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Novel outline format

How to write a novel without an outline. Novel outline example. Should you write an outline for a novel. What is a novel outline.

Starting out simple and layering up Good novels start with decent plots. So start with a simple sketch outline, then make it progressively more detailed. We show you exactly how to do it. The simplest way to write a terrible book is to start out having no idea what your story is, or where it's going to lead. The easiest way to avoid that outcome is to prepare a simple outline of your plot before you even write the first sentence. The downside of this approach: you actually have to do some thinking before you can start writing. The upside: you won't end up writing a terrible book. Which is a plus point, no? Understand the purpose of your outline. Start with a barebones outline. Add a midpoint. Have a firm sense of purpose. Integrate your characters. Complete your outline. Work in circles.

At its simplest, a plot outline can be defined as a very simple, barebones summary of your story. It could be as short as a single page outline. Or it might run to as many as ten or twenty pages. Either way, it's important to realise that you're not telling the story; you're summarising it. So if your outline feels flat and unengaging, that's fine. Your story isn't. But you can fix that by making your outline more interesting. The approach we're going to recommend in this post is to start really simply, then start to build as you get more insight into what you want to write. Here goes... It's commonly said that there are only seven plots in the world. We're not totally sure about that, in fact, but it's certainly true that pretty much every novel will adopt the same rough shape. That shape, at its simplest, is as follows: Status quo: This is the situation at the start of the book. So, for example, if we were dealing with a Lee Child / Jack Reacher novel, the status quo might be "Jack Reacher is travelling through rural Montana, wanting to heal after a particularly bruising recent adventure." At this point, nothing has happened. The situation is stable. Inciting incident: The inciting incident is whatever happens to disturb that status quo. It could be an apparently small thing, or an obviously big one. So in Twilight, for example, the inciting incident is simply that Bella Swan's attention is caught by an attractive – but odd – boy at school. In our Reacher story, it could be that an unseen sniper kills the bus driver dead and seems intent on killing everyone else on the bus too. Either way, the important issue is that the status quo has been disrupted. The reader already feels that a story has been set in motion. Developments: This is the big middle chunk of your book. This is the part that probably occupies you from (say) 15,000 words into your book right up to 10 or 15,000 words before the end. It's the scariest part of your outline, whether you're a new novelist, or a seasoned scriptwriter, or anything in between. We'll talk more about this element of your plot later in the post, but for now just bear in mind that your character will encounter obstacles, victories and reversals – but the victories won't be permanent and the reversals won't be lethal. Everything is still in play ... but the stakes will gradually rise. Climax: We said it earlier, but let's repeat it here: the climax is the single most important thing in a story. It's the moment when everything changes. It's the moment when the bad guy gets his comeuppance. In a thriller, it's the moment when the hero wins the war, or the villain loses. In a romance, it's the moment when the couple finally says "I do". In a mystery, it's the moment when the detective solves the case. In a horror, it's the moment when the monster is defeated. In a comedy, it's the moment when the underdog wins. In a drama, it's the moment when the hero dies. In a sci-fi, it's the moment when the alien invasion is stopped. In a fantasy, it's the moment when the hero defeats the evil overlord. In a historical fiction, it's the moment when the battle is won. In a contemporary fiction, it's the moment when the love story ends. In a non-fiction, it's the moment when the author reveals the truth. In a children's book, it's the moment when the hero saves the day. In a young adult book, it's the moment when the protagonist finds themselves. In a memoir, it's the moment when the writer reflects on their life. In a biography, it's the moment when the subject is revealed. In a history book, it's the moment when the event is explained. In a science book, it's the moment when the theory is proven. In a philosophy book, it's the moment when the argument is made. In a psychology book, it's the moment when the concept is explored. In a sociology book, it's the moment when the system is analysed. In a political book, it's the moment when the power is challenged. In a religious book, it's the moment when the faith is tested. In a spiritual book, it's the moment when the soul is saved. In a self-help book, it's the moment when the reader is inspired. In a business book, it's the moment when the strategy is implemented. In a sports book, it's the moment when the game is played. In a travel book, it's the moment when the journey is completed. In a food book, it's the moment when the meal is served. In a fashion book, it's the moment when the outfit is worn. In a beauty book, it's the moment when the look is achieved. In a health book, it's the moment when the cure is found. In a technology book, it's the moment when the invention is created. In a science fiction book, it's the moment when the future is imagined. In a fantasy book, it's the moment when the magic is cast. In a horror book, it's the moment when the monster is slain. In a thriller book, it's the moment when the killer is caught. In a mystery book, it's the moment when the culprit is named. In a drama book, it's the moment when the tragedy occurs. In a comedy book, it's the moment when the laughter is heard. In a children's book, it's the moment when the child grows up. In a young adult book, it's the moment when the teenager becomes an adult. In a memoir book, it's the moment when the memory is recalled. In a biography book, it's the moment when the life is lived. In a history book, it's the moment when the past is remembered. In a science book, it's the moment when the knowledge is gained. In a philosophy book, it's the moment when the wisdom is shared. In a psychology book, it's the moment when the mind is explored. In a sociology book, it's the moment when the society is studied. In a political book, it's the moment when the power is wielded. In a religious book, it's the moment when the faith is practiced. In a spiritual book, it's the moment when the spirit is lifted. In a self-help book, it's the moment when the goal is reached. In a business book, it's the moment when the success is achieved. In a sports book, it's the moment when the victory is won. In a travel book, it's the moment when the destination is reached. In a food book, it's the moment when the taste is savoured. In a fashion book, it's the moment when the style is admired. In a beauty book, it's the moment when the glow is achieved. In a health book, it's the moment when the wellness is attained. In a technology book, it's the moment when the innovation is embraced. In a science fiction book, it's the moment when the vision is realized. In a fantasy book, it's the moment when the dream is fulfilled. In a horror book, it's the moment when the fear is conquered. In a thriller book, it's the moment when the suspense is resolved. In a mystery book, it's the moment when the puzzle is solved. In a drama book, it's the moment when the conflict is resolved. In a comedy book, it's the moment when the tension is released. In a children's book, it's the moment when the imagination is sparked. In a young adult book, it's the moment when the heart is opened. In a memoir book, it's the moment when the truth is told. In a biography book, it's the moment when the legacy is left. In a history book, it's the moment when the lesson is learned. In a science book, it's the moment when the discovery is made. In a philosophy book, it's the moment when the question is asked. In a psychology book, it's the moment when the behavior is understood. In a sociology book, it's the moment when the culture is examined. In a political book, it's the moment when the system is questioned. In a religious book, it's the moment when the doctrine is debated. In a spiritual book, it's the moment when the path is chosen. In a self-help book, it's the moment when the change is made. In a business book, it's the moment when the plan is executed. In a sports book, it's the moment when the effort is put forth. In a travel book, it's the moment when the experience is shared. In a food book, it's the moment when the recipe is followed. In a fashion book, it's the moment