

Novel Outline Template

Ten beats from premise to resolution. Fill each band, then map the connections.

1 Premise

State who wants what, why it matters, and what happens if they fail.

2 Opening Situation

Show ordinary life just before the event that makes staying impossible.

3 Inciting Incident

Drop the event that forces a choice the protagonist cannot ignore.

4 First Commitment

Have them enter the new problem with a plan they still believe will work.

Raise the Cost

Each complication should be a consequence of the last attempt, not a new problem from nowhere.

5 Rising Complications

Stack consequences so each attempt makes the next problem worse.

6 Midpoint Shift

Reverse what they thought was true and raise the cost of turning back.

7 Subplot Convergence

Collide a second thread with the main plot so both change course.

8 Low Point

Take away the plan, the ally, or the hope that the first strategy required.

Choose, Then Close

The final choice spends the premise want. The resolution is the condition that choice created.

9

Final Choice

Force a decision that spends what they wanted at the start for what they need.

10

Resolution

Show the new condition that only this choice could have produced.

Genre adjustments

How the ten beats change by genre, then a short checklist for using the map.

Fantasy

Opening Situation carries the world. Rising Complications becomes a travelogue unless each new place is caused by a failed choice. A Wizard of Earthsea holds because Ged's later voyage is caused by the shadow he already called.

Mystery & thriller

Inciting Incident is the crime itself. Subplot Convergence is where separate clue threads collide. Do not let the Low Point become an information dump. Gone Girl spends the middle colliding the diary, the affair, and the cameras.

Romance

Midpoint Shift is the relationship's false high or false low. Final Choice spends the Premise want for the other person. Pride and Prejudice puts the first proposal at the midpoint and the real choice against pride at the end.

Literary

Final Choice is often internal, a recognition or a refusal, but causation still applies. Each beat must still produce the next. The Remains of the Day runs on letters, visits, and a last internal choice caused by the road that came before.

HOW TO USE THIS

- ☐ Start with the premise, ending, and midpoint before filling chapters.
- ☐ Add character and subplot nodes around the main spine.
- ☐ Connect every subplot to a main-plot consequence or reveal.