

Novel Writing 101: the first draft

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YouTube Course: Novel Writing 101 — [watch here](#)

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Section: A **Week:** 3 **Topic:** Outlining: Plot Structures / Pantser vs. Plotter

Pantser vs. Plotter Worksheet

There are many ways to approach writing a novel, but at the forefront of every process, routine, and habit is one question that overrides all: *are you a pantser or a plotter?*

While it can be amusing to adopt either moniker much like the results from a personality test, the question is truly beneficial to ask. It seeks to determine what your creative process is at its core and how you can best thrive.

Pantser: flying by the seat of your pants

A Pantser is someone who “flies by the seat of their pants”. Essentially, you go with the flow. Rather than relying on extensive outlines and structure, your best creative ideas often arrive in the moment, and you let them dictate what comes next. As a Pantser, wherever your mind leads, you follow.

Plotter: the best plan is a well-thought out one

A Plotter is someone who extensively plans their story before they even begin writing. Detailed, complex outlines are your best friend. You like to see the road ahead so you can plan for every detour and misstep.

Finding Balance:

Now, there's a good chance that you lean toward one, but resonate with aspects of the other. Feel free to pick and choose what works for you. The art of writing is not a one-size-fits-all practice. It's naturally creative, and that means it's highly personal to each and every one of us. So, experiment! Try one technique and get a feel for what works, then sample another. You won't know what conditions will produce your best work until you try.

Discovering What Works Best for You:

For my first two novels, I was a diehard Pantser. I didn't have any sense of an outline; I simply jumped in and got to work. But after writing the first book in my fantasy series, I realized I needed a plan. There were too many clues I needed to plant along the way and characters whose development required proper preparation. So, I started experimenting. I researched plot structures, I read a book on storytelling, and I realized there was no magic answer. I had to find what worked best for me and run with it. Now, I utilize something that resembles a brain-dump more than an actual outline. It's detailed in a chaotic, dense way, but it's perfect for me. And, at the end of the day, that's all that matters.

Are You a Pantser or a Plotter?

Complete the following exercise to see whether you might be more drawn to the life of a *Pantser* or a *Plotter*.

Remember: writing is personal. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, and you don't have to be 100% one or the other.

