Short & Sweet

A short story is not an essay or a novel. It's somewhere in-between. But you still have to tell a complete story. So how do you do that in not so many words? Author **Malavika Nataraj** *offers handy tips*

Before you even begin, the first thing to do is take the pressure off yourself. Don't aim to write a story that is 'perfect'. Because there isn't one. Instead, think through your idea and roughly work out what you want to say, in your head. Who's going to be the main character? What is the situation? How will the main character react in that situation? Who are the characters surrounding the main character? Where do you want your story to go?

So, what's it about?

When you are happy with what you have, try to write down the essence of your story in one or two lines. For example, try applying this simple formula: Main character + other characters + situation + outcome. This will help you understand, clearly, what your story is all about. It is important to do this because, remember, you need to tell your story as quickly, clearly and as interestingly as possible. Also, you don't want to wander too far away from what you actually wanted to say in the first place – you'll be surprised at how often this happens – so the two-line summary will keep you on track.

> *The aim is to keep the reader interested throughout the story, so it's great if something happens every few lines. However, make sure that the events occurring throughout are only adding to your storyline*

Don't distract

Once you've started writing your story, you'll need to make every sentence count. Keep the story and plot clear and the language as impactful as possible. The aim is to keep the reader interested

Pick a title

And finally...

And when you think you are done, edit!