



Romance Beat Sheet

Adapted from [Romancing the Beat](#) by Gwen Hayes

Dear Author,

within any romance, you will find four major beats—the meet-cute, falling in love, fleeing from love, and fighting for love.

Most often, each romance novel will hit all four beats, but sometimes an author will choose to do a slow-burn romance over a series of novels, where each of the beats are dragged out and the protagonist doesn't experience their happily ever after until the final novel. Either way, to qualify as a romance, it will need to move through all four beats by the time the story concludes, ending with either an HEA (happily ever after) or an HFN (happy for now).

The following romance beat sheet focuses on the four main romance beats and their sub-beats. You can weave these beats into their proper place in whatever other fiction beat sheet you choose to use, like the downloadable Save-the-Cat beat sheet in my [Tips for writers](#) article titled [The Heartbeat of Story](#). Because Save the Cat is my personal favorite, I've included notes in this romance beat sheet for where I most often find the main romance beats when blended with Save the Cat, but understand that it can vary from novel to novel.

For more information on the romance beats, read my [Tips for writers](#) article titled [Four Beats of Romance](#).

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!



Romance Beat Sheet

where two people go from hole-hearted to whole-hearted.

Romance Beat 1: *The Meet-Cute*

objective: introduce the protagonists, the setting, and the romance arc.

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act 1, Beats 1 - 3: opening image, Theme Stated, & Setup)

- Introduction to Protagonist A (Furthest to Grow)

what is their typical life like? How can you hint that it's all about to change?

what makes them compelling? Are they funny, skilled, suffering a hardship, etc.?

what do they want? what do they think will improve their life?

what do they need? what is holding them back from love?



- **Introduction to Protagonist B (Love Interest)**

what is their typical life like? How can you hint that it's all about the change?

what makes them compelling? Are they funny, skilled, suffering a hardship, etc.?

what do they want? what do they think will improve their life?

what do they need? what is holding them back from love?

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act 1, Beat 4: Catalyst)

- **Meet-Cute**

what inciting incident occurs to bring about the protagonists' first meeting? This can be cute, sexy, or even ugly.



(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act 1, Beat 5: Debate)

- **No way 1 (Choose one or Both)**

what argument does Protagonist A give against allowing themselves to fall in love with Protagonist B?

(Optional) what argument does Protagonist B give against allowing themselves to fall in love with Protagonist A?

- **Adhesion**

what is forcing the protagonists together despite their objections to love? Think about popular forced proximity tropes, such as partnering on a work project, entering into a pretend relationship, being snowed in at the lodge, or going on the run together.



Romance Beat 2: Falling in Love

objective: Encourage your readers to fall in love with the protagonists while they fall in love with each other.

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act II, Beats 6 - 8: Break Into Two, B-Story, Fun & Games)

- **No way 2**

(If you chose one in No way 1) what argument does Protagonist B give against allowing themselves to fall in love with Protagonist A?

(If you chose both in No way 1) Restate your protagonists' arguments against falling in love.

- **Inkling of Hope**

Poke holes in your protagonists' argument against falling in love. Start tearing it apart by inserting an unexpected tender moment, disproving a false belief, sharing a personal truth, witnessing a good deed, or having one save or defend the other.



- **Deepening the Desire**

While your protagonist(s) is still hesitant and guarded, they have now gotten an inkling into what their relationship could be like. Show them no longer able to deny their feelings for the other by inserting lingering gazes, thoughts of love being possible, and opening up to each other just a tiny bit more.

- **Maybe This will work**

Your protagonists are becoming more vulnerable to each other and beginning to let their guard down. Have them consider would happen if they gave into their feelings for each other.

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act II, Beat 9: Midpoint)

- **Midpoint of Love**

Your protagonists see everything they want in each other. Show them riding high with a perfect morning after or an especially sweet moment with a deeper emotional connection than they have had so far.



Romance Beat 3: Fleeing from Love

objective: Demonstrate how stubborn human nature is to change by exploiting your protagonists' arguments against love from the first two beats (No way 1 & No way 2).

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act II, Beat 10: Bad Guys Close In)

- **Inking of Doubt**

Using your protagonists' arguments against love, hit them where it hurts with a small seed of doubt, like a misunderstanding.

- **Deepening Doubt**

That seed of doubt begins sprouting up with more evidence that your protagonists should never have let their guard down.

- **Retreat**

Now your protagonists are actively watching for signs in each other that prove their arguments against love are valid. They will see signs that aren't really there and begin pulling away. It's time to retreat to protect their hearts from being broken.



- **Shields up**

Your protagonists have created a self-fulfilling prophecy and are causing their false belief to appear to be true. They believe their first impression of each other was right all along and they should never have let their guard down. One of them might break up with the other in this scene or they may just be thinking about it.

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act 1, Beat 11: All Is Lost)

- **Break up**

If they didn't break up in the last scene, they do now. If they already broke up, then the protagonist who was most passive in the breakup is now reacting.



Romance Beat 4: Fighting for Love

Objective: Demonstrate your protagonists' enlightenment that their beliefs about love were wrong.

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act II, Beat 12: Dark Night of the Soul)

- **Dark Night of the Soul**

Your protagonists wallow in their heartbreak, upset with themselves for allowing it to go that far.

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act III, Beat 13: Break Into Three)

- **wake-up/Catharsis**

Your protagonists begin to realize they brought this hurt upon themselves and regret starts to sink in. They must tear down the wall guarding their heart and choose love over fear. Maybe they are worried that it might be too late, but they have to try.



(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act III, Beat 14: Finale)

- **Grand gesture**

One or both of your protagonists is determined to perform a risky grand gesture in an attempt to prove their love and convince the other to give their relationship a chance. This may involve a symbolic death (death of a career, pride, goal/dream, etc.) in favor of love. Think racing to the airport against a ticking clock, a public declaration that could lead to humiliation, giving up a career, or overcoming a major fear. "This beat is the moment your entire novel has been building to. Make it grand. Make it funny. Make it angsty. Make it whatever you want, but make it big." (Hayes, p71).

- **Whole-Hearted**

Your protagonists finally get their happily ever after (or at least a happy for now)! Use a "mirror moment" where you draw on something from the beginning to illustrate your protagonists' character arcs. Illustrate the contrast between where they began to where they are now.

(Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet: Act III, Beat 15: Final Image)

- **Epilogue (Optional)**

Many romances include an epilogue, a brief window into the protagonists' lives now that they have finally allowed themselves to fall in love. Think sharing a home, getting married, or having a baby. But be cautious not to make it too perfect or it won't be believable.



THE END.