Sudowrite

UX AUDIT · OCTOBER 2026

A writer's first session

Sign-up, the Story Bible and the free trial, tested on a story I know cold: a Dallas b-boy crew the week before a battle.

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FOR
The Sudowrite team

TESTED
October 14, 2026
New free-trial account

SCOPE
Sign-up to zero credits: onboarding, Chat, Story Bible, characters, openings, credits and pricing

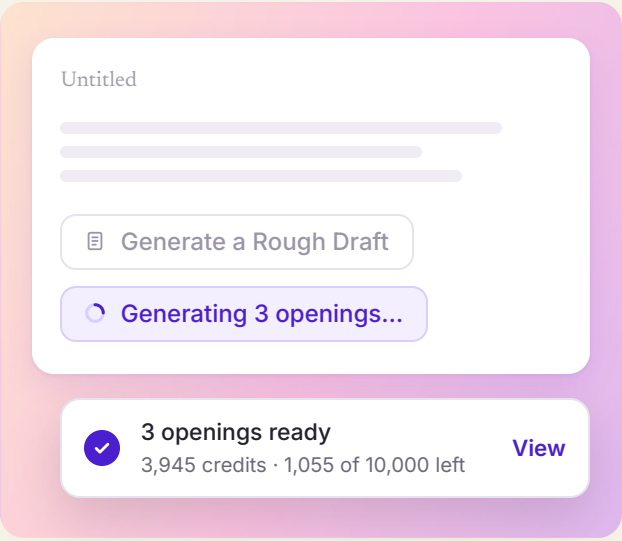
Independent, unsolicited audit: not commissioned or endorsed by Sudowrite.

THE SHORT VERSION

Sudowrite's writing is the real thing. From a Story Bible about a Dallas b-boy crew, it wrote Deep Ellum, a kid from Denton calling the crew out on Instagram, and a low entry into a flare. It got the vocabulary right.

The friction is everything around the writing. No generate button says what it costs, the balance lives in one settings popover, and a run in progress is a blank card. My first generated character used 84% of the free trial. The trial ended four generations in, before an outline or a chapter.

CONCEPT Quick win 1, page 5



The run says it's running, and says what it cost once it's done. Try it at sudowrite-concept-mwilson.netlify.app.

Times in this audit are from my two screen recordings: P1 (10:22) and P2 (30:12).

SUMMARY

Three recommendations

Two quick wins that use parts Sudowrite already has, and one bigger idea.

1 Make a running generation impossible to miss

Quick win · pages 4–5

WHAT HAPPENED

"Generate 3 Openings" never changes state. My first run showed an error; a retry then finished out of sight. Thinking it had failed, I ran it again, and that set took my last 1,055 credits.

THE FIX

A busy state on the button, "Working…" where results land, and a "ready" message that shows the cost once.

2 Show trial writers the meter you've already built

Quick win · page 6

WHAT HAPPENED

My first generated character used 8,433 of the trial's 10,000 credits. Nothing said so, and finding my balance took four and a half minutes.

THE FIX

Turn on the existing credits pop-up for trial accounts, show the footer balance from the first minute, and use one way of saying it.

3 Show the run's plan before the click

Strategic · page 7

WHAT HAPPENED

Each run says what it read and which model ran only after it finishes. What it cost shows only in Settings.

THE IDEA

Before every generate: what it will read, which model, about what it costs, and a way to change them. It's the step before "a more agentic future."

WHAT'S WORKING

- **It collaborates.** Sudowrite calls AI "a phenomenal collaborator, not a destroyer of worlds." The collaborating showed: a generated crewmate "quietly questions whether someone who came up through gymnastics has the right relationship with breaking."
- **The Story Bible carries.** The openings used Deep Ellum, Denton, toprock, flares and the protagonist's old gymnastics coach.
- **Chat is quick and clear.** Free, about 10 seconds to answer, with "Working…" and a stop button.
- **Nothing is lost at zero.** Insert still worked, and grace credits let an overdrawn run finish.
- **The system explains itself in places:** the credit ledger, "This section affects: Synopsis," and Outline menus like "3rd person limited POV (most common)."

FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

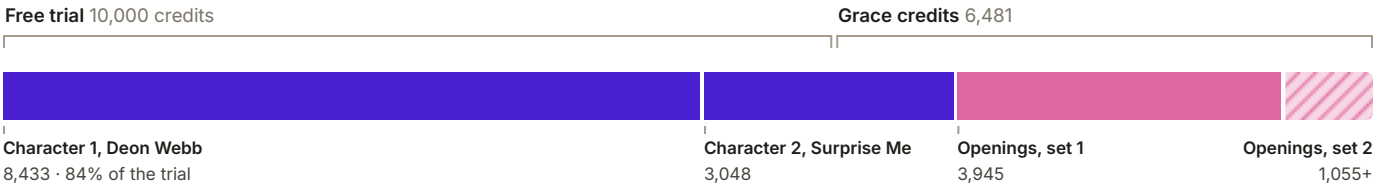
AREA	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
First run	0	3	4
Story Bible and generation	0	2	4
Credits and conversion	3	3	2
21 findings	3	8	10

All three High findings are about credits: what one action costs, where the balance lives, and what a run is doing. Every finding is listed on page 8.

THE FREE TRIAL

What the free trial bought

Four generations used all 10,000 trial credits plus 6,481 in grace credits. The first one used 84% of the trial.

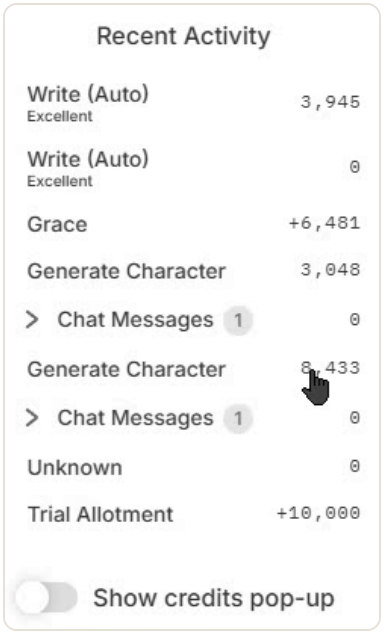


Generate Character · Generate 3 Openings · True cost hidden: the counter stops at zero

P2 TIME	ACTION	CREDITS	BALANCE	WHAT THE SCREEN SAID AT THE TIME
—	Trial allotment	+10,000	10,000	—
09:49–10:48	Generate Character, “Crewmate of Michael”, becomes Deon Webb	−8,433	1,567	Nothing. I found my balance at 15:03, in the settings gear.
15:35–15:54	Surprise Me, a second “Deon Webb”	−3,048	−1,481	“You’ve run out of credits for your free trial. We’re giving a few more so you can finish what you’re working on before you need to sign up.”
16:53	Claim credits (“Grace”)	+6,481	5,000	No confirmation. The panel’s meter jumps to half.
21:41–21:47	Generate 3 Openings	0	5,000	A red error inside the History card.
by 22:33	A retry, finished out of sight (most likely started from the error card’s link, 22:01)	−3,945	1,055	Nothing, until I reopened the settings gear: “1,055 of 10,000 credits left.”
23:01–23:43	Generate 3 Openings, again	−1,055+	0	“You’ve used all your credits for your free trial. Subscribe to keep using Sudowrite.”

1. Chat cost nothing, as your docs say.
2. The two characters cost 8,433 and 3,048, nearly 3× apart for the same kind of output. Nothing on screen says why.
3. Your docs say cost follows the words a run reads, the words it writes, and the model. The writer sees none of the three before running.
4. Amounts are from Settings › Show Recent Activity; balances are computed from them. Before I ran out, the only balance on screen was in the settings gear (15:03: “1,567 of 10,000 credits left”). The last run’s true cost is hidden because the counter stops at zero.

TODAY P2 22:58



Settings › Show Recent Activity, newest first. Below the list, “Show credits pop-up” is off. My cursor sits on the first digit of 8,433.

QUICK WIN 1

Make a running generation impossible to miss

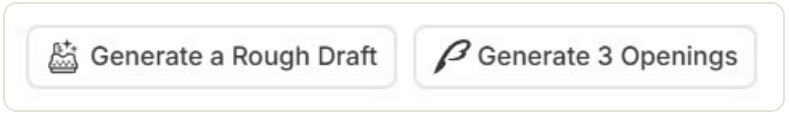
Screen: “Generate 3 Openings” under the editor, and the History tab it reports to.

