

13 Steps To Evil – Cheat Sheet

How To Craft A Superbad Villain Cheat sheet

This cheat sheet is a super easy to use checklist to help you create the perfect superbad villain for your novel or story. This cheat sheet is best used in conjunction with the book 13 Steps To Evil – How To Craft A Superbad Villain by Sacha Black.



13 Steps To Evil – *How To Craft A Superbad Villain*

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Why Writers Fudge Up Their Villains

Villains are like newborn infants. So much glorious potential. Until we writers get our grubby mitts on them and balls it up. With the careless flick of a pen, we can turn a finely sculpted baby villain into a cringe-worthy cliché because we didn't make him bad enough, or we create something so heinously evil it's unrealistic.

While researching for the book, writers told me all kinds of problems they encountered while creating their villains. From getting the dialogue right and avoiding clichés, to knowing how evil to make a villain, to how to reveal her motives without using blatant exposition.

The Thing With Cheat Sheets

This short guide will help you improve your villains fast. However, like anything in writing, if you want to master your craft, you need to bleed words over the page study and practice. Which means this checklist is best used in conjunction with the full textbook, 13 Steps To Evil – How To Craft A Superbad Villain, which you can find [here](#), and extensive study of your genre.



But behind all these issues were two basic barriers that were the Achilles in every writer's villainous heel:

1. Depending on the point of view (POV) the book's written in, the villain is *usually* seen through the eyes of your hero.

A solitary POV gives you a page-limited amount of time to show your villain's best, most authentic and devilishly evil side. Page-limited to the point it makes it eye-wateringly difficult to convey her backstory effectively without information dumping. You have to be better, clearer, more tactical and more concise with your words to create superb villains.

2. Writers are hero worshippers.

We love our heroes and protagonists more than our spouses. And as a result, we spend shameful amounts of time honing our protagonist's muscular heroics into shape. But that relegates our villain (the plot-driving conflict-creator) to the corner of our book, complete with a nobody-loves-you-anyway hat. In other words, writers don't pay enough attention to their villain.

So let's fix this with a quick fire cheat sheet.



Step 1 – Villainy 101

Just because you've created a villain, doesn't mean you have the right one.

1. What type of villain should you have? Villain, antagonist or anti-hero?

2. What type of hero should you have? Hero, protagonist or anti-hero?

3. What is your core conflict?



Step 2 – Villainous Traits

Even villains have mommies that love them.

1. What three negative traits does your villain have?

2. What one or two positive traits does your villain have?

3. What does your villain love or value more than anything?

4. Will your readers sympathize with your villain early on? If yes, have you foreshadowed their evil inner core?

5. What morals does your villain have?

6. Are your hero's traits the same, opposite or somewhere in the middle?
And how does this increase the conflict in your story?



Step 3 – Motives And Goals

Goals are ***what*** a villain wants. Motives are the ***reason why*** they want them.

1. What is your villain's goal/s?

2. What is your villain's motive for those goals?

3. What is your hero's motive for stopping your villain?



Step 4 – Villain History And Psychology

There are moments in all our lives that mark our souls and change the way we see the world, for better and for the worst. Understand a villain's past and you unlock the key to his character arc.

1. What defining moment in your villain's past marked their soul and changed the way they saw the world?

2. What action your hero takes or moment in the plot solidifies your villain as the bad guy?

3. How do they react to that moment and how is that reaction linked to their past?

4. What lie does your villain believe?

5. What situation in your plot makes your villain believe the lie is true?



Step 5 – Credibility And Believability

Credibility + believability = authentic villain.

1. What are your villain's inner values?

2. How does your villain react if those values are broken?

3. How does your villain show integrity? i.e. How do they stick to their values no matter what? Even if they are bad ones.



Step 6 – Archetypes

There are as many villains as there are books. Each one has a flavorsome cocktail of evil spice, crushed insects, and dashes of negative traits. But there are patterns to villains, and **these patterns are called archetypes**.

