Novel Outline Template

Fill the story skeleton first (the two pinch points are optional), then plan chapters. Gray italic rows are an invented example (The Salt Ledger); type over them. Free to use. From litmemo.com/en/templates/story-outline

1. Three-act skeleton

Key moment	% of book	What it is	What happens in your book
Hook	*0%*	*The first scene: the protagonist in their normal world, doing something that shows who they are.*	
Inciting incident	*10%*	*The event that breaks the normal world. It happens to the protagonist.*	
First plot point	*25%*	*The protagonist chooses to engage. End of Act One; no way back.*	
Pinch point 1 (optional)	*37%*	*The opposition shows its strength and raises the pressure.*	
Midpoint	*50%*	*A reversal or revelation that changes what the protagonist wants or knows.*	
Pinch point 2 (optional)	*62%*	*The opposition strikes again, harder.*	
Second plot point	*75%*	*The lowest point, or the last piece of information. End of Act Two.*	
Climax	*90%*	*The confrontation the book has been building toward.*	
Resolution	*100%*	*The new normal. Echo the hook so the reader can measure the change.*	

2. Where the key moments fall, in words

Book length	First plot point (25%)	Midpoint (50%)	Second plot point (75%)	Climax (90%)
60,000	*15,000*	*30,000*	*45,000*	*54,000*
80,000	*20,000*	*40,000*	*60,000*	*72,000*
100,000	*25,000*	*50,000*	*75,000*	*90,000*

120,000	*30,000*	*60,000*	*90,000*	*108,000*

Your book: _____ words ÷ _____ words per chapter = _____ chapters.

3. Chapter outline

Ch	Working title	What happens / what changes	Plants (→ ch.) / payoffs (← ch.)	Target words	Status
1	*Closing the Books*	*Maren closes the Gullhaven cannery's books for the last time and finds a $40 cash advance to her father every month since 1987, with no receipt.*	*→14 the $40 advance*	*2,800*	*Final*
2	*Low Tide*	*A week in Maren's life: her late father's empty house, her brother Eli, and the boats she has refused to step onto since she was nine.*	*→24 she won't go on the water*	*2,600*	*Final*
3	*The Funeral*	*At the funeral, harbormaster Calvin Reese asks her, quietly, for "the green ledger."*	*→14 Reese's limp ("a fall on the ice")*	*3,000*	*Revision*

Status: Concept · Draft · Revision · Final