



## Novel Blueprint Beat Sheet

Adapted from [Save the Cat! writes a Novel](#) by Jessica Brody & [Blueprint for a Book](#) by Jennie Nash

Dear Author,

The purpose of this Novel Blueprint Beat Sheet is to help you craft a character-driven novel through a meaningful cause-and-effect trajectory that will resonate with your reader. Note that some beats overlap and the location of each can change slightly to better fit your story, but you *will* need to include all fifteen beats for your novel to be compelling. Additionally, you will want to ensure that every part of your plot (what happens) has a point (why it matters) and logically leads to the next event/beat. Some should occur during a single-scene, while others will require multiple scenes, as noted on the Novel Blueprint Beat Sheet.

If you're unsure where to start, read my [Tips for writers](#) article titled [Character-Driven Plot](#) for a free downloadable Character Bible Toolkit so you can really get to know your protagonist(s). Determine their three main components (their biggest problem, want/goal, and need) to discover what story they want you to tell. Then focus on developing the Five Foundation Beats (Catalyst, Break Into 2, Midpoint, Break Into 3, and All is Lost). With those beats locked in, the rest should practically fall into place.

For more information on why I chose to combine these particular elements into what I call the Red Quill Book Plan, read my [Tips for writers](#) articles titled [The Heartbeat of Story](#) and [Pairing Plot with Point](#). I also highly recommend reading [Save the Cat! writes a Novel](#) by Jessica Brody and [Blueprint for a Book](#) by Jennie Nash.

Your editor,

*Mandi Summit*  
*Red Quill Editorial LLC*

*PS:* when you're ready for editing, [let's Discuss Your Manuscript](#) and secure your spot on Red Quill Editorial's calendar!



# Novel Blueprint Beat Sheet

## ACT 1

First 20% of Your Book (0 - 20%)

GOAL: Set up your protagonist's "before" world, before they are forced to make a change.

BEAT 1: Opening Image: (single-scene beat) 0 - 1%

A visual that instantly hooks your reader and sets the tone, style, and mood of your novel.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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BEAT 2: Theme Stated: (single-scene beat) 5%

A statement is made, typically by a supporting character, that voices your protagonist's greatest flaw and need for transformation. This lets the reader know what your book will be about (the life lesson your protagonist will learn by the end of the novel).

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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### BEAT 3: Setup: (multi-scene beat) 1 - 10%

Reveals your protagonist's everyday life including their goals and motivations (wants/external goals); shows your protagonist at home, work, and play and includes the A-Story characters (those who currently exist within your protagonist's world); and exposes your protagonist's flaws and the things that need fixing.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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### BEAT 4: Catalyst: (single-scene beat) 10%

The life-changing moment or inciting incident that sets the story in motion by forcing your protagonist to make a choice or a change. It's important to note that the Catalyst must be something that happens *to* your protagonist. Make it BIG.

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**BEAT 5: Debate: (multi-scene beat) 10 - 20%**

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction, and for every catalyst, there is a debate. Your protagonist reacts to the life-altering catalyst from the last beat, often reluctant at first (no one accepts change right away). This beat may also include physical, mental, and emotional preparation for the journey.

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• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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~~~ End of Act 1 ~~~

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## ACT II

Middle 60% of Your Book (20 - 80%)

GOAL: Immerse your protagonist in a new world, during which they go somewhere new or try something new as they attempt to fix things the wrong way (wants/external).

### BEAT 6: Break Into Two: (single-scene beat) 20%

This is the point of no return where your protagonist determines to accept the challenge by stepping into a new world and way of thinking. This must be their *choice*.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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### BEAT 7: B-Story: (single-scene beat) 22%

The secondary story or a subplot that often involves love, friendship, or mentorship is introduced. This includes the B-Story character(s) whose purpose is to bring out your protagonist's flaws, make them *want* to change, and guide them in learning the theme (life lesson/point) of the novel.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**BEAT 8: Fun and Games: (multi-scene beat) 20 - 50%**

This is the biggest beat in your entire novel and focuses on delivering the "promise of the premise," often used in the blurb. Vary the action here with a "bouncing ball" narrative of up, down, up, down, etc., but ensure there is an overall direction toward either success or failure (a mostly upward or downward path). Show your protagonist either seemingly succeeding or failing in this new upside-down world as they pursue their goal (wants/external).

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Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_

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Point: \_\_\_\_\_

### BEAT 9: Midpoint: (single-scene beat) 50%

Predictably, the midpoint is the halfway mark of the story, the second act, and your protagonist's transformation. Although this is a single-scene beat, it is the pivot point of your novel and should pack a punch. It *must* include:

- a) **False victory/Defeat:** Depending on the general trajectory of your protagonist's path in the Fun & Games beat, your protagonist will now experience either a false victory (upward path) or a false defeat (downward path). Maybe they realize they will never get what they want, or maybe they do get what they want but realize it's not what they expected or really need. Either way, your protagonist still hasn't learned the theme and there is more growth to come.
- b) **Raise the Stakes:** This is the time to raise the stakes and increase the tension by adding a ticking clock, ramping up the love story, throwing in a surprise twist, or having the protagonist attend a big celebration.
- c) **A-Story Meets B-Story:** It's also necessary to have your A-Story (external) and B-Story (internal) intersect in some way here, offering a subtle shift from your protagonist's wants (external) to their needs (internal).