WHAT HAPPENED

1. The button never changes. No spinner, no disabled state, the same label before, during and after a run (21:41, 23:01).
2. The run reports only in History, which opens by itself, as a “WRITE” card with nothing else in it: no “Working…”, no progress, no time, no cost (23:02–23:34). Chat already shows “Working…” and a stop button.
3. My first run showed a red error in its card (21:47) and cost nothing. I collapsed the panel (22:04). Between 22:14 and 22:33 a retry, most likely from the error card’s link, finished out of sight and 3,945 credits came off. Settings lists both as “Write (Auto)”, not “Generate 3 Openings.”
4. Thinking it had failed, I ran it again (23:01). That run took my last 1,055 credits (23:43). Its result landed above where I was reading, with no notice.

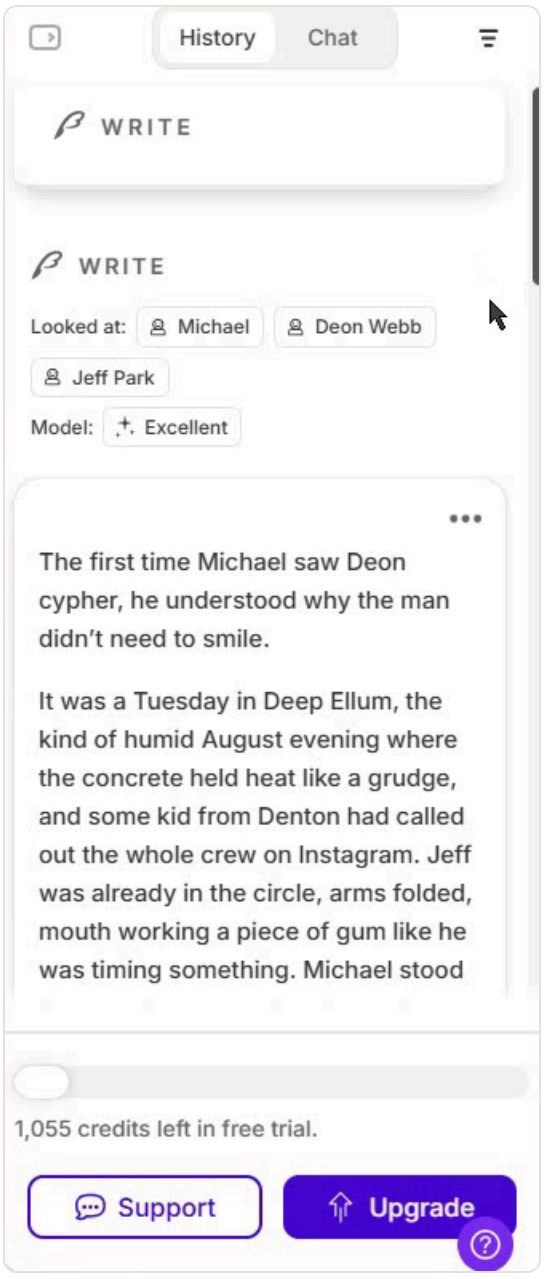
> *“Because I pressed the button multiple times, it created multiple sets of three openings. I thought it just wasn’t working.”*
>
> My narration at P2 24:59

TODAY P2 23:08, during the second run



Mid-run, both buttons look ready to click.

TODAY P2 23:08



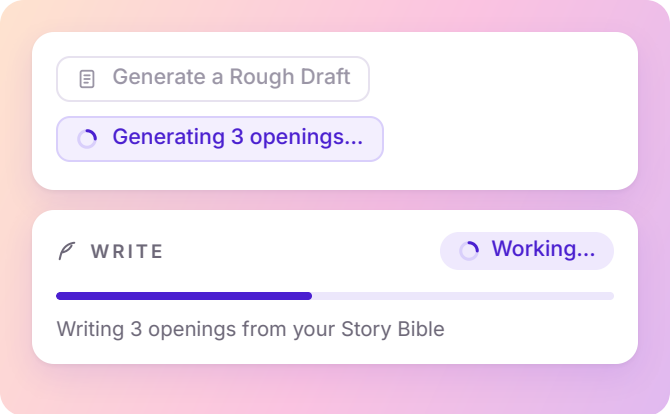
Top: the new run, a “WRITE” card with nothing else in it. Below: the retry that finished out of sight, with “Looked at” and “Model” shown only on the result.