when the trend is set. In a beauty book, it's the moment when the secret is revealed. In a health book, it's the moment when the advice is heeded. In a technology book, it's the moment when the tool is used. In a science fiction book, it's the moment when the machine is built. In a fantasy book, it's the moment when the spell is cast. In a horror book, it's the moment when the scream is heard. In a thriller book, it's the moment when the chase is on. In a mystery book, it's the moment when the clue is found. In a drama book, it's the moment when the choice is made. In a comedy book, it's the moment when the joke is told. In a children's book, it's the moment when the story is read. In a young adult book, it's the moment when the diary is written. In a memoir book, it's the moment when the journal is kept. In a biography book, it's the moment when the letter is written. In a history book, it's the moment when the document is discovered. In a science book, it's the moment when the experiment is conducted. In a philosophy book, it's the moment when the debate is held. In a psychology book, it's the moment when the test is administered. In a sociology book, it's the moment when the survey is conducted. In a political book, it's the moment when the speech is given. In a religious book, it's the moment when the sermon is preached. In a spiritual book, it's the moment when the prayer is said. In a self-help book, it's the moment when the affirmation is repeated. In a business book, it's the moment when the meeting is held. In a sports book, it's the moment when the game is watched. In a travel book, it's the moment when the photo is taken. In a food book, it's the moment when the dish is cooked. In a fashion book, it's the moment when the dress is designed. In a beauty book, it's the moment when the makeup is applied. In a health book, it's the moment when the workout is completed. In a technology book, it's the moment when the code is written. In a science fiction book, it's the moment when the robot is built. In a fantasy book, it's the moment when the dragon is tamed. In a horror book, it's the moment when the zombie is killed. In a thriller book, it's the moment when the bomb is defused. In a mystery book, it's the moment when the suspect is arrested. In a drama book, it's the moment when the divorce is finalized. In a comedy book, it's the moment when the wedding is celebrated. In a children's book, it's the moment when the bedtime story is read. In a young adult book, it's the moment when the prom is attended. In a memoir book, it's the moment when the vacation is enjoyed. In a biography book, it's the moment when the funeral is held. In a history book, it's the moment when the treaty is signed. In a science book, it's the moment when the Nobel Prize is awarded. In a philosophy book, it's the moment when the lecture is given. In a psychology book, it's the moment when the therapy session is over. In a sociology book, it's the moment when the conference is attended. In a political book, it's the moment when the election is held. In a religious book, it's the moment when the church service is held. In a spiritual book, it's the moment when the meditation is completed. In a self-help book, it's the moment when the course is finished. In a business book, it's the moment when the company is founded. In a sports book, it's the moment when the championship is won. In a travel book, it's the moment when the trip home begins. In a food book, it's the moment when the feast is ended. In a fashion book, it's the moment when the season closes. In a beauty book, it's the moment when the year ends. In a health book, it's the moment when the New Year begins. In a technology book, it's the moment when the decade ends. In a science fiction book, it's the moment when the century ends. In a fantasy book, it's the moment when the era ends. In a horror book, it's the moment when the millennium ends. In a thriller book, it's the moment when the world ends. In a mystery book, it's the moment when the universe ends. In a drama book, it's the moment when the time ends. In a comedy book, it's the moment when the space ends. In a children's book, it's the moment when the earth ends. In a young adult book, it's the moment when the sun ends. In a memoir book, it's the moment when the moon ends. In a biography book, it's the moment when the stars end. In a history book, it's the moment when the galaxies end. In a science book, it's the moment when the universe ends. In a philosophy book, it's the moment when the cosmos ends. In a psychology book, it's the moment when the multiverse ends. In a sociology book, it's the moment when the infinity ends. In a political book, it's the moment when the eternity ends. In a religious book, it's the moment when the forever ends. In a spiritual book, it's the moment when the always ends. In a self-help book, it's the moment when the never ends. In a business book, it's the moment when the someday ends. In a sports book, it's the moment when the sometime ends. In a travel book, it's the moment when the whenever ends. In a food book, it's the moment when the anytime ends. In a fashion book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a beauty book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a health book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a technology book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a science fiction book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a fantasy book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a horror book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a thriller book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a mystery book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a drama book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a comedy book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a children's book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a young adult book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a memoir book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a biography book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a history book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a science book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a philosophy book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a psychology book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a sociology book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a political book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a religious book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a spiritual book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a self-help book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a business book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a sports book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a travel book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a food book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a fashion book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a beauty book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a health book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a technology book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a science fiction book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a fantasy book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a horror book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a thriller book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a mystery book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a drama book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a comedy book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a children's book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a young adult book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a memoir book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a biography book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a history book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a science book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a philosophy book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a psychology book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a sociology book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a political book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a religious book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a spiritual book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a self-help book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a business book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a sports book, it's the moment when the anywhere ends. In a travel book, it's the moment when the everywhere ends. In a food book, it's the moment when the nowhere ends. In a fashion book, it's the moment when the somewhere ends. In a beauty book,

