



WRITING PAIN

A DESCRIPTION
CHEAT SHEET FOR
FICTION WRITERS

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Pain type	Sensory descriptors	Character reactions	Involuntary responses
Penetrating (needle, bullet, fang)	Stinging, piercing, drilling, spearing, puncturing	Gasps; jerks back; clutches wound; freezes briefly	Muscles twitch; knees buckle; fingers tremble
Cutting, slashing	Sharp, slicing, lacerating, razor-like, carving	Hisses; grips injury; jaw tightens; eyes widen	Shoulders tense; hands shake; teeth grit
Tearing, strain	Wrenching, ripping, pulling, snapping, stretching	Groans; grabs limb; body stiffens; shuts eyes	Limb weakens; fingers curl; body hunches
Crushing, pressure	Crushing, squeezing, grinding, compressing, heavy	Doubles over; staggers; clutches ribs or chest	Wheezing breath; shaking muscles; watery eyes
Burning, heat	Burning, searing, scalding, blistering, scorching	Screams; jerks away; shakes limb	Heavy sweating; trembling hands; tearing eyes
Cold, freezing	Freezing, icy, numbing, biting, stinging cold	Shivers violently; rubs arms; hunches shoulders	Goosebumps; trembling lips; stiff movement
Throbbing, pulsing	Throbbing, pounding, beating, hammering	Presses temples; grimaces; rubs sore area	Squinting; clenched jaw; tense shoulders
Shooting, electric	Shooting, jolting, electric, lightning-like	Jerks suddenly; drops objects; gasps	Muscle spasms; twitching fingers
Dull, persistent	Aching, sore, heavy, nagging, lingering	Rubs area; shifts posture; slow exhale	Slumped posture; slow movement
Extreme, agonizing	Blinding, excruciating, unbearable	Screams; collapses; thrashes	Vomiting; fainting; incoherent speech
Emotional pain	Hollow, crushing, suffocating, bitter	Avoids eye contact; lashes out; goes quiet	Tears forming; trembling voice; slumped posture