

The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Great Story



You love to write stories, but you're not sure if you're doing it the right way.

I mean ...

Maybe you have great basic **concepts** but aren't sure how to build those into a cohesive theme.

Or maybe your **theme** is crystal clear in your mind, but you struggle to put together a compelling plot.

Or *maybe*, you just don't know which **story structure** best fits your golden idea.

You're not alone — writing fiction is *hard*, and none of us is sure about the best path forward all the time. Fortunately, precisely *because* we all search for answers on a regular basis, your fellow authors are also more

than willing to *share* those answers with you when they find them. The Internet is full of great writing advice if you know where to find it.

And that's what this guide is all about — bringing the best information on the web about all facets of writing a great story together in one place. Below you'll find more than 100 awesome articles by some of the most accomplished writing experts around, categorized to help you find the advice *you* need.

So get your list of questions together, take a deep breath, and dig in.

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Chapter 2 Premise

Premise is the basic idea for your story, expanded to include your protagonist, setting, and primary conflict. Fiction writers are often encouraged to write a one-sentence encapsulation of their premise before doing anything else and then to use that premise to guide the entire writing process.

If your foundation — your *premise* — is shaky, the house you build — your *story* — will fall flat.

Obviously, premise is of paramount importance in constructing a great story, so you need to get it right. But how do you do that?

Well, a good place to start is with the advice of the experts below.

- [6 Steps to Creating Your Plot Premise](#) by Joseph Blake Parker
- [Designing Your Novel's Premise](#) by Gaelen Foley
- [How a Strong Story Premise Sets You up for Success](#) via [Be a Better Writer](#)
- [How to Write a Novel Step by Step — Step One: The Premise](#) via [Novel Software](#)
- [How to Write a Novel: The Story Premise](#) by J.R. Hall
- [How to Write a Story Premise](#) via [The UnNovelist](#)
- [Keep It Simple, Stupid](#) by Daniel Arensen
- [Six Ways to Define the Premise of a Story and Eight Ways to Write a Book](#) by Martina Boone
- [Step 6: Build your Premise](#) via [My Book Therapy](#)
- [Theme and Premise – What's the Difference?](#) by Rob Parnell
- [Writing the Premise](#) by Mike DiMartino

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Chapter 3

Theme

Theme is the unifying or dominant idea in a story that recurs throughout the plot and presents the author's overall message to the reader. Examples include *good v. evil*, *death*, and *man as hero*.

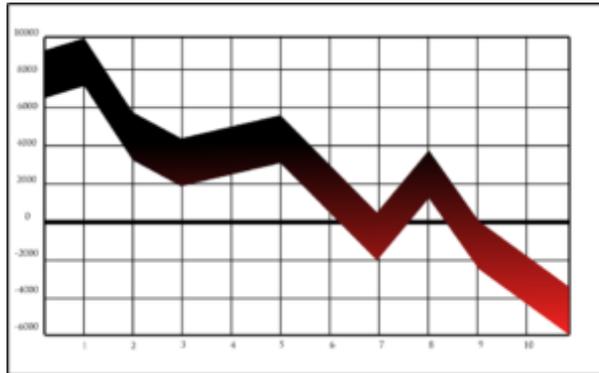
Theme can be explicit or implicit, but without it, your story won't really say anything to your reader. Theme ties everything together, so you have to know what you're trying to convey and how to do it.

These experts can help you hammer out your message.

-
- [25 THINGS WRITERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THEME](#) by Chuck Wendig
 - [Does Your Fiction Novel Have a Theme?](#) by James Chartrand

- Don't Know Your Story's Theme? Take a Look at Your Character's Arc by K.M. Weiland
- Fiction Writing Exercises for Exploring and Developing Theme by Melissa Donovan
- Finding The Theme Of A Story: Almost Famous by Chris Oatley
- Finding Your Themes by Holly Lisle
- Theme Me Up: How to Develop Your Theme by Janice Hardy
- Theme, Fiction, and Empire Games by Charles Stross
- Top 10 Types of Story Themes by Samantha Stone
- Writing from theme by John August

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Chapter 4

Plot

Plot is the series of events that drive your story from beginning to end, together with the structure that orders those events and helps establish relationships among them. It is the framework around which your story and characters are built.

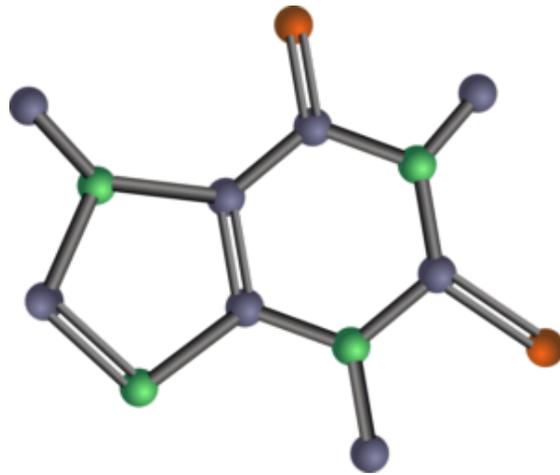
Without a compelling plot, your story will languish and your readers will put down your book.