QUICK WIN 1 · CONCEPT

Same parts, clearer states

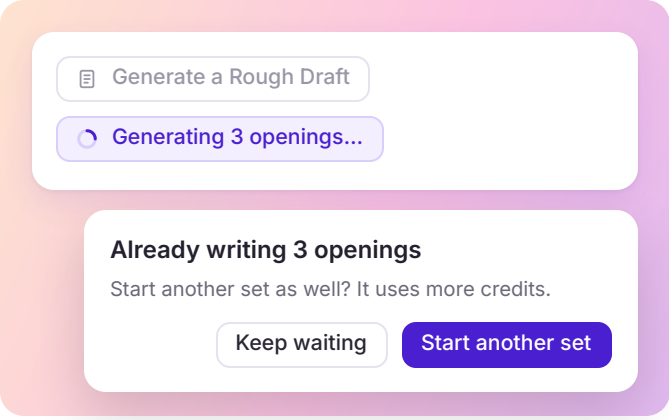
Four states for the editor's generate buttons, using the pattern Chat already has.

CONCEPT 1 · Running



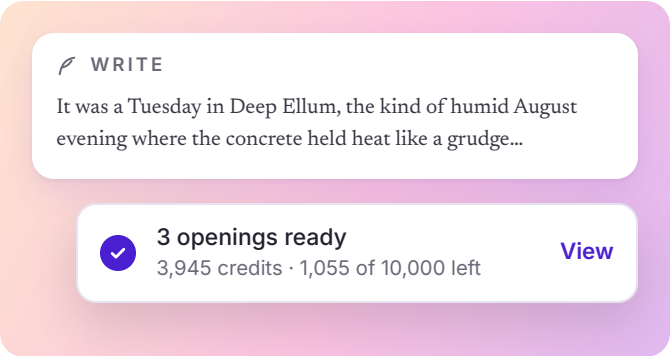
The button holds the busy state; the History card says "Working..." like Chat. If you're on the Chat tab, History gets a dot.

CONCEPT 2 · Clicked again



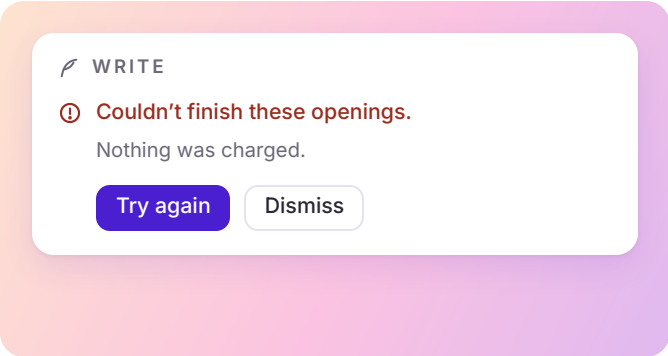
A second click asks instead of quietly starting a paid run.

CONCEPT 3 · Done



When a run finishes out of sight, one message says it's ready and what it cost. The balance changes once, here, not while the run is working.

CONCEPT 4 · Failed



An error says whether credits were used, and retry is its own button, so a later success is never a surprise.

TRY THE CODED PROTOTYPE **sudowrite-concept-mwilson.netlify.app**
Click Generate 3 Openings, then switch between Today and Concept to compare.

THE FIX

1. While a run is in flight, the button reads "Generating 3 openings..." and a second click asks first.
2. Show "Working..." on the History card, and a dot on the History tab when you're on Chat.
3. When a run finishes out of sight, say so with its cost: "3 openings ready · 3,945 credits."
4. After an error, say whether anything was charged, and give retry its own button.
5. Name activity rows after the button that started them: "Generate 3 Openings," not "Write (Auto)."

WHY IT SHOULD BE QUICK

Chat already has the pattern. This brings the editor's generate buttons up to it; it's state, not new screens.

WHAT I'D MEASURE

Second runs started within two minutes of the first, and credits spent per opening inserted.

