

July 2024 Writer's Challenge –

How Structure and Outlines can Help to Organize Your Plot and the Story You've Chosen to Tell.

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Many writers don't outline because they don't see the point or don't know where the story is going until they get there. So, is it ever a good idea to start writing in earnest without an outline? Yes, and no. It's important to commit to a daily writing schedule. So, if there's no outline, that shouldn't stop you from getting down to writing. On the topic of having an outline, it's useful to view your outline as a type of safety net. It keeps you motivated, moving, and mindful. It's like the next thread that I can pick up the next day. This makes it easy for me to jump right into my writing each morning; with no writer's block.

To get started, you may want to look to a variety of author's whose work you enjoy reading and who impress you. Take note of the work that particularly moved you and outlines those stories. This may help to serve as a blueprint. See where the beats are.

Is there ever such a thing as way too much outlining slowing the creative process? Writers want to be aware not to back themselves into a corner, rather, rely on your outline as a bullet point, more like giving a title to a chapter you're ready to create. You can have fun with your blueprint by using colored pencils, color codes, highlighting, and the like. Allow yourself to move your pieces around. Ideally, your outline will serve as a type of seatbelt. You stay anchored, and hopefully you'll stay on task and get to your destination in a more expedient way.

Challenge: Using the following steps in order: A = Action, B = Background, D = Development (plot and meat of your story); C = Climax, rising action, key narrative burst, significant change; E = End, character may be different because of their journey.

Your essay does not have to be long, and, in fact, it can be brief. Before writing your story, long or short, design your blueprint.

Here's a few prompts:

1. Delay at the airport. Outline suggestions: Cause of delay, who's with you, what's the crisis, how is it solved. Outlines serve their purpose by allowing the writer to jot down details that spice up the storyline.
2. Nosebleed. What time of day? Cause? Where? Is there a trip to the emergency room? Was the problem solved? By whom? Is there a cure?
3. A quick grocery run that turns momentous. You run into an old friend. What words are exchanged? Could it be life-changing? Write your outline, and as you're doing this, the creativity will flow.

