

## NaNoWriMo Outline Overview

There are many different ways to create a story outline.

- Some people like to write bullet point lists
  - Just the main plot/character points
  - Does not have to be in chronological order, because this method is about getting the story beats down, not organizing them in any particular way
- A. Some people use a traditional, somewhat academic outline format.
- a. You may be familiar with this from school.
- B. This format is great for identifying main themes or arcs in the plot, as well as filling in the details of these moments.
- a. It utilizes a linear order more than the bullet points, because this method is about organizing the plot points in the order that they happen.
  - b. Point A literally leads to Point B

Some people use a method called storyboarding

This involves drawing or writing out ideas as scenes.

This method also involves a logical progression - not necessarily a linear order, but definitely it follows the order that the events appear in the story.

There are more varieties of outline, of course, so you should definitely pick the method that makes the most sense to you and works the best for your story idea!

Other methods:

- a. Roller coaster curve outline
- b. Chapter by chapter outline
- c. Character-based outlines instead of plot-based
- d. Pyramid outlines
- e. 3-5 Act structure outlines

Examples of most of these can be found here (click link): [NaNoWriMo Prep \(from NaNoWriMo Official Website\)](#)

How do I get started with my outline?

If you have never used an outline before, it may be best to try a little of everything until you find something that seems to work well for you. The NaNoWriMo Prep form linked above can be really helpful for that. If you already have a good idea of which outline format you like best, but you aren't sure of how to get started with the story outline, here are a few tips:

1. Think about your overall plot idea. Do you know where your character is at the beginning of the story? What are the circumstances that cause the plot to start? This is called the catalyst for the story. Then, do you know, generally, where you want the character to be at the end of the story? You don't have to have any details figured out just yet, but having a general idea of how the story ends is a good way to get started at this point.
2. Think about where you want the story to begin. Do you want the opening scene of the novel to be the chronological beginning of the story, or do you want to start in media res? This can be your first outline point in a bullet point or traditional outline format, as well as a storyboard or act structure format. Where (and when) does the story start?
3. You can try starting by making a simple list of things that you want to happen in the story. For instance, if you are writing a mystery novel, your list might look something like this: protagonist learns of mystery, decides to solve it, protagonist discovers clues, stakes are raised, another clue, protagonist's love interest gets involved, someone is in danger, more clues, a snag in the case (looks like they won't solve it), a breakthrough, protagonist confronts perpetrator (if mystery is a crime),

reveal of answers, justice/resolution for case, happily ever after for protagonist and love interest. Once you have this list written out, you can organize it into whatever order you want it to happen in the story, using either another list format or one of the other formats mentioned here. You can then flesh out your outline with specific details about characters and plot points.

Now that you have an idea of how an outline works, it's time to get started! You can use a pen and paper, or type it out in your preferred writing program.