QUICK WIN 2

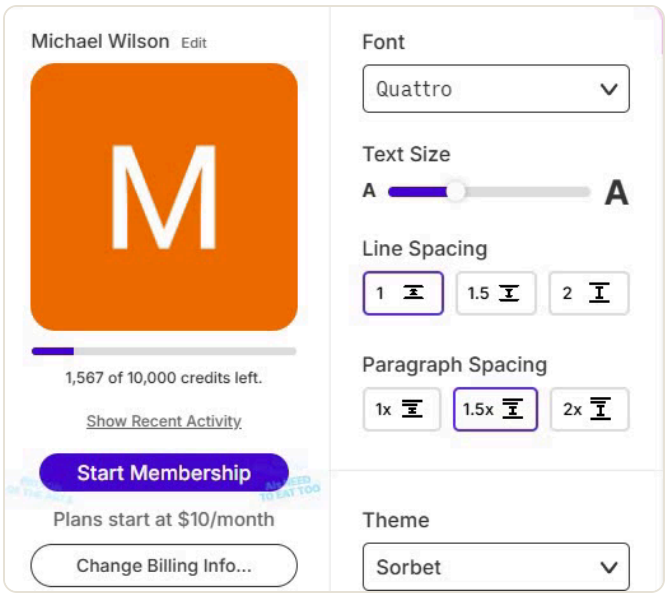
Show trial writers the meter you've already built

Screen: the right panel's footer, the settings gear, and Show Recent Activity.

WHAT HAPPENED

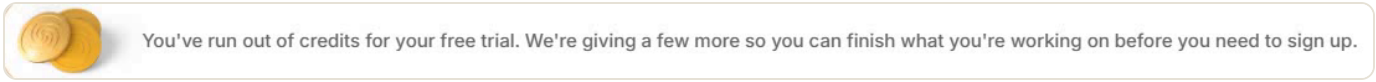
1. No generate control shows a cost: "Go!", Surprise Me, Generate 3 Openings, Generate Novel Outline, Generate Synopsis, or a field's "Generate...".
2. The balance shows in one place, the settings gear. I asked "I'd like to know how many credits I'm using" at 10:24 and found it at 15:03, after More Tools, the chat panel's gear, the help docs, AI Help and the pricing page. For most of that search the gear was scrolled out of view (F6).
3. By then my first character had cost 8,433 of 10,000.
4. The parts exist: a per-run ledger, a "Show credits pop-up" switch that's off, and a footer balance that first appeared when I ran out (15:54).
5. The wording changes by place. After grace topped me up to exactly 5,000, I asked out loud: "You only used the first 5,000 credits for the free trial?" (22:27)

TODAY P2 15:10



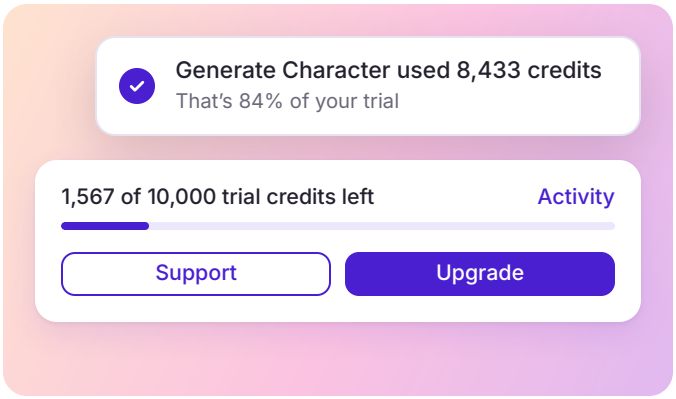
The settings gear: the only place the balance shows before you run out.

TODAY P2 15:56



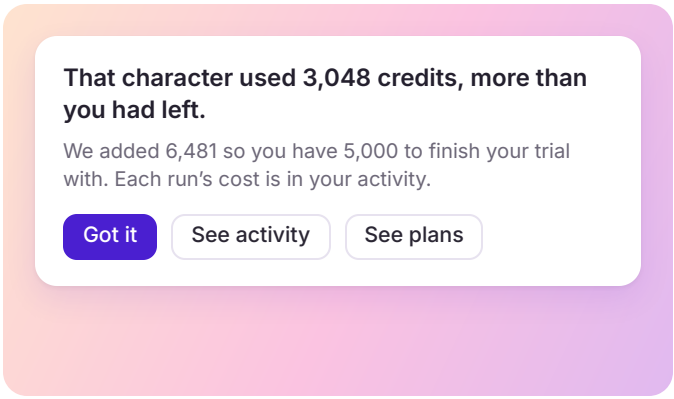
"You've run out of credits for your free trial. We're giving a few more..." appeared after the second character overdrew the balance to −1,481.

CONCEPT After every run



The credits pop-up you already have, switched on for trial accounts, and a footer balance from the first minute, in the same words everywhere.