Types of Villains

- Omnipotent power hungry dark lord
- The arch nemesis
- The deranged lunatic
- The revenge whore
- The secret squirrel
- The invisible internal villain
- The slut seductress
- The jealous one

1. Which archetype does your villain fall into?

2. Does your hero have an internal demon as well? If yes, how can your villain use this to his advantage?



Step 7 – Anti-Heroes

Everybody loves the underdog because we can relate to her, her flaws are our flaws.

1. If you have an anti-hero character what are her main flaws or negative traits?

2. What positive traits does she have?

3. What does she care about most?

4. What bad decisions does your anti-hero make during your story?

5. What action or situation in the plot forces your anti-hero to make the right decision and save the day?



Step 8 – Clichés and Tropes

Clichés are words, phrases, expressions or scenes that have been overused to the point they're as dull as watching paint dry. They're predictable and unoriginal.

Tropes are reoccurring themes, concepts and patterns usually found embedded within genres. Tropes help you identify what genre you're reading. What separates a trope from a cliché is that a trope can be done over and over again, as long as it's told in a novel way each time.

1. Name as many villain clichés as you can. Look at your list and ask yourself if you've accidentally used one in your story.

2. Name the three major tropes in your genre. How do these affect your villain?



Step 9 – Fear Factor

Readers don't need monster to scare them. They only need the idea of fear.

Physiological fear is created by pain.

Psychological fear is created by what you can't see.

1. Do you use fear in your story? If so, are you using psychological or physiological fear?

2. How can your villain use movie making tactics like insinuation to 'show' rather than 'tell' how significant their threats are?

3. What information do you purposely withhold from your hero?

4. Have you used all five senses to describe scenes with heightened conflict?



Step 10 – Mental Health

Villains are often portrayed as having mental health disorders. If your villain has a mental health disorder you need to research extensively.

1. Does your villain have a mental health disorder? If yes, which one?

2. If yes, have you researched the following?

- The illness in its entirety
- Medication
- Symptomology
- Patterns of behavior
- Triggers
- Severity
- Coping strategies
- Reactions
- Prevalence
- Whether or not a person is aware of their disorder and treatments



Step 11 –Conflict And Climax

Everything, all the conflict in your story leads to one giant literary crescendo - the climax. And it's only about two people: hero and villain.

1. Is your conflict linked to your hero and villains goals and motives?

2. Is your conflict targeted specifically at your hero? If not, does your hero have enough motivation and justification to save the day?

3. How do you raise the stakes?

4. Does your climax focus on the hero and villain? If not, what do you need to change to ensure it does?

5. How does your hero change in order to beat your villain?

6. What flaw leads your villain to his downfall?



Step 12 – The Villain’s Demise

Much as a villain is fun to write, they rarely win. They can, however, make a hero suffer for his win.

1. What type of ending do you have?

- Happily Ever After
- Not so happily ever after
- Hero’s sacrifice
- Bittersweet
- Ambiguous

2. How does your villain make your hero suffer?

3. What does your hero have to sacrifice to beat your villain?

4. What’s the best ending you’ve ever read?

5. What’s the most common trope or type of ending in your genre?



Step 13 – The Introduction

First impressions count, especially with a villain.

1. If you keep your villain’s identity a secret until the end, where have you dropped breadcrumb clues for the reader?

2. Do you have any characters that are dubious enough to cast doubt over who the real villain is?

3. If you don’t introduce the villain early on, how do you show the reader what’s at stake for your hero?



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Sacha writes books about people with magical powers and other books about the art of writing. She lives in Hertfordshire, England, with her wife and genius, giant of a son.

When she's not writing, she can be found laughing inappropriately loud, blogging, sniffing musty old books, fangirling film and TV soundtracks, or thinking up new ways to break the rules.

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Where To Buy 13 Steps To Evil

13 Steps To Evil – How To Craft A Superbad Villain text book is available at all good retailers.

13 Steps To Evil – How To Craft A Superbad Villain can be purchased [here](#). There is a workbook in construction that will be published in the summer of 2017. Stay tuned on my mailing list for details.