



Welcome!

Webinar on 3-Act Novel Plotting will begin soon!

Hello! I want to start by welcoming everyone and thank you for taking time out of your busy lives to spend the next hour with me. If you are here, you probably know that today we are going to go over how to outline your novel using the 3 act method.



Who am I?

My name is Bill Edwards and I am a professional writer and book coach.

I help people just like you write that great novel they have always said they were going to write!

For those of you who don't know, my name is Bill Edwards and I am a professional writer and book coach. I help people just like you write that great novel they have always said they were going to write!

Why do people need a book coach? Don't worry, we will get into that.

Quick Housekeeping

What is a book coach?

Great question! We will get into that in the about me section.

What if you have questions?

Drop them in the chat function and I will answer them all at the end?

How long is this webinar?

One-hour. I understand that your time is valuable and will move quickly so you can take what we discuss and start using it today!

But first, some housekeeping. If you have any questions or comments, please write them down and hold them until the end. I've made sure to set aside some question time so I can fully answer any questions without having to rush through any sections.

This webinar will last about an hour. I will spend the first few minutes telling you who I am and what we will be doing. Then we will go over how to outline your novel using the 3 act method.

Be sure to stick around until the end to receive a special thank you from me!

Plotter Vs Pantser

Plotter:

Plans out their novel
Does all the research before the begin writing

Pros:

Helps avoid writer's block
Can typically write quicker

Cons:

Can get stuck in the "perfect" plot trap
No room for "discovery"

Pantser:

Sits down and writes their story "by the seat of their pants"
Does very little research before, so does it during or after the story is written

Pros:

Very organic and discovery
Flexibility

Cons:

Can get lost, of track, writer's block

Plotter or pantser. These terms are floating around every writing conference, every writing Facebook group and every blog started by any writer.

What are they?

A plotter is someone who plots. Before they sit down to write, they plan out their novel, from beginning to end. Plotters also do any necessary research before they begin writing. This can include locations, characters, historical information, scientific, you know name in.

There are lots of ways to plot. We are obviously going to go over a way to plot so, to clear the air, I am a plotter and I make no apologies for that.

Pros to this method is it typically helps avoid running into writer's block and you almost always know what you are going to write. This helps you write quicker.

The cons to this method include getting stuck in the trap of wanting to have the perfect plot before you begin. Some plotting methods leave no room for discovery, taking all the fun out of writing.

What I am going to show you today helps with that.

A Pantser is someone who sits down and just starts writing. They typically have an

idea or character and they just write like there's no tomorrow with writing. Typically they do very little or no research.

The pros to this method is it can be very organic and leads to a lot of unexpected and exciting discoveries. It is also very flexible. If you don't like something that's happening in your story or a certain character, you can certainly pull a George R. R. Martin and kill them off.

Cons to pantsing include hitting a lot of writers block when you aren't sure where to go next, the story becoming a muddled mess of ideas or even getting lost in the narrative.

WendyWitch

You are here because:

Started a novel

But you just don't know where to go next and you have a mess on your hands

Idea

You have an idea but don't know how to start

Learning

You want to learn how to plot and are overwhelmed by all the options

Inbetween

You have a little bit over everything going on and you need guidance

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You are here because you have either:

(Next slide, click for every number for it to appear)

- 1) Started writing a novel and now you have a jumbled mess of words that don't really make a lot of sense and you are stuck, not sure where to go from there
- 2) Have an idea but have no idea where to start
- 3) Know you want to plot but are intimidated by all the plotting software out there.
- 4) Someplace in between

Obviously, this course is not designed for pantsers. But, if you consider yourself one, please stick around! You might find the information we cover useful in your writing or you might feel compelled to try it out.



3-Act Structure

This mini course is going to teach you the 3-plot structure of plotting a novel. So many great novels and Hollywood blockbusters follow this structure.

As I said earlier, I am a plotter. I have tried pantsing and my stories always seemed to require more edits/rewrites or I abandoned them because I got lost and couldn't find my way out of the words.

The 3-act structure is my preferred way to plot. It is focused enough to keep me writing and loose enough to allow in surprises.

I only teach my students how to use this method because of it's ability to help guide while still allowing the creative freedom of pantsing.

This plot outline is perfect for newbies and seasoned writers alike. As I said before, it provides writers with structure for their story, takes their ideas through all the important parts but allows for the best part of writing to still happen. Those moments when something exciting appears on the page. It guides you through the days of writer's block and prevents you from getting off course.

Before I get into the good stuff, let me tell you why you should trust me.

About Me

Professional

Worked in one of the big 5 as an editor for 15 years

Writing

Started writing in high school
Has published several novels
2 USA Today Best Seller

Coaching

8 years experience
Started by helping Full Time Coach

As I said at the beginning of the course, my name is <book coach> and I have been a professional writer for the past 20 years and I have worked as a book coach for the 8 of those years.