NOTE: This outline is a VERY general outline for fiction to move a story through 20 chapters. Within the Community Novel Project, it is used to give writers a general idea of what point we are at in the story, NOT to dictate exactly what has to happen during a particular chapter. **As the story is written, we may stray a bit from this outline, which is okay.** Eventually we need to reach the end of the book, though, so by the time I do along and help out the writers who come after you with what they need to accomplish also. Please send suggestions to improve this general fiction outline to estacy@tscpl.org.

Outline for 50,000 word novel of 20 chapters - 2500 words each

General advice for chapters and scenes

- Every chapter must contain action/reaction, conflict and decision (scenes too)
 - Each scene has action, reaction, tension, stumbling block/road block
 - Each scene starts with a goal - what does my want, why, what willing to do for it?
 - Decide what block will keep your character from reaching his or her goal - who or what
 - Don't start too intense, or have nothing to build to
 - Peaks and valleys of tension/intensity - arrange in order of importance

1. - intro main character - spell out his/her goals - at least one conflict
2. Event/motivating incident - what happens in character's life to set his course of actions - reader learns what character wants Intro 2 nd MC
3. by end, mc reaches his or her first turning point - send me into new or different direction
4. Decision to act -> 1 st major event away Type of scenes include cause-effect and action/reaction/conflict/decision. Just when one event wraps up....
5. 2 nd event Advance retreat scenes - Don't let characters do more in one day than is credible - too many fast-paced days leave readers out of breath - they need some breaks - Description slows action. Use background to ease out of a tense scene - new, calmer setting (night, dark, place of escape, breath sigh of relief). Subtle transition into day, light, sense of hope, new day breaking is symbolic. Humor is good transition from tension too - Transitions should be visual.
6. Lay groundwork/journey - Confront - Explore (looking ahead: At mid-point, your mc's should be at total cross-purposes.)

may also want to explicitly state who their antagonist is and what the obstacles in their of their success are. (That approach works better for some books than others, so if it doesn't quite make sense to you, you can just ignore it. Who's the antagonist in *Twilight*, for example? There isn't really a great answer to that question.) So far, we've spoken of a plot outline as something almost mechanical – like a piece of clockwork you just have to wind up and set in motion. But of course your plot is propelled by its characters and the best stories aren't character-led or plot-led, but led equally and powerfully by both. You can read more about plotting here.

To take an example, think of John Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*. The twisty, double-crossing plot needed a suspicious and experienced spy at its heart. And if that sounds cold, then the spy, Alec Leamas, also had a desperate desire to find love, to be able to trust again after his years of secret service. That character – cynical, but with that hopeless dash of longing – turned an efficient spy story into a twentieth century masterpiece. The best way to bring your characters and plot into perfect synchrony is to develop them both together. So you probably want to work on your character worksheets (more here) at the same time as you're developing your story outline. So you might fill out your developments section with a new idea you had for a scene there. That might trigger an insight into your character, so you'd go and add something to your character worksheet. Then back again. You'll find you don't even need to work too hard on the integration. If you develop your story and your characters alongside each other, each element will bleed into and influence the next. The process will happen automatically and in a beautifully seamless way. How far you take your outline is very much up to you. Some writers like to plan very intensively. Some like to use the Snowflake method. I know writers who will write a detailed 30 page synopsis of their novel before they proceed

Outline for Your Fiction Story	
General Goal: _____	
Somewhere (Describe the main character of your story.)	
Somewhere (Describe the main setting for your story.)	
Wants Something (Explain your character's goal or dream.)	
But (The problem in your story. Explain why the character has trouble reaching his or her goal.)	
So (How your character overcame the problem.)	

