

Book Outline Template

Plan your book chapter by chapter. Fill in what you can, leave the rest blank, and change it as you write.

How to use it

1. Write your book in one sentence below.
2. Fiction: fill in the turning points (page 2), then the chapter grid (page 3). Non-fiction: go straight to the chapter grid on page 4.
3. Already have a draft? Use the reverse outline on page 5. Then run the checklist on page 6.

My book in one sentence

Fiction

[Character] wants [goal], but [obstacle]. If they fail, [what they lose].

Non-fiction

By the end, my reader will know or be able to do: ...

Who it is for

My reader is ... and they pick up this book because ...

Example (invented): A ferry captain must learn why her late father tore the last ten days out of his logbook, before the person who wrecked her boat silences her too.

Turning points

Pin down the big moments first. The positions follow the Save the Cat! beat sheet as adapted for novels by Jessica Brody. Treat them as a rough guide.

Turning point	Where it often falls	What happens in my book
The story starts	About 10%	
Point of no return	About 20%	
Midpoint	About 50%	
Lowest point	About 75%	
Climax	80% to 99%	
Ending	After the climax	

Tip: each turning point should change what your main character wants or what it costs them.

Chapter grid

One row per chapter. Every chapter should end with something new.

Ch.	Chapter title	Goal: what the POV character wants	What gets in the way	How it ends
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

Chapter grid

Order chapters so each one answers the next question your reader would ask.

Ch.	Reader's question	Key points	Example or story	Takeaway
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

Reverse outline

Read one chapter at a time and fill in a row. Repeated chapters, missing steps and a slow middle stand out quickly.

Ch.	What happens, or what the reader learns	What this chapter does for the book	Keep, cut, merge or move?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

Outline checklist

- ☐ I can say my book in one sentence.
- ☐ I know how the book ends.
- ☐ Fiction: every chapter has a goal, an obstacle and a new ending.
- ☐ Non-fiction: every chapter answers one clear reader question.
- ☐ No two chapters do the same job.
- ☐ The middle has something at stake.
- ☐ The order has a reason (cause and effect, or problem, method, result).
- ☐ I have marked the chapters I'm unsure about, and I'll start writing anyway.

Notes

Questions to solve while drafting

Free to use for your own book. From AuthorWings Guides: authorwings.com/guides/how-to-write-a-book-outline/