I got my start in the writing world like many. I wrote my first novel in high school, and it was terrible. Then I went to college and I got a degree in creative writing. After college, I started working for one of the big 5, first as a lowly associate editor and slowly working my way up. I'd work with authors both experienced and new, during the day and at night I would go home and grind out my own word count goals.

I, like so many, wanted to be like Steven King and tried getting thousands of words a night. Most of the time, it didn't work. I felt frustrated and like a phony. Have you ever felt like that? It took me years to realize, surprisingly, I am not Steven King and I can not write like him. So, I allowed myself a little leeway and found a way to make writing my happy place.

For every new novel, I would spend time plotting, using the template that I am going to share with you. Then, during the work week, I would go to my writing space, AKA my kitchen table next to the tiny window in my tiny New York apartment and write for one hour. I didn't keep track of words.

My plot was my guide, especially on those brain-fried days when I couldn't remember what I had for lunch, let alone what I had written the night before.

Using the method, I managed to write my first book that was accepted. Then another, then another. Soon, I was seeing my name on TBR lists on Goodreads and currently reading alike. I went on a couple book tours and I even sold enough books to be listed on USA Today Bestseller list.

I began meeting people who asked me the same question. "How do I manage to write so much, while still working a full time job?"

Plotting was my number one suggestion. And getting my butt in my seat every night was the other.

I heard lots of excuses as to why people couldn't do that. They had kids, they worked late, they worked early, they were too tired at the end of the day. Blah, blah, blah.

If you aren't willing to do the work, then you won't write your novel is what I always told them.

About five years ago, I was having lunch with a friend. He was glowing. He had just successfully pitched a new book idea to a publisher and they had accepted. Halfway through lunch, my friend began to panic. He had the idea but now it was the hard part. He had to actually write it.

The celebratory lunch was taking a turn. My friend was one of those from above who always had excuses. He was brilliant and procrastination was a real thing for him. This time though, he couldn't procrastinate. His career was on the line.

So, I offered to help him. We would sit down together and figure out a schedule and I would coach him through it. I would hold him accountable and be there when he needed someone to bounce ideas off of. I would read something he wrote that he wasn't sure would work or if it was in tone with the rest of the piece.

Most importantly, I would make sure he got his butt in that chair and did the damn work.

I was a little worried about my friendship with him, but we set off on the journey. I called him twice a week to check in and soon, my friend had not only completed his outline but he was writing steadily.

When he hit writer's block, he called me and we talked through what was holding him back. We learned quickly that he needed very specific word totals to hit weekly and then daily. So we adjusted his plan.

His editors were thrilled when he turned in his completed manuscript on time.

He's working on his next project and you guessed it, I'm still his coach.

I help authors of all calibers go from idea to published manuscript. I am there to help them with writer's block. I read new sections and provide guidance and tough love. One of my favorite parts is to sit with my new authors (or whatever you want to call a Zoom) and help them lay out their novel.

We aren't going to sit down and go over your individual ideas today, but I will give you the tools to do just that on your own.

WendyWitch

Terms:				
Exposition	Rising Action	Climax	Falling Action	Resolution
This is the opening of your story. It establishes the protagonist, location, time period etc.	This is the build up of your story	This is when the most important/exciting/impactful part of the story.	The hero has won (or failed) and the world is resetting	What happens next. If it is a series, this sets up the next novel. If it is a stand alone, you will have to follow conventions. For example, a romance needs to have a happily ever after.

Let's get to it!

Content: (Vocab Slide, click for each term to appear as you describe it)

First, some terms.

Exposition: This is the opening of your story. It establishes the protagonist, location, time period etc.

Rising action: This is the build up of your story

Climax: This is when the most important/exciting/impactful part of the story.

Falling Action: The hero has won (or failed) and the world is resetting

Resolution: What happens next. If it is a series, this sets up the next novel. If it is a stand alone, you will have to follow conventions. For example, a romance needs to have a happily ever after.

Know the basics

Who?

Who is the story about?

What?

What is happening?

Where/When?

Where and when is this story taking place?

Why?

Why should the reader care? OR Why is this happening now?

How?

How is your hero going to solve this problem?

Before you plot you will need to know who your story is about, where it takes place, why your reader should care, etc.

Let's go over these ideas very quickly:

Who is your story about? Your protagonist needs to be relatable. No one likes rooting for a dick.

What is happening? Seems obvious but so many people spend a lot of words writing about nothing. Make sure something is happening. Also, who is the antagonist? Is it a super villain looking to hold the planet hostage for 1 billion dollars? Or is it a big storm, threatening to destroy human kind as we know it?

Where/when: You need to know when this story is taking place. Is it in a dystopian world, modern time or back in the 1700's France?