I know others (like me!) who do the absolute bare minimum. Who just trust their instincts to be able to create on the run, if you like. So I'm not going to tell you how far you need to take your outline. What I will say is that if you want a detailed plot outline template to follow, then you may well want to use Blake Snyder's famous beat sheet from his 'Save the Cat' book.

MODEL OUTLINE

Request to the following on assignments as provided

General Information

1. What is the title of your case study?

2. Who was the client?

3. Who submitted the case?

4. In what year was the case study published?

Find

1. What is the purpose of your statement of the program? Include in your description how the program meets its purpose.

2. Describe a feature of the program. This is a description of the program, facilities, or its organization, and how it affects the overall organization or meets its purpose.

3. What is an aspect of the structure presented in the program? (State a year)

4. Give a thorough description of the program. (State a year)

5. Describe a feature of the program. (State a year)

6. Briefly describe the organization of the program.

7. Briefly describe the working part of the program.

8. What is the outcome of the program?

9. Briefly describe the location of the program.

End paper

1. Briefly describe the location of the program.

2. Briefly describe the location, living, eating, and recreation of the subjects.

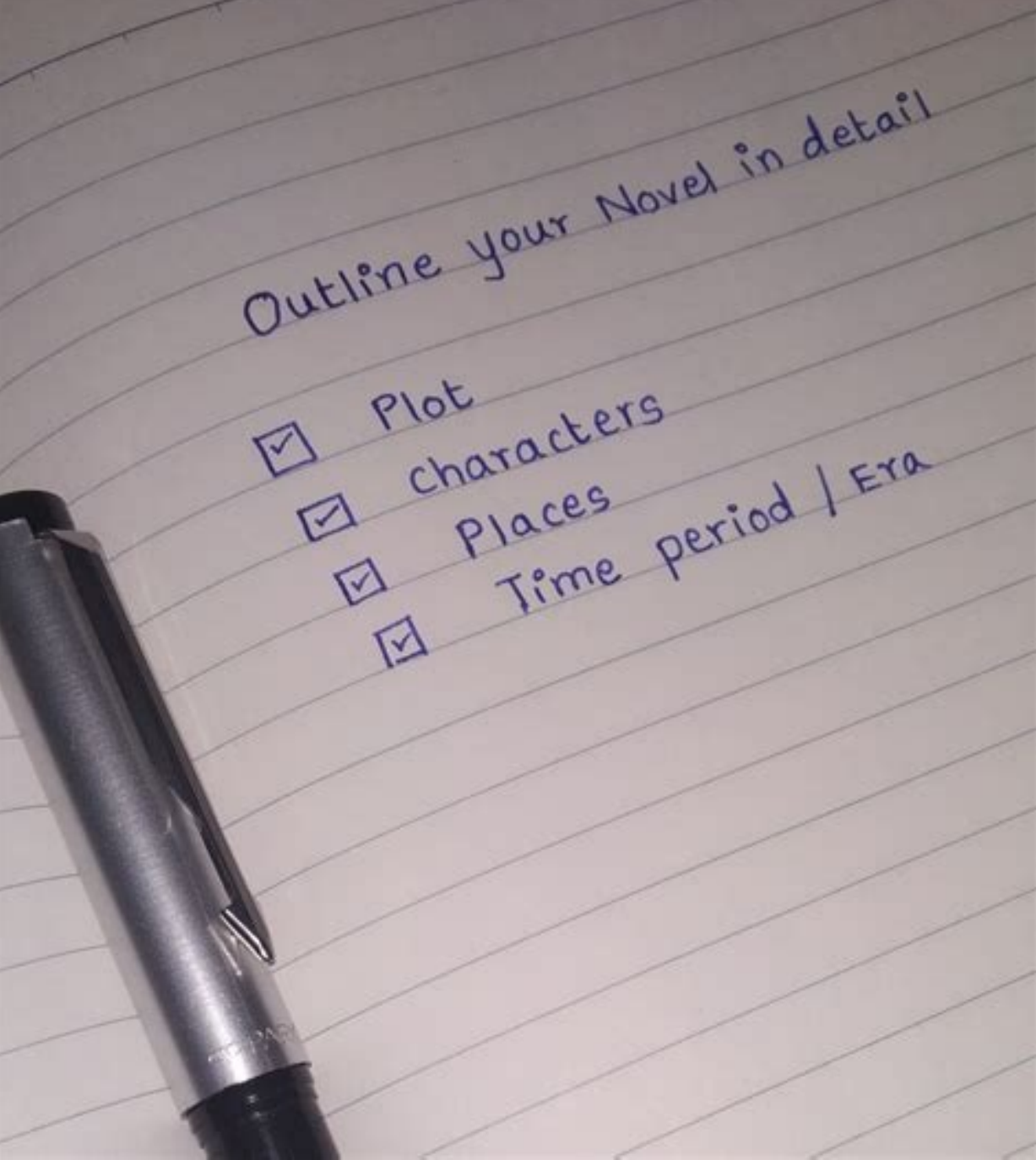
Book was written for screenwriters and doesn't have universal applicability to novelists, but a lot of people find it helpful all the same. So if you are Mr/Ms/Detailed and you want a roadmap, then here it is: Opening Image. This is like a touchstone for where your protagonist is at the very opening of the book. Theme stated. All recent books (or films) should have some underlying theme or debate. You want some statement of that theme – possibly playful; you don't have to be too heavy – in the opening couple of chapters of the book. Set-up. This corresponds roughly to our Status Quo section Catalyst. This corresponds roughly to our Initiating Incident section. Debate. Is the hero going to rise to the challenge posed by the Initiating Incident? Quite often there's a refusal or reluctance, before something tips the hero into changing their mind. Break into two. That's the moment that launches the story from the opening set-up into the excitement of the Developments section. It's where your character decides to accept the adventure being offered and launches off into the guts of your story itself. B-story. A really good tip this. Very often, there'll be some secondary story to accompany your main one. So if you are writing a broadly action-themed novel, the secondary story might be a romantic one. Introducing that that secondary tale right after the opening section is done and dusted is a great way to give your reader a sense of what's coming next, and an idea of how the plot will develop.

