



Logline, Plot and Treatment

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LOGLINE OR LOG LINE

A logline is a one-sentence summary or description of a movie. Loglines distill the important elements of your screenplay—main character, setup, central conflict, antagonist—into a clear, concise teaser.

Syd Field (2005) describes a logline as “the **DNA** of a screenplay,” where the essence of the story must be distilled into a short summary to quickly communicate what the film is about and why it’s compelling.

Good Logline should be able to immediately communicate the story's genre, tone, and basic structure, setting the stage for the audience's expectations and engaging their curiosity

4 PRIMARY PARTS OF A LOGLINE

[protagonist] + [inciting incident] + [protagonist's goal] + [central conflict]

CREATE STRONG PROTAGONISTS

The first part of your logline should give us insight into who your movie is about.

A wannabe child beauty queen.

A beautiful assassin.

A culinary-gifted rat.



DESCRIBE THE INCITING INCIDENT

The inciting incident is the jolt from the blue that sets your story in motion. This is also sometimes referred to as the “call to adventure” or “catalyst.”



HIGHLIGHT YOUR PROTAGONIST'S GOAL

The hero's goal is the primary motivation for the rest of the action. In the logline, outline what the hero wants or needs with a few quick words. This aligns the reader with the character's goals, and creates a level of investment and empathy when obstacles stand in the character's way. Goals can range from a character wanting to kill their nemesis to wanting to find her birth father or reversing the zombie outbreak.



HIGHLIGHT YOUR PROTAGONIST'S GOAL

The protagonist's goal establishes the stakes and narrative momentum, giving readers an idea of what is at risk. For example, in Inception (2010), the goal is "to plant an idea in someone's mind," which reveals the high-stakes, sci-fi nature of the story.



CREATE A COMPELLING CENTRAL CONFLICT

Write down a list of possible obstacles that will get in the way of your character achieving his or her goal.

It can be including the stake : What is at risk if the protagonist fails.



SPEED (1994)



A young police officer must prevent a bomb exploding aboard a city bus by keeping its speed above 50 mph.

INSIDE OUT (2015)



“When young Riley moves to a new city, her emotions—Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust—struggle to guide her through the transition, leading to an adventure within her mind.”

THE WOLF OF WALL STREET (2013)



An unemployed stockbroker amasses a fortune committing securities fraud and indulges in excessive sex-and-drug orgies until federal authorities catch up with him.

Based on the true story of Jordan Belfort, from his rise to a wealthy stock-broker living the high life to his fall involving crime, corruption and the federal government.

SPEED (1994)



A young police officer must prevent a bomb exploding aboard a city bus by keeping its speed above 50 mph.



WHAT IS A STORY PLOT?


The plot is what happens in a story. However, a plot is not a simple sequence of events.

- A strong plot is centered on one moment—an interruption of a pattern, a turning point, or an action—that raises a dramatic question, which must be answered throughout the course of the story. This is also known as plot A.
- Every element of the plot—each scene, each line—exists in service of answering that question. There are myriad plot devices that can bolster the main story; these are considered subplots.

7 TYPES OF PLOTS

THE NATURE OF THE DRAMATIC QUESTION INFORMS THE PLOT AND WHAT KIND OF STORY IT WILL BE. ARE THE CHARACTERS THREATENED BY SOMETHING EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL? WHAT GENRE WILL THE STORY BE?






1. **Tragedy.** In a tragedy, your main character should undergo a major change of fortune – almost always from good to bad, happy to sad. Tragic characters have to suffer.


2. **Comedy.** In comedy, even though your characters have defects, their defects should never wind up being painful or destructive. Comic characters make it through unscathed.

3. **Hero's Journey.** In a "hero's journey," the hero of a story must undergo two things: recognition and reversal of a situation. Something has to happen from the outside that inspires the hero in a way that he/she didn't realize before. Then he has to undertake a quest to solve the situation.



4. **Rags to Riches.** Remember Cinderella? The classic fairy tale follows a simple rags-to-riches plot: the protagonist is downtrodden, impoverished, or otherwise struggling, and through a series of events— either magical, like in the case of Harry Potter, or more realistic, like in *Great Expectations* — achieves success. This type of plot often features a happy ending.

5. **Rebirth.** The rebirth style of plot follows a character's transformation from bad to good. The character will frequently have a tragic past that informs their current negative view of life, however, a series of events (usually set in motion by the protagonist or a narrator) will help them see the light. See: Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, or the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*.



