). Please refer to those two posts for the full details. To download the actual checklist, go to: <http://jamigold.com/worksheets>.

Many thanks to [Janice Hardy](http://blog.janicehardy.com/) for her ongoing support and writing insights.