Yes, things are at stake here, but this is still the lower stakes portion of the book. Things seem to matter, but they're not that consequential compared with what follows. Midpoint. As discussed above, The quivering dagger at the dead centre of your book. Bad guys close in. After the midpoint, things feel more consequential. Yes, your character may notch up some 'wins', but the mood, broadly, will be one of increasing seriousness as you move towards the climax of your story. All is Lost. It looks like everything is lost. Bond is captured and the villain is going to detonate his bomb. Or Lizzy's Bennett's silly sister has gone and destroyed her hopes of happiness with Darcy. Dark Night of the Soul. This is the interior / emotional counterpart of the 'all is lost' moment. It's how the character reflects to themselves after the disaster that's just happened. Break into three. This is the moment where the character bursts out of their despair. Where they come up with one last desperate stratagem, or some last effort of will. Finality. This is the climax and resolution elements we've already spoken of. Closing Image. This is the image that shows where we are now – and is often a mirror image, in some way, of where we were. As I say, there'll be elements of that template that may seem very helpful, and others that may not especially speak to you. So grab what you want. Discard what you don't. And when you come to thinking about adding in more details, read up on the actual chapter lengths – it's really helpful! In most things we do, we want to work in a logical, disciplined way. Start at the beginning. Follow a plan. Complete the task. Done. Outlining a novel is not like that. It's the opposite. I've already mentioned that you'll probably be developing plot as you go along, so your character's journey through the story will change over time. Good, that's not incompetence at all. It's cyclical, because you're always going back to the start, error-free progress is usually what you're aiming for. You're not trying to develop a road map that you can't follow, it's more like how it works (or almost never anyway). So give yourself credit. Forgive yourself error. And have fun. Happy plotting. Happy outlining.

And happy writing ... Jericho Writers is a global membership group for writers, providing everything you need to get published. Keep up with our news, membership offers, and updates by signing up to our newsletter. For more writing articles, take a look at our blog page. Book outlines are crucial when writing a book, so it's important to learn how to outline a book in the most effective way for your readers. A book outline is the foundation for an organized writing process, and it can be used as a roadmap for your book. No matter how skilled you are as a writer, you've no doubt experienced the dreaded blank page syndrome, or writer's block as it's commonly referred to. From aspiring authors to professional novelists, writing a book is challenging. You know how daunting of a task it can be string together a fluid sequence of words that accurately conveys a thought or concept. But you don't know how to outline a book or novel the right way. In this post, you'll discover how to create a book outline that will help you start, and finish, writing your book. Get A Nonfiction Book Outline To Write Your Book! Includes Acknowledgement page, Table of Contents, Author Bio, and More!

I'M WRITING MY BOOK TOO...I'm writing a book to grow my business! I'm not interested in building a business. I'm just writing a book to make an impact.I want to write a quality fiction book that entertains people.