6. **Overcoming the Monster.** Otherwise known as the good versus evil plot, this type of story features a protagonist (good) fighting an antagonist (evil). The protagonist can be a singular character or a group united in their mission. The antagonist is generally a big, bad evil (like Darth Vader in Star Wars) who continuously throws obstacles in the protagonist's way—until the final battle.

7. **Voyage and Return.** This plot is a simple point A to point B and back to point A plot. The protagonist sets off on a journey, only to return to his or her starting point having gained wisdom and experience (and sometimes treasure too). Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* is a beloved contemporary illustration of this plot.



9 WAYS TO RAISE THE STAKES IN YOUR PLOT

Whatever situation your hero is facing at the start of the middle section should become worse.


If the story itself falters, remember that the stakes have to grow increasingly higher for your protagonist. Throw obstacles into their path, even if you don't know how they'll surmount them. Sometimes, forcing your characters into a corner can stimulate your problem-solving skills.

1. Create physical danger.
2. Create secondary characters who bring new tensions to the story.
3. Introduce new problems.
4. Give a character a complicated history or situation.
5. Create obstacles for your hero.
6. Complicate things.
7. Remind the reader of the stakes.
8. Find ways to keep your protagonist moving from one location to another.
9. Add time pressure, like a ticking bomb.



3 WRITING EXERCISES TO CREATE A GOOD PLOT FOR YOUR STORY

Now that you have the elements of plot down, try your hand at writing your own story with the following exercise.

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1. Ten events that might spark a story. They don't have to be big: these could be things that happened to you or someone you know, or items you read about in the news.
 2. Ten characters. These might be characters you've already worked with, people you've seen but never spoken to, or perhaps historical figures that fascinate you.
 3. Ten classic stories: folktales, fairy tales, myths, or maybe family stories that were passed down to you. No need to detail them; just list a few words that sum up the story.



WHAT IS A TREATMENT?

A treatment is a document that presents the story idea of your film before writing the entire script. Treatments are often written in present tense, in a narrative-like prose, and highlight the most important information about your film, including title, logline, story summary, and character descriptions.



THE 4 ELEMENTS OF A FILM TREATMENT


Treatments contain detailed descriptions of the setting, theme, character roles, and plot in order to show how the story will play out for the audience. There are four main things a treatment should contain:


1. Title. Give your treatment a title, even if it's just a working title.
2. Logline. This is a short sentence summarizing the premise. Learn how to write a logline [here](#).
3. Plot summary. How long you want your story summary to be depends on you as a writer—some writers give short one-page summaries, while others use 70 pages to tell their film's story.
4. Key characters. Provide a breakdown of key characters, including their arch or how their character develops in the story.



HOW TO WRITE A TREATMENT IN 6 STEPS

While there are different ways to style your treatment, there are a few general steps most writers take.

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- Start with your title. A title should be something that encapsulates the essence of your story. Some titles use the characters (“The 40 Year Old Virgin”), the setting, (“Manchester by the Sea”), or the premise, (“Get Out”). Titles can also be metaphorical, (“Silence of the Lambs”). Titles should be as original as possible, and not sound like or be too close to an existing film title.
 - Compose your logline. A logline is just a brief sentence (or two) that captures the general premise of your movie. In your log line, include who the protagonist is and what they’re up against in their world. This condensed summarization of the overall concept of your film should make the reader want to see the rest.
 - Summarize the concept. Here is your chance to expand on the shorter log line, and provide the next step in understanding how the film will play out. This is also where you can establish theme, tone, and cite any relevant background related to the conception of your story.

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- Set up the main characters. Who is going to be in this story? What do these characters want? How will they develop? Give a brief version of their possible arcs. You want to emotionally invest the reader by giving them a sense of who these characters are and what will become of them.
 - Explore the acts. Once you've set up the world and its inhabitants, it's time to delve into the story itself. Write out how the story begins: What do we open on? Who do we see? Tell the tale of your film as if it were a short-story, and include the juicy moments to keep the reader engaged in the world you've created.
 - Epilogue. The final paragraph of your treatment wraps up the narrative. State what the ending is, how the premise concludes, what happens to all the characters, and what they learn (if anything). Here is where you tie up any loose ends, and give the reader a sense of what will now happen to this world.

THANK YOU