



reedsy

# Short Story Template

To write a successful short story, you'll need to develop strong characters and clear conflict within less than 7,000 words. Use this template to create a satisfying story arc.

## Part 1 – The Basics

Develop these four essential elements to set the stage for your short story.

### 1.1. CHARACTERS

Who are your main character(s)? What is their relationship? What do they want?

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### 1.2. POINT OF VIEW

Will you write in the first, second, or third person? If you choose third person, is your narrator omniscient or focused on one character?

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### 1.3. CONFLICT

What is the main problem or conflict facing your character(s)?

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### 1.4. SETTING

Where does your story take place? How does it challenge or contextualize your characters?

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**HOW TO CRAFT A KILLER SHORT STORY**  
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## Part 2 – The Plot

In a condensed space, you need to cut to the conflict quickly. Plan out these five essential story beats.

### 2.1. THE OPENING

What image, dialogue, or scene will your story open on? Make sure it hooks the reader and introduces something important about the character(s) or conflict.

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### 2.2. THE PROBLEM

You might choose to open with your story's main conflict or problem. If not, plan how you'll introduce it.

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### 2.3. THE ESCALATION

How will the story escalate after you've introduced the problem? Plan how you'll raise the stakes through dialogue, obstacles, or urgency.

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### 2.4. THE CLIMAX

Describe the moment when your character(s) finally face the problem.

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### 2.5. THE ENDING

Whether you choose to resolve the problem or end on a more ambiguous note, plan an ending that shows how the climax has changed your character(s).

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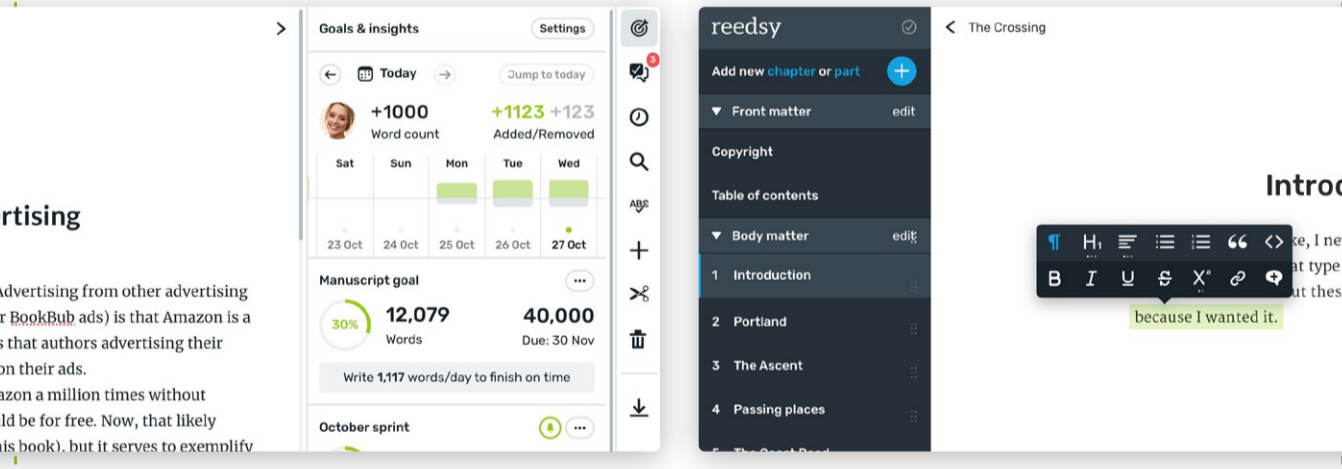
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Need help plotting your story?

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## Part 3 – Themes and Message

For personal reference, write down some notes on the larger themes of your story.

**My story is about...**

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**The important images, symbols, and descriptions in my story include...**

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**By the end, the reader should understand that...**

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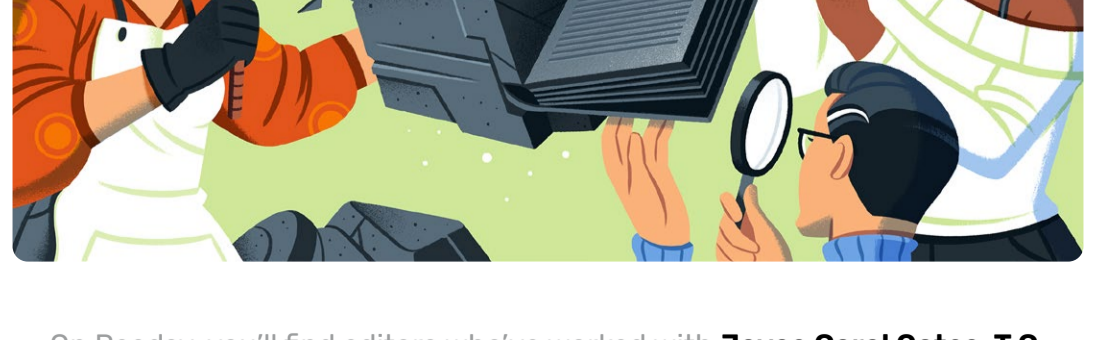
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## Congrats on your short story outline!

Now all it's left is the writing...and the editing. Once you have a strong draft, work with a professional to polish your story for submission.



On Reedsy, you'll find editors who've worked with **Joyce Carol Oates, T.C. Boyle, and other superstar short story writers**. Sign up to meet them.

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