By submitting this form, you consent to receive marketing text messages from selfpublishing.com at the phone number provided.A book outline is a structured document that plans out and sequences the information that your story will include. It is a wireframe or skeleton of your book, and will be used as the roadmap during your writing process. Your book's outline is an agenda, or roadmap, that includes the main points or events that you will write about in your book. It's not uncommon to use a map (or GPS) when we go on holiday. And certainly, if we want to build a house, we use a blueprint. In football, the coach puts together a game plan. All of these make the actual task easier (sometimes it makes the task possible). Writing an outline for your book serves the same purpose – it is a guide that you can follow to write your book. A book outline will essentially be the same concept for both fiction and nonfiction books, but the outline format and style will vary on the genre. A fiction novel will include important storytelling aspects such as structure, plot, scenes, and characters. A nonfiction book will include important information aspects such as topic clusters, concepts, and intentional information architecture. Without an outline, it will take a lot longer to finish your book, and it may hinder the book's quality and reader experience. You may not need a book outline, but it will certainly help you write faster and with better quality. Think of a book outline as a writer's plan. When you outline a novel or book, you are creating a plan or roadmap of your book's contents. To outline or not to outline? Is it more difficult to write a book without an outline? Are there benefits to outlining a book? These are just some of the questions you may have. But there is not one answer, and certainly not one way on how to outline a novel. "I always have a basic plot outline, but I like to leave some things to be decided while I write." J.K. Rowling Many successful authors know not to underestimate the power of a book's outline. Not only does it help in writing an organized book with clear goals, but it also helps them stay motivated throughout the entire writing process. Below are some examples of famous authors who learned how to write a book outline that fit their needs, then went on to write and publish their successfully. Below is the handwritten outline of novelist James Salter. Image Credit: The Paris Review You may be familiar with this image of J.K. Rowling's plot lines of the Harry Potter books.... Image Credit: Daily Mail Famous outliers (or plotters) include John Grisham, J.K. Rowling, R.L. Stine, to name a few. The biggest benefit of learning how to write a book outline is that your outline can help you start, and finish your book. It can make your process towards becoming an author easier, and more clear – with less detours and frustrations along the way during your writing process. Write quickly. With a book outline, you know exactly what you have to write about next. Intentional structure. Although an outline is equally applicable to nonfiction and fiction, an outline can help you create a solid structure for your novel. This can result in a better quality piece of literature. Overcome blank page syndrome. With an outline, the dreaded blank page is not as daunting as it could be. When you sit down to write, you will be able to kickstart your writing with an outline. Prevent writer's block. Again, having an outline can help you eliminate writer's block because you open your outline, and there you have the next piece to start writing. It's like jump-starting the brain. Push through the sagging middle. If you're writing a novel, you no doubt are familiar with the uphill battle of writing the sagging middle. Writing a book outline is a first draft. "To write a nonfiction book without an outline, is an invitation to stress and frustration (and it may likely result in a sub-standard book)." To write a fiction novel without an outline is a bit more acceptable, because it's more of a creative process. But you should still have an idea of your book's starting and ending points to avoid writer's block and overwhelm – especially if you're a first-time author. From the Introduction of K.M. Weiland's book, Outlining Your Novel, she offers the following: "Outlining has transformed my own writing process from hit-and-miss creativity to a reliable process of story craft. Outlining allows me to ride the waves of my story with utter confidence, channeling the art into the craft to produce solid stories. And the best part about outlining? It's entirely learnable." A book outline template can make it super easy to get started writing your outline. The first thing you should do before moving on is to get your free book outline template. For FICTION, you can download the free template here. For NONFICTION, you can download the free template here.



If you're ready to get started, we have ready-made templates just for you. Select your genre, and get a completed book outline that's ready for you to plug in your book ideas. Use this outline template tool as a starting point to write your book's outline. It's yours to adjust as needed! There is no single right way to outline a book. What works for you, may not work for another writer, and vice versa. Don't feel like you have to follow a rigid set of rules to craft your outline and get started writing your book. But, your book outline should have the basics covered. It's perfectly fine to start with a loose structure and develop your outline as you go. So, how do you write an outline for a book? Begin with a one-line idea. Write one sentence to summarize your book's "big picture" idea. Although it sounds easy, summarizing the whole of your book in one single sentence can force you to strip away your ideas into one essential premise. Do a brain dump. Brainstorm the main components of your book's idea. A mindmap or bubble map is a popular method for this step. I start with drawing a bubble in the center of the sheet (usually with the chapter number and/or title), and then asking the 5W + H (Who, What, When, Why, Where, and How) questions in individual bubbles. I add snippets in between the bubbles as well. When you start your outline, begin by asking the 5W + H questions: What? What is the concept, topic, or idea? Where? Where does this concept, topic, or idea, apply? Maybe it's an event, or a context situation. Why? Why does this matter? Who? Who is this for, or who is involved? When? Is there a concept of time involved? How? If applicable, ask yourself how will this happen? Working through your outline, asking and answering these basic questions, you will likely find you building a story that when you sit down to actually write your book, it will develop and grow almost magically. Give it a try. If you're writing nonfiction, the value of questions is indispensable... What information do you want to share in your book? Who is your reader: beginner, intermediate, advanced? Why does your reader want to know the information in your book? What does your reader want to learn by reading your book? If you're writing fiction, questions can also help... If my antagonist does that, how will my protagonist react? How can I get my protagonist out of that jam? Use "What if?" in different scenarios. Narrow in on the essential details. Now that you have the premise of your book's idea, and you've had a chance to brainstorm all of your ideas, it's time to get organized with the specifics. Organize your book's main points, and add in any specific details that you will have to touch on in each point. It's important to note that the above steps are a loose starting point for any standard book idea.

