



STORY POINTS: BUILD YOUR STORY

PREPARING TO WRITE

CheckList in no particular order.

CHECKLIST

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- Start with your [5-Plot Points](#) if writing a novel. 1) Inciting Incident—2) Lock In—3) Midpoint Crisis; 4) Dark Night of the Soul (Main Climax)—5) Third Act Twist.
- Short Story—you should start in action, plus as close to the end as possible. The shorter your story is then the closer to the end you want

to start the story. Limited word count should help you determine. You only have enough word count for one important moment-scene-slice of life for your character.

- In a short story, you might start with a character with a big problem to solve, and then solve it in a unique way, or with a twist, or make them laugh, or cry, or scream. It can be just satisfying too BUT it has to feel like the end so the reader gets a sense of closure, especially if writing [flash fiction](#) or shorter.
- Make your [antagonist](#) 3-Dimensional (shades of gray, [include bad & good traits](#), antagonists are not always bad guys, and in their eyes they are the hero of their story.) They can enhance your protagonist when they have a legitimate foe that matches or outmatches them.
- Create strong, relatable protagonists (emotionally sympathetic, include negative/positive traits, there is no perfect human.) The story is about the struggle and journey and how your character handles it. Everyone likes to root for the underdog.
- Give your character a deep-seated need/desire, something that is of a do or die importance to THEM.
- Bonus points if you can connect to their core belief system—the way they view and interpret the world around them. If you connect it to their WHY—the thing that drives their actions and choices it will help drive your story and create its own kind of conflict. You will find it easier to find their motivation for the things they do.
- Clarity of Purpose (avoid the ambiguous, readers need to relate or at least understand the core why of any character, including sidekicks and minor characters as it pertains to the story.)
- Conflict is a system of cause & effect (conflict = consequence which is generated from characters' own actions and reactions and worldview.) (A [book](#) that can help with figuring out conflict.)
- Include *No detail* that does not move the story forward to the end goal or the next scene.
- Know your story's end goal. How do you do that? What is the overall story question? The story-question is what you have to answer by the end of the story. Answering questions tells you it is the end of the story.
- Scenes are mini 3 act plays. Each scene has a forward motion for the story, a sense of beginning, middle, and end. A scene should reflect some change or reveal something about a character or element of pertinent story or plot. If not, remove it.

- Write a compelling **Hook** in your opening scene. In fact, every scene can **use some type of hook** that makes the reader want to keep reading.
- Your opening should introduce the story question that you the writer will answer by the time you finish writing the story.
- The opening should include character, setting in their ordinary world and a hint of upcoming problem(s) connected to the story forward motion.)
- The *mirror moments technique* is a tool you can use, especially at around the midpoint climax. (James Scott Bell Book **Write From Middle**)
- Create Actionable, External & Internal conflict for Primary & Secondary characters.
- Create, at least, thumbnail profiles for all characters: Show internal-external elements, history & connections. Any character added, no matter how minor, should always have a purpose that moves the story forward to the end goal.
- Use Deep Point Of View description for story movement. DPOV can reveal the personality of character & emotion. It can be used to enrich the setting. (example: L.M. Montgomery's **Anne of Green Gables**, and yes some is telling but in a deeper point of view in this book.)
- Natural dialogue-Flows & Pops (Use a reader to hear what your story sounds like. Read it aloud. **Free Text to Speech Software** use in browser)(**A book** that helped me with dialogue.)
- Use pace to control story action & nonaction moments. Shorter sentences give a more action feel (e.g. fight scenes, action scenes, dialogue), while longer sentences and paragraphs can slow the pace down.
- Create a guide for your own use. Some call these loglines, or elevator pitches. Sum up your entire story in 1 sentence (30 words or fewer.) It will help you write the blurb later, which is only slightly longer.
- Keep premise to 1 paragraph (no more 250-300 words) The premise can help you focus your logline and your blurb.
- Often with fiction, reader experience is about *story immersion, escape, and emotional connection*. Give them plenty of reasons to care. People don't remember so much what you say, but they remember how you MADE them FEEL. Do this by using emotionally **strong word choices**—verbs, nouns, adverbs/adjectives and action words and phrases. Emotion and action keeps them turning pages after you HOOK'em.

Enjoy!

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Juneta is one of six team members of the Ninja Writers community. You can check out Ninja Writers at ninjawriters.org