CONCEPT When grace kicks in



Replaces "You've run out of credits" with what happened, so 5,000 doesn't look like a new rule.

WHY IT SHOULD BE QUICK

Every piece already ships: the pop-up, the footer line, the ledger. This is defaults and copy.

WHAT I'D MEASURE

Trial writers who reach a first chapter, trial-to-paid, and credit questions to support.

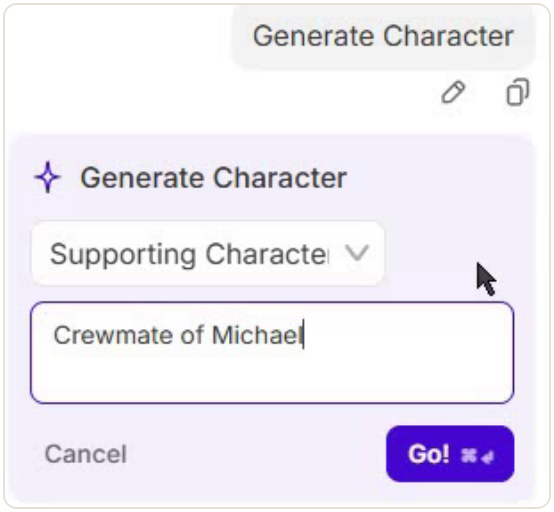
STRATEGIC OBSERVATION

Show the run's plan before the click

Sudowrite shows what a run read and which model ran only after it finishes, and what it cost only in Settings. Showing that plan before the click, and letting the writer change it, is the step that comes before "a more agentic future."

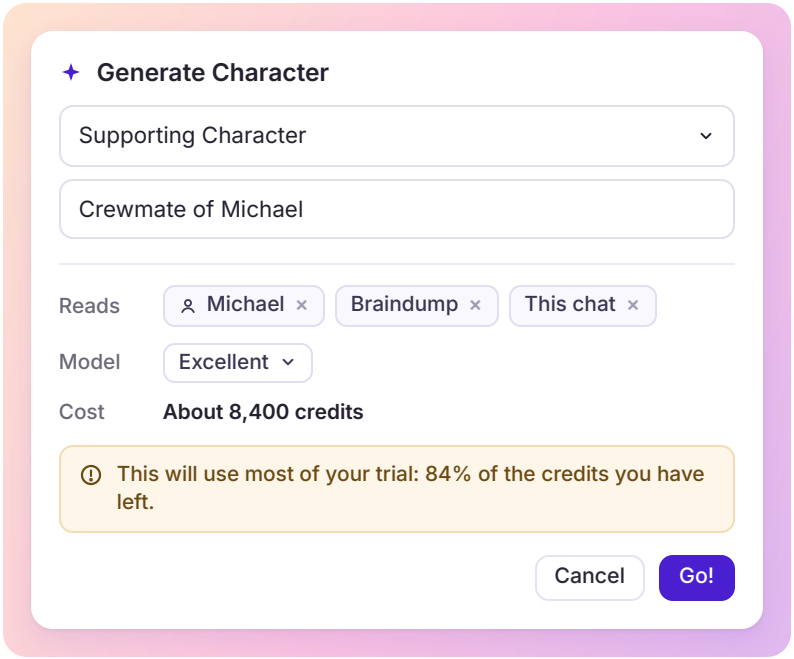
1. Every finished set of openings says "Looked at: Michael · Deon Webb · Jeff Park" and "Model: Excellent" (23:08). Nothing before the click says either.
2. "Looked at" names three characters. It doesn't say whether the Braindump, where my glossary went, was read.
3. No model picker appeared in either session. The homepage advertises Muse 1.5; results say "Excellent." I never chose one.
4. Your docs say cost follows words read, words written and the model, and the Story Bible the app keeps asking you to fill is part of what a run reads.

TODAY P2 09:46



Generate Character asks for a role and an instruction, then "Go!". This run used 8,433 credits.

CONCEPT The plan, before it runs



Each item it reads is a chip the writer can drop, the model is a menu, and the estimate updates. Runs that would take more than about a quarter of what's left ask first. What it reads and the model menu are illustrative; the cost is what this run actually used.

TRADE-OFF

One more line between the writer and the result, and some writers will generate less. The bet: writers who can see and trim a run waste fewer credits on runs they discard, and trust Sudowrite with bigger runs, like an outline or a chapter, sooner.

