

This is a worksheet for those wanting to write anything. It could be a book. Short Story. Screenplay. Anything with a narrative really.

This is the process that has helped me start. Because after all, starting is the hardest thing to do when writing. This will help you focus and start the process of putting words on paper. Because ultimately, that's all writing is to some extent.

Working Title: if you don't have one that's fine.

Idea: What's the gist of your idea? It can be fleshed out. It can be half baked.

Doesn't matter. Write what you've got so far.

Setting: Where are we? Present day? Past? Future?

Main Character(s): Who is our main character? What do they want? What's their personality? You can even go so far as to what they eat for breakfast. This will help you flesh out the story, too.

Opposition Character(s): Who is it? What do they want? Their want should get in the way of what our main character(s) wants.

Conflict: What is our conflict style? Person versus Person? Person versus institution? Person versus Nature? Hell, even make up a new one.

Genre: What's our genre? Is it comedy? Drama? Action? Both? Yes, pick one, max two. Please. It will help you, because with genre comes a template, you'll subconsciously know what should happen when.

Comps: If you had to compare your idea to something what would it be? It could be a show. Movie. Book. How is your idea similar? Is it tonal? Is it the theme? Is it the main character? This will also help you because you'll have homework.

Watch and rewatch what you are trying to imitate.

Emotion: What is the emotion you want audiences to feel at the end? Is it elation? Is it bliss? Joy? Sad? Contempt? Awe? Terror? If you don't know, think back to your comps, how did those make you feel at the end?

Theme: What is your truth? What are you saying or trying to say? Or what question are you pondering or dealing with? For example, one of mine currently is identity, and how it is a fluid changing thing.

Plot beats and plot points:

Okay, now let's get into breaking story. Trust me, you can do this. You've got momentum now. You should have some idea of your characters, and what they want. Great. Now let's dive into how they get what they want. And don't make it easy. If your character wants a bag of chips. Make it the hardest fucking bag of chips to ever get.

Ordinary world: What is our ordinary world? What does it look like? What do our characters do on a daily basis?

Introduction: Who do we meet? aka our characters? What do they do? Who are their friends? Most importantly, what do they want?

Theme: What's our message? What is the truth we are subtly telling?

Call to Adventure: Moment of change. Our main character makes a decision or gets called to do something.

Refusal of the Call: Debate to change. Will they or won't they? Ultimately, yes, they will. Because if they don't, then the story ends here. This is a brief moment of pause before we lift off.

Meeting the Mentor: Someone or something guides them to change or make the decision to go. To change. It can be a person. It can be a realization. It can come from within our main character even. But this is the extra push they go to do the thing.

Crossing the Threshold: The decision. Our characters start the journey of the new world. We have liftoff. They are leaving home and they ain't coming back.

Trials and tribulations, Allies, Enemies, and Fun: Who's helping, who's halting? Is the new world fun? Is it scary? This is also our fun and games section. Also known as the promise of the premise, or the genre. There can be defeats and pushbacks. But not total failure. That comes next.

MIDPOINT: This is typically the big reveal. A new discovery. It makes our main character question what they've done. This is a fail moment. It can even be an oh shit moment where they have to do something spectacular.

FALLOUT: our character cannot get what they want. They begin to spiral or doubt themselves. They doubt what they've done. They may even want to return home. Return to normal.

Dark night of the soul: The ultimate decision. Keep going or stop. We find new motivation. Even a helping hand. We are not returning to normal. We've come too far. Too close to stop. We have to see it through. Our character gets a new plan, a new course of action.

Reward: Our main character wins, of course overcoming some potential slip ups and halt points. They reach the mountain top. Accomplish the task. Or don't, it is your story! They also learn the deeper truth here. It can be as simple as, it was never about winning or losing, but seeing if I could compete with the best. Or it can be a newfound friendship. A love for life. Think of that AHA moment! The moment in your favorite movie, or in your own life that made you go WOAHH! This is that moment.

The Road Back: The falling action. The residue. The world is no longer the same. How? Do our characters trek back home? What is life like post-journey?

Closing time: the ending. Where are we? What's it look like? How does it feel? Who's there? Who's alive? And most importantly, what's our message? What's our final image? Or final line of dialogue? The dust has settled. You've taken us on a journey, now what is the most satisfying ending you can think of for your character and for the audience?

One last thing! Story Summary!

Great job! Now with all this fresh in your mind. Write the story summary. I know, I felt you role your eyes! But trust me, you've already got it in your head. Even follow this basic format, and of course, add your own flair to it. You got this.

1. Working title.
2. Is about [insert character] who wants [insert want]
3. But when [insert life changing event happens] [insert character] is forced to change.
4. List off some fun and games. Promise of the premise.
5. In the end, our character learns [insert theme].

Sample example: The Final Bag of Doritos is about an eight-year-old boy, Mika, who wants nothing more than the last bag of Doritos. But when his Mom makes the floor become lava, Mika is forced to figure out a new way to get to said bag of Doritos. Initially, annoyed at the floor becoming lava, Mika creates a plan to get that bag and that delicious man-made chip. He uses pillows, tabletops, and counters, even his own clothes, to get to the bag, but as he reaches for it, he slips! But his Mom catches him. In the end, Mika learns that sometimes the more difficult the journey, the better the crunch.

Great work! Now, you should have a better understanding of your story. You should feel some confidence. You've got a roadmap. It is no longer just an idea floating around in your noggin, but is now a living and breathing thing. ‘

If it helps. And you've got the energy, now go back through and refine it. Or expand from it. Start listing potential scenes for each plot point. This is a fluid document. It is not regimented or set in stone. Just remember to always do "save as" and start a new doc, because there might be something you wrote in an older document that you liked, and you won't lose it this way. Keep on writing! What comes next is a more in-depth outline.