

How and Why to Story Outline

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/how-and-why-to-story-outline/>

This entry is part 11 of 12 in the series [Devil in the Details](#)

[Devil in the Details](#)

- [Writing Details: get from blah to awe](#)
- [A Hot Object](#)
- [Making it Count: word count & structure in storybooks](#)
- [How to Write a Chapter Book](#)
- [Design a Great FLAG: how to use Vexillology in your writing](#)
- [Plotting Panels: Planning the Layout for Your Visual Story](#)
- [How to Start a Story](#)
- [Literacy on the Margins](#)
- [Most Common Mistake Writers Make](#)
- [International Spellcheck: story vs. storey](#)
- How and Why to Story Outline
- [Top Fonts for Books](#)

Why on earth would you ever want to draft a story outline when it's so much fun to just sit down and pants your way through? There are certain narrative choices you simply cannot make without crafting a story outline first.

To really experience creative freedom as a writer, you need to story outline.

Here's how to really *get there*.

When you don't story outline, things get pretty chaotic - fast. Can it be fun? Well... sometimes. But not always.

Outlining a story before you get down to writing means being able to use any narrative trick you want.

Crafting a Story Outline means you as the writer can work-out the kinks before you've even begun writing. It means not getting derailed in chapter three. It means a smoother, more enjoyable writing

experience. It will free your mind to be more creative.

So why don't all writers story outline? For years, I pushed it away from me. "No way," I thought - actually I said it right out loud sometimes. "It just stifles the creative flow and makes it feel more like work."

Well, I learned the hard way (over and over) just how wrong I really was. So I'm hoping I can sway you to start story outlining - and avoid all my previous mistakes.

Why Writers Don't Outline

A lot of writers hate outlining, and when it comes to creating a chapter outline fit for a publisher, I'm one of them (yes, *still*). It's boring. BORING. Only slightly better than filing taxes, really. But that isn't what I mean with Story Outlining here.

A story outline meant only for *your eyes* will help you keep track of exactly what you need to write. As you write, there's still plenty of room to make stuff up as you go. The creativity doesn't stop - and truly, it isn't hindered.

In fact, just the opposite is true. If you know the structure and key moments that need to happen, that will free you up to be even more creative than if you had to come up with everything (and remember all your decisions and details) as you go.

You *can* Wing-It when it comes to a rough draft, but you should never shop around or publish that first draft no matter how awesome you think it is. Seriously - never.

Narrative Tools and Tricks

There are some great narrative tools you can play with in order to make your story great. Thing is, these tricks rely on your careful and intentional planning.

You cannot wing-it if you craft:

- [Reverse Chronology](#)
- [Multiperspectivity](#)
- In media res
- Stream of consciousness
- Epistolary story
- [Any illustrated storybook](#)
- A Bookend Story
- Any story with sense of suspense/mystery
- A story with strong themes

All these options require that the writer know:

- What the protagonist cares most about and what they must learn.
- The complete story arch.
- [How the story should end.](#)
- [What 3 things are most important about any given scene](#) (a.k.a. why it must be there that way).

Remember: Using your imagination takes practice. The more you use it, the more imaginative you'll be.

How to Story Outline Novels

If a Chapter Book, Middle Grade, or Young Adult Novel

Do a chapter-by-chapter outline. It doesn't need to be lengthy – maybe a paragraph or two for each chapter.

I personally like to simply bullet-point my chapters and list what points of action there are. Then within those bullets, I list what's important about that moment of the story. If it isn't important, I either cut it or make a few decisions so that it *becomes* important.

How to Story Outline Books with Pictures

If an Illustrated Storybook or Graphic Novel

Do a page-by-page outline. It's really important to have a strong sense of what should be on every page, even before you start writing the story or sketching images for your mock-up.

Keep in mind that a storybook has 32 pages, but that includes necessities like the [Copyright Page](#). Know what special extras you want with your book and make room for those. If you're self publishing, [this is critical information and should be part of your story outlining process.](#)

A graphic novel can be just about any length (between 60 and 500 pages). However, graphic novels are oftentimes a collection of comic books – which are 24 pages (actually 32 pages, just like a storybook – but 24 pages of story). This might help you plot your overall story arch.

Where you need to be particular is when it comes to timing, page turns and building suspense – curiosity. (Do you have suspense in a storybook for kids? YOU BET! If you don't keep their attention with a sense of curiosity, those little buggers will just walk away when you're in mid-sentence.)

Stand Out, Stand Up

Take time to really pin-down what you want to accomplish with your story. *Why are you doing this?* If you don't know how to really answer that, your readers won't know why they should read it.

With so much on the market, with so many options, the only way to stand out is to stand up – with a real purpose. Craft with intention and you'll find you can bring much more to each project you tackle. Then

How and Why to Story Outline

by Chazda Albright - GreatStorybook.com - <http://greatstorybook.com>

your creativity will really soar!

Keep creating, no matter what.

This entry is part of the series

[Devil in the Details](#)

Be sure to check out the other posts:

[<< International Spellcheck: story vs. storeyTop Fonts for Books >>](#)
