

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 try to move it 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 estaley@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 mc 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

<p>1. - intro main character - spell out his/her goals - at least one conflict</p>
<p>2. Event/motivating incident -what happens in character's life to set his course of actions - reader learns what character wants Intro 2nd MC</p>
<p>3. by end, mc reaches his or her first turning point - send mc into new or different direction</p>
<p>4. Decision to act -> 1st major event away</p> <p>Type of scenes include cause-effect and action/reaction/conflict/decision. Just when one event wraps up....</p>
<p>5. 2nd event</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>6. Lay groundwork/journey - Confront - Explore</p> <p>(looking ahead: At mid-point, your mc's should be at total cross-purposes.)</p>

7. Exploration
Scenes should escalate in intensity over the first two thirds of story
8. More exploring/problems
Group as much significant action as possible into each scene - don't offer loosely connected series of trivial scenes.
9. Gets bad
Make sure something important crops up - if not have major complication, intro a new sub-plot that throws a monkey wrench into the works
10. Gets worse
Middle chapters - use cliffhangers, foreshadowing, restate problem, worrying the reader, or flat stop the scene with the wheels of the car over the edge of a hundred foot embankment!
11. New...
Mid-point of book - something new - change of scenery, colorful setting, tense argument, plausible red herring, an ah ha!
12. Gets worse
Add conflict, make it a little harder for your mc, give new, unexpected crisis, toss in moral conflict where must make instant "right or wrong" decision. Beef up the stakes. Bring out a flaw.
13. Gets worse
Chronological, believable (but not predictable) progression. Always hold something back - tidbits build into realization scene. advance/retreat scenes (reversals) /romance
14. Realization scene - declaration of love, finds out who killer is, etc. this ties together breadcrumbs left in earlier chapters, but then...
15. Darkest hour begins - . 2/3 of way through book - Plunges story into darkest hour. Reader must believe mc has no way out.
16. Make it bigger
17. Turning pt Facing final turning point - flips story into climax and resolution. MC is forced into action and the pace picks up.
18. Decision Climax
set up situation where mc must choose between two specific, but concrete alternative courses of action. Reward or punish in accordance with poetic justice. What does the character deserve? Get?
19. Resolution
The principle must mean more than the victory. The right decision is generally the character's hardest decision. Torn between right and wrong, good and evil, principle and self-interest. Reader wants to SEE mc make decision. Once the decision is made, focus the reader's fulfillment into one punch line and the story ends. Deliver his reward (last chapter).
20. Reward/tie-up

Adapted from: <http://kalindria.googlepages.com/Outline50K20Chap.rtf>.