Why: You need to give a reason for your readers to want to read this. Is there a message about humanity you want them to take away? Alternatively, why is this happening to your character now? What is different about today versus two days ago?

How? Your hero needs to have the skills or the ability to gain the skills needed to defeat the antagonist.

If you are here, I am going to assume that you already know all of that. If not, before you begin plotting make sure you have an idea of those.

3-Act Structure

Act 1 (25% of your novel)

Sequence 1: Status Quo

Sequence 2: Inciting Incident (Occurs in the first 10-15% of your novel)

Sequence 3: Locked-In

Act 2 (50% of your novel)

Sequence 4: The First Obstacle

Sequence 5: Midpoint

Sequence 6: Biggest Obstacle

Act 3 (25% of your novel)

Sequence 7: The Climax

Sequence 8: Ending/Resolution/Establishing what's next

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Now, let me explain. I keep saying 3 Acts so naturally, you know that this is going to break you into 3 acts. But each act has a couple sequences to it.

Here is a template of what it will look like. <3 Act Outline on slide>

Act 1 has three sequences. Act 2 has 4 and Act 3 has 2. You will adjust these to fit your needs.

3-Act Structure

Act I (25% of your novel)

Sequence 1: Status Quo

Sequence 2: Inciting Incident (Occurs in the first 10-15% of your novel)

Sequence 3: Locked-In

Now, let's go over every element and what I suggest you include.

Act 1. I like to include a title. So, for example you might title it when it started or the day the world changed.

The point of Act 1 is to introduce a character. Most characters are going to be normal people who have something extraordinary happen to them.

Here are some examples:

Luke Skywalker is just an orphaned kid living on his aunt and uncle's farm when one day two droids arrive and turn his world upside down. Katniss Everdeen is a normal girl whose world is changed the day her sister's name is drawn for the reaping.

Get it? The normal has to be normal for that character. And that's where the status quo comes in.

The first of two sequences is the Status Quo. You introduce your main character and show just how normal (or different if they are something like a hobbit or living in a dystopian world) they are. You need to establish that whatever world they are living in, all of this is very normal.

They are the average joe of their world. Bilbo Baggins was the ideal hobbit until Gandalf turned up at his front door.

The next sequence is the inciting incident. This is when something happens that forces our character to change. It pushes them out of their comfortable world and takes them on an adventure.

For Luke, it was when the droids showed up and he went to see a weird loner in the desert. For Bilbo, it was when Gandalf showed up and invited a bunch of dwarves into his home. For Katniss, it was when her sister's name was drawn from the bowl.

The final sequence in Act 1 is when our character locks into their choice. They have to decide if they go when the crazy guy in the hood or do they stay on the farm. Do they go on the adventure with the dwarves to the mountain or do they stay in the shire? Do they go knowing they are going to die or do they go and fight like hell to survive and come back to their district?

ErudyWitch

Common Mistakes of New Plotters: Act 1

Spend too much time
establishing the new world

They don't establish any world
and jump straight into the
problem

First, they spend too much time establishing the world. Unless it is a fantasy novel, your inciting incident should occur in the first 10 percent of the story.

Or, they don't establish any of this and just jump into the problem. We need a reason to like your character and relate to them. If the characters aren't relatable, nobody is going to want to read your novel.

3-Act Structure

Act I (25% of your novel)

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Sequence 3: Locked-In

Word Count: Average novel 75,000 words

Act I = 18,750 Words

Inciting Incident = somewhere in 2-5 thousand words

So, say you are aiming to write a 75,000 word novel. Pretty standard length. That means Act 1 needs to be about 18,750 words. Breaking it down even farther, your inciting incident needs to occur between the first 2 to 5 thousand words.

If this is causing panic, please take a moment. The droids may have been the inciting incident for Luke, but he still had to go find Old Ben and then go back to his family farm. Then there was the whole incident in the bar where we met Han and Chewy. Although important, you are still establishing a lot with your new world.

3-Act Structure

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Act 2 (50% of your novel)

Sequence 4: The First Obstacle

Sequence 5: Midpoint

Sequence 6: Biggest Obstacle

Moving on to Act 2. This will be about 50 percent of your novel. For your numbers, that's about 37,500 words for our 75,000 word novel. Each sequence will vary, based on your story. If you want numbers, you can shoot for 8-9 thousand per sequence.

Sequence 4 is the first obstacle. This is the thing that stands in the way of our hero. For Luke, it was going on the death star and getting captured while trying to save the princess. Bilbo has to deal with the trolls. Katniss is getting assigned the drunk mentor and going through training.

Sequence 5 is the midpoint. Something drastic must happen but it can't be as big as the climax. Luke loses Ben. Katniss is sent to the games.

Sequence 6 is the biggest obstacle. This is the moment that what your character has been preparing for, trying to prevent or hoping wouldn't happen. Katniss is in the games and people are dying all around her. She has to find Peeta, they have to work together. Luke has to become a Jedi and fight for the galaxy.