Outline of “Plot” page 4-6

- I. Plot
- A. Definition—an arrangement of events that show their cause and effect in a way that creates suspense or forward motion
- B. Plot Line—a plot has several distinct parts
- 1. Exposition
 - a) Gives the setting
 - b) Introduces the major characters
 - c) Shows the story question
 - (1) What the main character wants to achieve
 - (2) Everything the character attempts to do relates to the story question
 - (3) The story question is always answered in the end
 - 2. Complications
 - a) Called the rising action
 - b) Many events that “complicate” the main character’s attempt to answer the story question
 - 3. Climax
 - a) Is the most suspenseful moment
 - b) Is the do-or-die moment for the character
 - c) “brings about a change in the situation or in the main character or in both”
 - 4. Resolution
 - a) Called the denouement
 - b) Main characters experiences no additional complications
 - c) The story question is answered

To really hone in and follow a book outline strategy, you need to know which type of book you are writing, since the outline can vary greatly depending on this. Are you writing a novel, based on fiction, or are you writing a nonfiction book? Let's take a look at the next two sections to determine the process for each. A novel is based on fiction, or imagination – it is not based on real life. If you are writing a fictitious narrative, then you need to create a novel outline. Fiction and nonfiction books are very different, and while the steps to create an outline of a book can be similar, they are pretty different based on the book's genre. Learn how to outline a novel well, and you will improve your storytelling and reader experience tremendously. The purpose of a novel is to entertain, and your book's outline needs to be created with that in mind. You are telling a story in a novel, and a well-structured book outline will help you create a roadmap to tell that story well. Note: If you're writing a memoir, your memoir outline will most likely resemble more of a fiction structure than that of a nonfiction structure. Write your idea out. What's your book's big picture? This is the premise of your story; it's the "big idea." Try to write your idea into as few sentences as possible, preferably one. You'll have a chance to get into the granular details later. Answer the 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where, Why). Get clear on the essentials of your story. This will help guide you in determining how to create your book's outline framework, and will also help you identify any major "holes" that you might have missed. Use a book outline framework or template. Choose a template to work with as a starting point, then make any adjustments as you see fit and start plugging in your contents. Create your plot. Start with a beginning, middle, and end. It's perfectly fine if you don't have a clear idea of every event in your book. You can flesh it out as you go, but you should have an idea of the starting and ending point, at the least. Add characters. Now that you have a plot, it's time to include your characters. This is important because it helps you identify any supplemental characters you hadn't yet thought of. It also helps you chart out your protagonist's purpose and hero's journey. Plug in scenes. With a starting point for your plot, and an idea of which characters are needed, you can start plugging in the major scenes that will help tell your story. If you plan to write a nonfiction book, then you need to know how to create an outline for a nonfiction book. While the process is similar to the fiction outline steps, it's also very different, because of the differing structure. Think about it: A nonfiction book is likely based on facts and real life, whereas a fiction book is based on imagination. The purpose of a nonfiction book is typically to educate or inform, so you need a book outline that is structured to that purpose. Write out your idea. Write your big book idea out in one to three sentences. Identify the purpose of your book. Think about the 5 Ws (Who, What, When, Where, Why) questions specifically in terms of the problem your non-fiction book is solving, or what purpose your book serves. Choose your book structure. Many nonfiction books follow a specific structure. Is it a problem and solution structure? Maybe it's a compare and contrast, or a chronological structure? If you're having trouble deciding, go back to your purpose. Use a book outline template. Start with a template, and fill in the details of your book as you go. Add your main points as chapters. Brainstorm the main points your book will discuss to convey the topic you're writing about. Then, add these main points as chapters. Structure individual chapters with details. Once you have your main points mapped out as chapters, you can add the specific points or details that you will write about in each chapter. Write an outline for each chapter. Once you have your overall outline completed, you can hone in and continue developing it by creating an outline for each chapter. Get A Nonfiction Book Outline To Write Your Book! Includes Acknowledgement page, Table of Contents, Author Bio, and More! I'M WRITING MY BOOK TO...I'm writing a book to grow my business! I'm not interested in building a business. I'm writing a book to make an impact. I want to write a quality fiction book that entertains people. By submitting this form, you consent to receive marketing text messages from selfpublishing.com at the phone number provided There are a lot of strategies and frameworks when it comes to writing a book outline. There are some effective ways to outline a novel or nonfiction book, and many authors find success using popular book outlining strategies. Let's dive into some book outlining strategies that you can consider for your own book outline. Just be sure to make tweaks to any process that you see fit for your specific needs and writing process. A mindmap can be done with software or with paper and pen. It's a brain dump at its core – as you think of an item or point, you add it to your mindmap. This