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• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_

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Point: \_\_\_\_\_



### BEAT 10: Bad Guys Close In: (multi-scene beat) 50 - 75%

As the second largest beat of your novel, your protagonist will now follow the opposite trajectory from the Fun & Games beat. If they were on a mostly upward path before, they will now travel downward, or vice versa. Despite the overall trajectory, you should again use the "bouncing ball" narrative throughout this beat to keep your readers on their toes.

Continually increase the stakes and tension as the bad guys close in and your protagonist heads toward the final showdown of the climax. Keep in mind that these bad guys can be literal or figurative; external or internal; a person, thing, or even a force—whatever is getting in the way of your protagonist reaching their goal.

• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_

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Point: \_\_\_\_\_

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• Plot: \_\_\_\_\_



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Point: \_\_\_\_\_

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### BEAT 11: All Is Lost: (single-scene beat) 75%

In this rock-bottom catalyst beat, the thing your protagonist most feared comes true, and now all hope is seemingly lost. It's important to note that this must happen *to* your protagonist, but it should also be at least somewhat your protagonist's fault because they *still* haven't learned the theme. Make it REAL and make it BIG (bigger than the original Catalyst). A "whiff of death" can assist with this, whether in the form of characters or a pet (almost) dying, a dead plant, or the death of a relationship or career. Whatever shape it takes, something must end here. Now your protagonist is worse off than when they started.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_
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Point: \_\_\_\_\_

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### BEAT 12: Dark Night of the Soul: (multi-scene beat) 75 - 80%

And so begins the wallowing, anger, denial, and reflection with this reaction beat. Your protagonist needs to process everything that has happened so far and try to understand why they haven't been able to achieve their goal to improve their life. This is their darkness-before-the-dawn moment and the *only* time in the story where your protagonist is allowed to move backward into something familiar or return to where they started—getting back together with an ex, visiting their family home, returning to a previous job, or reuniting with an old friend. The problem is that this space no longer *feels* familiar or safe because, while it has remained the same, your protagonist has changed.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_



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Point: \_\_\_\_\_

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~~~ End of Act II ~~~  
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## ACT III

Final 20% of Your Book (80 - 100%)

GOAL: Illustrate the fusion of your protagonist's "before" world with their "after world," where they finally figure out what they actually need to fix things the right way (needs/internal) as they transform into a better person.

**BEAT 13: Break Into Three: (single-scene beat) 80%**

This is the breakthrough moment where your protagonist has a "Dark Night epiphany." Through reflection in the last beat, new information comes to light or something already in front of them becomes clearer. They finally learn the theme (life lesson) and understand how to fix things the right way.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_

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Point: \_\_\_\_\_

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### BEAT 14: Finale: (multi-scene beat) 80 - 99%

This is the moment your reader has been waiting for: the big showdown between your protagonist and their nemesis (remember, this could be a person, thing, or force), after which your protagonist is completely transformed. For your novel to be compelling and really resonate with your reader, your protagonist must work hard for the win in this Finale (or if they fail instead, ensure there is a point or a life lesson to be learned from it). The Finale is an intricate beat and arguably the most important one of your entire novel. It's best broken down into five sub-beats.

- a) Gathering the Team
- b) Executing the Plan
- c) High Tower Surprise
- d) Dig Deep Down
- e) Executing the New Plan

**Sub-Beat 1 – Gathering the Team:** Your protagonist makes any necessary amends and gathers allies or tools to carry out their plan.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Sub-Beat 2 – Executing the Plan:** The plan is put into action. There is a sense of impossibility, while at the same time a growing sense of accomplishment as they make progress. If your protagonist gathered a team, they start to drop off (B-Story Sacrifice), because in the end, your protagonist must do this alone.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Sub-Beat 3 - The High Tower Surprise: Curveball!** Just when your protagonist believes they might succeed, something happens (another catalyst) to check their confidence and remind them it can't possibly be that easy.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_

Point: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Sub-Beat 4 - Dig Deep Down:** Your protagonist reacts to the catalyst of the last sub-beat by altering their plan and determining what to do next. Through the major flaw your protagonist had to overcome, they now provide proof that they've changed by taking a leap of faith and deciding to do something they never would have done at the beginning of the story (theme/life lesson).

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_

Point: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Sub-Beat 5 - Executing the New Plan:** Your protagonist puts their altered plan into action, proving once and for all that they are transformed for the better. They have earned their victory.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_

Point: \_\_\_\_\_



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**BEAT 15: Final Image: (single-scene beat) 99 - 100%**

Opposite to the Opening Image, the Final Image is one last view of your now-transformed protagonist living their new life in their newly fused Act III world. This mirror image reflects exactly how much your protagonist has grown since the opening of the novel.

- Plot: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- Point: \_\_\_\_\_  
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~~~ End of Act III ~~~  
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THE END.