The resources below will help you ... um ... *plot* your course.

-
- [11 Plot Pitfalls – And How to Rescue Your Story From Them](#) by Laura Whitcomb
 - [25 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PLOT](#) by Chuck Wendig
 - [5 Tips for Writing an Effective Plot Twist](#) by Suzannah Windsor
 - [How To Create A Plot Outline in 8 Easy Steps](#) by Glen C. Strathy
 - [How to plot a novel: 7 tips for success](#) via Now Novel

- [How to Write a Novel Plot that Grips your Reader via The Writers' Workshop](#)
- [Novel Plotting Worksheets](#) by Annie Neugebauer
- [Plot Generator](#) via Plot Generator
- [The 7 universal story plots that still entrance audiences](#) by Ffion Lindsay
- [The Best Advice on Plotting I've Ever Heard](#) by Janice Hardy
- [The Golden Rules for a Good Plot](#) via Scribendi

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Chapter 5

Story Structure

Story structure is the scaffolding on which you build your plot. It helps you lay out the events of your story in a way that flows well for readers and keeps your characters moving toward their destinies.

There are several standard story structures from which to choose, and there are also ways to customize structure based on the demands of your individual story.

The experts below can help you pick through the options and zero in on the structure that's right for you.

-
- [Writer's Cheatsheet to Plot and Structure](#) by Matt Herron
 - [Blake Snyder's Beat Sheet](#) by Tim Stout
 - [Classic Story Structure Begins with Plot](#) by Adam Sexton

- [How to Outline a Novel – Seven Point Story Structure via Writers to Authors](#)
- [How to Plot With the Three-Act Structure by Janice Hardy](#)
- [How to Structure A Story: The Eight-Point Arc by Ali Hale](#)
- [Short Story Structures: Several Ways Of Structuring Short Fiction by Karen Woodward](#)
- [Story Structure by Alexandra Sokoloff](#)
- [Story Structure in Short Stories by Philip Brewer](#)
- [Story Structure Series: #1 — Introducing the Four Parts of Story via Story Fix](#)
- [The Best Approach To Story Structure: From Aristotle to Dramatica by Glen C. Strathy](#)
- [The One Underlying Substance of All Story Structure Models: Bullshit by Lincoln Michel](#)
- [The Secrets of Story Structure \(Complete Series\) by K.M. Weiland](#)
- [Watch: 10 Films That Really Nail Story Structure by V Renée](#)

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Chapter 6 Setting

Setting is the backdrop against which your story takes place. It can include locale, time, date, day of week, cultural climate, weather, geography, and almost any number of other factors.

Setting goes a long way toward establishing the mood and tone of your story, so you need to put some work into getting it right.

The resources below can help you, *ahem*, set the table.

-
- [Building Your Story's Setting via Novel Writing Help](#)
 - [English 250 Fiction Unit: Setting by George Hartley](#)
 - [How to Describe the Setting in a Story via WikiHow](#)
 - [Literary Devices – Setting via Literary Devices](#)
 - [Narrative Elements – Setting](#)

- Setting—The Place and Time of Story by Beth Hill

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Chapter 7

Point of View

Point of view is the perspective of the narrator in your book and generally takes the first-person, second-person, or third-person form.

But which one is right for your story? And can you switch points of view as your plot unfurls?

These and other questions are answered in the expert advice below.

-
- [6 Tips to Choosing the Right Point of View](#) by Nancy Kress
 - [Different Types Of Point Of View](#) via The Beginning Writer
 - [Grammar Girl : First, Second, and Third Person](#) by Geoff Pope
 - [How to Write a Novel with Multiple Points of View](#) via NY Book Editors

- [Point of View via The Balance](#)
- [Point of View From My Point of View](#) by Alex Keegan
- [Point of View in Writing](#) by Joe Bunting
- [Point of View: The Complete Guide](#) by Harvey Chapman
- [Points of View in Fiction](#) via The Writers' Workshop
- [Science Fiction Writer Robert J. Sawyer: On Writing — Point of View](#) by Robert J. Sawyer
- [Tools for Writing: Points of View in Writing](#) via Aims Community College
- [What Is the Point of View of a Story?](#) by Ginny Wiehardt

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Chapter 8

Worldbuilding

Worldbuilding is the gradual reveal of all details — or at least most of the essential ones — about the universe where your characters dwell and in which your story takes place.

That may seem to be the same as *setting*, but worldbuilding is much more sweeping and includes all aspects of the universe you're creating — commerce, nations involved, interplanetary travel, modes of travel and on and on and on.

It's a complicated concept, and you have to take care not to lose your *story* in the quest for building a perfect world.

The resources below can help you navigate the choppy, expansive waters.