can be a few words, a line, a sentence, or whatever you need to get the basic idea down. The first round of mindmapping is all about speed; get your idea out of your head into your mindmap. You can set a timer, and start mindmapping by allowing your thoughts and ideas to freely flow out of your head and into a visual scheme. Mindmapping is one of the best ways to outline a book. This is similar to the mindmap; the difference is that a bubblemap is usually done on paper or a white board. The same principles apply as with a mindmap: get the ideas out of your head onto paper (or white board). You may find that doing this on paper (or a white board), you'll be able to get the ideas out of your head quicker. You can scratch out, add, and move items: it's your outline, and you do it as you want to. Below is an example bubble outline for a chapter in my forthcoming book (as you can see, it looks similar to a mindmap). Scrivener is a popular paid book writing software used by many expert authors. To create an outline in Scrivener, you would use the Corkboard tool. This is an electronic version of using 3x5 flashcards, and the benefit of doing this in Scrivener is that all your "cards" are safely in one place. The Corkboard in Scrivener is a neat tool to outline your book. Author Becky Levine uses Scrivener and says: "I create a text file/note for each scene in the story." Below are example notes on the corkboard in Scrivener... If you're not familiar with Scrivener, and are looking for a free alternative, consider using Notion. It's not strictly a writing software, but it allows you to work in a similar way. This is a quick and easy way to start your outline. Either in your word processor of choice, or with pen and paper, jot down root ideas. These can be questions, phrases, sentences, or whatever it takes to get the idea down on paper (or screen) as quickly as possible. Usually, when you outline your whole book, it will be from a 30,000 foot view. After the book outline, it's a good idea to then outline it chapter-by-chapter. You can use any of the methods offered here to outline your chapters. The idea behind this is to drill down into the details of each chapter, so you can write each chapter more efficiently. If you have the space, using Post-it notes is a great way to outline a book. This video by Pat Flynn is a great example of how to use post-it notes to outline. If you are more of a visual person, you can use a storyboard to outline your book. Here is a step-by-step video on how to outline a book. Bestselling author Randy Ingermanson created the Snowflake Method. In his book, How to Write a Novel Using the Snowflake Method, he offers 10 steps on writing a first draft. "The Snowflake Method is nothing more nor less than the method that works best for me in writing fiction. If you can use it to guide your creativity as you write a powerful story, then I'll be thrilled." – Randy Ingermanson If you're still struggling to get started, or finish, your outline, we have four best practice book outline tips for you: Ask more questions. Questions are your most valuable asset to create an outline for your book. Start with the basic, What? Why? When? Where? Who? And How? Refer to similar books. If you're stuck with getting started, look at the Table of Contents of books in your niche. Do not plagiarize, but use them as ideas. Ask yourself these questions: Where can you add your unique angle? Can you add something more, or different? Leave blanks & skip over. If you can't hash out a particular detail, or have a gap in your outline, don't pressure yourself to fill the gap. Instead, skip it and leave it blank. It will come to you as you start writing! Be flexible. Don't be rigid with your book outline. The best outlines are those that can be adapted and tweaked on-the-go. The outline is just a starting point, but it's up to you to refine as you write. Don't feel rushed to get your outline done. And always remember your outline is not cast in stone – you can change it how many times you want to. Investing the time in writing a detailed outline will save you time when you write your book. "The outline is 95 percent of the book. Then I sit down and write, and that's the easy part."Jeffery Deaver Don't lock yourself into just one type of outline. Try different types, and feel free to mix and match. Over the past decade, a number of companies have entered the market with software for writers. A few of them specifically help authors with outlining novels. Most of these tools were made by authors, for authors, so they can be extremely useful. However, they will cost money and they do have a learning curve. That's why we offer the free templates in a simple word processor you're already familiar with and know how to use. If you are interested in a more robust software for outlining, we have written reviews on many of them, including but not limited to: Scrivener NovelPad Novel Factory Notion Chapterly If you'd like to see more novel writing software, you can read this article. Otherwise, it's time to get started with your outline! If you're just starting out on your writing journey, give book outlining a try. It may just enable you to progress forward and avoid the hurdles of the blank page, writer's block and other stumbling blocks. Remember the sage advice of Winnie the Pooh... "Organization is what you do before you do it, so when you do it, it's not all messed up." – Winnie the Pooh And if you're feeling stuck by this whole book writing and publishing process, consider a self-publishing course where you can be guided through the ins and outs of the entire book writing and publishing process. Get A Nonfiction Book Outline To Write Your Book! Includes Acknowledgement page, Table of Contents, Author Bio, and More! I'M WRITING MY BOOK TO...I'm writing a book to grow my business! I'm not interested in building a business. I'm writing a book to make an impact. I want to write a quality fiction book that entertains people. By submitting this form, you consent to receive marketing text messages from selfpublishing.com at the phone number provided