WHAT I'D MEASURE IN WEEK ONE

Credits spent per word kept, share of generations inserted or kept, repeat runs within two minutes, time from Story Bible to first chapter, and trial-to-paid.

ALL FINDINGS

Twenty-one findings

ID	FINDING	WHERE	SEVERITY
CREDITS AND CONVERSION			
C1	One generated character used 84% of the trial (8,433 of 10,000). Nothing said so before or after.	P2 09:49–10:48; 22:58	High
C2	Finding the balance took 4½ minutes and five wrong places; it shows only in the settings gear.	P2 10:24–15:03	High
C3	No busy state on the button; after an error, a retry finished out of sight; then a second paid run.	P2 21:41–23:43	High
C4	The credit story is hard to follow: 1,567 of 10,000 left, then "You've run out," then "Claim credits" lands at exactly 5,000 with no confirmation.	P2 15:03–16:54, 22:14	Medium
C5	Recent Activity has no times, labels that don't match the buttons ("Write (Auto)", "Unknown", "Grace"), and the credits pop-up is off.	P2 22:44–22:59	Medium
C6	Pricing never translates credits into words, characters or chapters. On the Yearly toggle the cards read "$10 per month," and Settings says "Plans start at $10/month": the annual rate (Hobby billed monthly is $19).	P2 14:04–14:22, 15:09	Medium
C7	At zero credits, Feedback +PRO stays live, three tools disappear instead of greying out, and the generate buttons still look live.	P2 23:43	Low
C8	Upgrade leaves the editor for a full page; getting back took browser Back and a full reload.	P2 14:03–14:25	Low
FIRST RUN			
F3	The genres picked in onboarding never reach the Story Bible's Genre field, though the chat greeting uses them.	P1 01:45–02:21, 09:04	Medium
F4	No tutorial at the start; the sample project sits in the History tab's promo cards; the tour is offered only on first opening the Story Bible.	P1 03:14, 09:04–09:18; P2 08:26	Medium
F6	The app is about 50 px taller than the window; jumping to a Story Bible section can hide the header (help, settings), and with it the balance.	P1 09:04; P2 09:50–14:23	Medium
F1	The first Google sign-up ended in a generic error; a retry with another account worked. Both sign-up buttons open new tabs.	P1 00:15–00:52	Low
F2	Onboarding is six steps with no Back or Skip, and the last step is multi-select without saying so.	P1 00:54–02:49	Low
F5	A 23.5-second "Setting up your first project…" spinner with no progress, then a half-drawn first screen.	P1 02:50–03:16	Low
F7	The toolbar's order changes mid-session: Feedback +PRO moves between fourth and first place.	P1 09:17; P2 08:30 vs 23:00	Low
STORY BIBLE AND GENERATION			
S1	Surprise Me reused an existing character's name with no warning; renaming the copy left "Deon" in its traits.	P2 15:54, 20:20	Medium
S2	"Looked at" and "Model" appear only on finished results; "Looked at" doesn't say whether the Braindump was read.	P2 23:08	Medium
S3	Opening Generate Character switched the chat from "Chat only" to "Allow edits"; the notice came after the run.	P2 09:07–09:17, 10:52	Low
S4	A blank character opens with 11 empty fields, no placeholders and no required marks.	P1 09:34–10:07	Low
S5	"This section affects: Synopsis" shows only on focus; Generate Synopsis looks disabled without a reason; Worldbuilding has no free-text field.	P2 07:57–08:48	Low
S6	New results land above where you're reading, with no notice.	P2 23:34–23:40	Low

METHOD

Two narrated screen recordings in Chrome on Windows, October 14, 2026, on a new free-trial account: P1 (10:22) from the homepage to the Story Bible, P2 (30:12) from filling in a character sheet to zero credits. Test material was prepared in advance, including a five-term glossary. Every distinct screen state was reviewed at one frame per second; quotes are verbatim where legible.

NOT TESTED, AND SOURCES

Credits ran out before outlines, chapters, Rewrite and Describe on hand-edited text, Guided mode, beta readers, Canvas, Visualize and Feedback. The next test I'd run: does a hand edit survive a Rewrite?

Sources: sudowrite.com, its pricing page and its designer job listing; Sudowrite's docs on plans, credits and credit use (updated January 7, 2026).