I want to reiterate for the numbers people, this section is about 50 percent of your novel. But for you free flowing people, it could be up to 65 percent of your novel. Remember, there are no hard set rules. Just guidelines.

Common Mistakes of New Plotters: Act 2

Don't skip midpoint or the first
obstacle

Let your hero fail!

Let's take a quick moment to discuss a couple common mistakes. You can't skip the midpoint or first obstacle. Good novels build to the climax. You give the reader a hint of the power that is to come.

Also, don't be afraid to let your hero fail a little. Katniss does get burned in the fire. Han peaces out for a while. Everything can't be smooth sailing. That would be boring!

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Act 3 (25% of your novel)

Sequence 7: The Climax

Sequence 8: Ending/Resolution/Establishing what's next

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Let's get into the final Act. Like Act 1 it will be about 25 percent of your novel or just under 9 thousand words. It is okay if it is more like 10 percent if your sequence 2 is a little long. Some climaxes happen very quickly. Others take a while. It will just depend on your story.

Sequence 7 is the climax . Things seem to be going well or according to plan and something happens. For Katniss, it's when they change the rule from two winners to one. For Luke, it is when he has to fly into the death star and has to decide if he uses the sophisticated technology to ensure he hits his target or trusts his instincts aka the force.

Sequence 8: This is the part after everything. The problem has been solved and now we get to see how life is after. For a series, this is when the next problem is revealed. In the end, we get closure. Remember, every genre has different expectations. Make sure to stick with yours.

Common Mistakes of New Plotters: Act 3

Don't skip to "THE END" or
They lived happily ever
after....

Avoid cliffhangers

Before we finish, let's go over a few final problems for you to avoid.

Don't just skip to the end. A lot of new authors struggle to end their novels properly. Your reader just committed some serious time to read what you've written. Don't jilt them and leave them with a simple and they lived happily ever after.

Avoid cliff hangers. By that I mean if you are writing a series, don't try to leave them hanging too much. Make sure you resolve what happened in this novel while teasing what is going to happen in the next. Don't just end and expect people to go buy your next book. Give them a satisfactory ending and they will want to buy the next book.

That's the 3-Act

Not meant to be a lot.
Allows for freedom to explore your characters
Keeps you focused and on the right path

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That's it! 3 acts and 8 sequences for you to follow and plan out your novel.

Some of you may be thinking that is not a lot.

It isn't. You do not need to plot every second of your novel. That is just called writing at that point.

This process still allows people who want to enjoy the creative freedom to let things organically happen but helps keep you on track!

On the other hand, if any of you are feeling overwhelmed, don't worry. That is normal. The more you do this, the easier it will be.

Now, here's the thing. It is a lot easier said than done to get your novel plotted out and off the ground. Some people, a lot of people, need extra help.



That's where I come in.

If you feel you got everything you needed out of today's session. Awesome!

But for those of you who are still unsure if you can do this, let me offer this. For a limited time and as a thank you for attending this webinar, you could book a novel plotting coaching session with me for half price. For just \$99, you and I will sit down (or Zoom) and plot out your story.

Book a coaching call with me

One on One meeting

We will sit down and discuss your plot, from the 5 W's to the Resolution

Advice

Figure out if your idea is enough for a novel, without spending too much time on it

Guidance

Use my 20 years of experience to make your novel a success
Are you staying within your genre norms? Do you have a clear idea?

Determine next steps

After you work with me on the coaching call, you can decide if you want one of my other packages

[Link to coaching session sales page](#)

During your personal one on one session, we will discuss the 5 W's and How to make sure you have a full fleshed out idea.

We will move on to plotting out your novel, making sure you have an inciting incident, exciting plot points, a hefty middle and satisfying ending.

You will be able to use my 20 years of experience to save yourself time, disappointment and headaches later. I will make sure that when you leave our session, your plot is solid.

With each coaching session, I provide advice on how to get the most out of your idea, what it's lacking and I help you brainstorm solutions.

There is a limited number of slots available, so you will need to act quickly!

What if you don't want a coaching call right now but you want one later?

You can find me at www.billedwardsbookcoach.com and connect with me that way.

I offer a variety of packages, from full service coaching which guides you from idea to publication to quick sessions that help with writer's block and so much more.

Since you signed up for this webinar, you will continue to get helpful, actionable tips from me to help you guide your writing. These will always be free.

Today, I am booking one on one coaching calls for \$99 dollars to help develop the plot of your novel. Again, there are only a limited number of slots available so make sure to sign up for your spot now!

WendyWitch



Questions?

Okay. Time for questions.

Thank you for coming!
If you think of anything, reach out to me at
www.billedwardsbookcoaching.com

WendyWitch