- 11 Tips for World-Building in Science Fiction and Fantasy by Laurence MacNaughton
- 7 Deadly Sins of Worldbuilding by Charlie Jane Anders
- An Impatient Writer's Approach to World Building by Victoria Strauss
- Fiction Writing: How to Create a Believable World for Your Characters by Tim Hillebrant
- Fictional World Building Begins with Imagining by Tina Dubinsky
- Five Foundations of World-building by Malinda Lo
- How to build a fictional world – Kate Messner by Kate Messner
- The Ultimate Guide To World-Building by Claire Bradshaw
- World-Building in Historical Fiction by Tim Weed
- Writing 101: Setting and Worldbuilding by Kaitlin Hillerich

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Chapter 9

Characters

Your **characters** are the lifeblood of your story. I mean, can you imagine writing anything at all *without* characters? Not unless you're a bad Minecraft fanfic author — even then, you'd have to write yourself into the tale.

But you have to get them right, or your story is doomed. Flat and boring characters will doom your tale, and so will overblown, unbelievable characters.

If you're having trouble striking the right balance and making your characters sing, the resources below can help get you back on track.

-
- [1000+ Ideas About Character Development on Pinterest via Pinterest](#)

- [5 Things You Need To Know About Character Development](#) by Bronwyn Hemus
- [Character Development Fundamentals to Create Characters Actors Want to Play](#) via ScriptMag
- [Character Development](#) Reddit via Reddit
- [Character development: 9 tips for convincing arcs](#) via Now Novel
- [How I Create Characters](#) by Melissa McPhail
- [How to Create a Character Profile](#) by The Lazy Scholar
- [Quotes About Character Development on Goodreads](#) via Goodreads
- [The Art of Character Development](#) by Sheree Rehema
- [The EPIGUIDE.COM Character Chart for Fiction Writers](#) by Kira Lerner and Toni Walker

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Chapter 10 Dialogue

Dialogue is vital to the success of your story, but for most authors, it's one of the toughest parts of writing.

The problem is, no matter how comfortable you are *speaking*, it feels unnatural to actually write down a conversation between people. *Especially* made-up conversation between *fictional* characters.

What often results are written discussions that feel stilted or overdone and that don't ring true to your readers' real-world experiences.

Part of the answer to overcoming this author's affliction is simply to practice writing dialogue, but first, you have to know *what* you should be practicing.

That's where the resources below come into play — they'll show you the ins and outs, the wrongs and rights of crafting fictional dialogue.

Your job is to digest this advice and then put it into *practice*, again and again and again.

-
- 10 Easy Ways to Improve Your Dialogue by Ali Luke
 - 13 movie dialogue rules to write great dialogues via What a Script!
 - 9 Easily Preventable Mistakes Writers Make with Dialogue by Joanna Penn
 - 9 Tricks to Make Your Dialogue More Organic by Rob Blair
 - Collaborating to Write Dialogue by Janis Cramer
 - How to Fix Really Bad Dialogue by Doug Richardson
 - How To Format Dialogue by Dax MacGregor
 - How to write dialogue in a story: 7 steps for great exchanges by Bridget McNulty
 - The #1 Best Tip to Writing Dialogue by Chazda Albright
 - Thinking About Writing: Effective Dialogue by Chip MacGregor
 - Tips for Writing Dialogue by Teddy Wayne

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Chapter 11

Scene Building

Scenes are the individual units of action that establish your characters' relationships and move your story through the plot you have laid out.

Scenes are where you do the real work of carrying out your story after all the planning is in the books.

If you can't write enthralling scenes that *compel* your reader to move to the next page, and then the next scene, your story won't have the impact you want it to have.

Check out the resources below if you need help making *your* scenes more captivating.

-
- [7 Tension-Building Tips for Writing Action Scenes](#) by Joan C. Curtis
 - [Crafting Memorable Scenes in Fiction](#) by Martina Boone

- [Create Scenes That Sizzle – 7 Essential Elements](#) by Martha Alderson, M.A.
- [Creating Scenes: Fiction’s Building Blocks](#) by Sue Bradford Edwards
- [How a Scene List Can Change Your Novel-Writing Life](#) by Monica M. Clark
- [How to Create Effective Scenes and Chapters in Your Novel](#) by Idrees Patel
- [The Fundamentals of Writing a Scene](#) by Jordan Rosenfeld and Martha Alderson
- [TURBO-CHARGE YOUR FICTION: WRITE SCENES TO HOOK READERS](#) by Angela Booth
- [Writing Fiction? What You Need To Know About Creating a Story Theme and Believable Scene Transitions](#) by Candace Sinclair

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Chapter 12 Conclusion

Will these articles and experts guarantee that your next story is a rollicking success?

Heck no!

But the most important thing you can do to become a better author is to *keep learning* and then **apply** what you learn to your craft. There is hardly a better way to learn than by emulating people who have been where you want to go and done what you want to do.

And, when it comes to writing great stories, these resources are the cream of the crop. Eat them up, incorporate what you can into your own writing, and then get busy crafting your next story.

It just might be your best one yet!

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