

The problem with setting up a story is that people focus on the set-up and miss the point of the story

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In writing, one of the steps you need to perform is motivating the discussion. Now, technically, you don't have to do that, but if you just dive into the guts of a topic right off the bat, people are going to say, "What the heck is going on and why should I care?" Consider, for example, an article I wrote a while back on [how to use WMI to obtain computer configuration information](#). To motivate the discussion, I considered a customer who wanted to collect computer manufacturer information programmatically (presumably for asset inventory purposes). But really, the reason wasn't important. It was just something for the script to do. If it weren't printing the computer manufacturer, it could have been getting the number of processors, or querying, I dunno, the [thermal state of the motherboard](#). Actually, the computer manufacturer was what I was after because of the bonus commentary regarding how computer manufacturer information is one of the things computer manufacturers often skimp on providing when they manufacture their computers. Often it's not even the set-up but the placeholder itself that people fixate on. Consider, for example, my complaint about [repeated pony-begging](#). Most people understood that the question itself was just a placeholder (and some people even [joined in](#)), but you can always count on someone [complaining about the placeholder](#). Another common problem is people who take [an analysis of a specific case](#) and extrapolate it to all cases. There are places where you want to use bitfields, and places where you don't. It so happens that the example I chose was one of the ones where it wasn't. Some people interpreted this to mean that there were no cases where you would want to use bitfields. Remember, [good advice comes with a rationale so you can tell when it becomes bad advice](#). These people skipped the rationale and just applied the advice blindly. As an experiment, I've deleted the motivating preliminary discussion from tomorrow's article. It would have involved a little game of one-upsmanship between two Czech colleagues. (**Update:** Who, according to one commenter, [have no self-respect](#).)

[Raymond is currently away; this message was pre-recorded.]

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