

The Everdawn City Magic Academy's Guide to Writing Fantasy Stories

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How to Use This Fantasy Writing Guide

Different writers need different things. The goal here is to give you lots of tips, tricks, and tools that can help you write a fantasy story. Then, you choose which things to use and in which order.

Let me repeat that. You do not have to start at the beginning, or even use every page of this. Use what you think will be helpful and leave the rest.

Some writers like to start by planning out their setting. You can skip to that part of the guide and build your fantasy world. Others prefer to begin with an interesting character. If that's you, then start with the character building guide. Eventually, it will all come together and you'll have all the pieces you need to make a great story in a fantastical world with amazing and heroic characters.

Some of this guide will be focused on planning your story. Others will be more about your own writing habits so that you can have a great time writing the story once you have a plan.

Planning the Plot

Guide to the Story Planner

This page is going to guide you through how each section of the story planner works and what you can do to use it as a helpful tool to help plan out your story.

Idea: This is where you write that first little spark of an idea. It doesn't have to be complete, or even fully make sense at first, but that's okay. You can add to it, change it, and make it what it needs to be as you write.

Working Title: Coming up with a good title is hard. A working title is just a temporary title that you give something while you're working on it. Your working title could be something that you think might become the title later, or it could be something that definitely won't become the real title, but it's a good placeholder for now.

Now we're getting into planning the story itself. The planner is split up into three sections, Beginning, Middle, and Ending, but some call it Act I, Act II, and Act III. There are lots of ways to structure a story, and this planner combines aspects of a few of them such as the Hero's Journey created by Joseph Campbell, the three act structure, formalized by Syd Field, and the Save the Cat "Beat Sheet" created by Blake Snyder. If you want to learn more about story structure, you should definitely check them out.

Guide to the Story Planner

Normal Life: This is where the main character is going through life before the adventure begins. Here is a good place to give some exposition so we know who the main character is and some important information about them and the world the story takes place in before things get started.

Call to Adventure: Something happens that kicks off the action of the story. The main character has a choice to follow the call and begin their adventure. Sometimes they're reluctant.

Getting Help: The main character has begun their adventure. They get help that might take the form of a mentor, training, or their friends.

Early Challenges: Their adventure isn't easy, but this isn't the toughest challenge that they'll face. Think of it like the beginning of a video game where the first few levels might not be as tough as the boss battle.

Growing and Learning: The main character has overcome some challenges, and is learning and growing. Now is a good time to show some of that growth.

Guide to the Story Planner

Greatest Challenge: This is where they face the final boss battle. They confront the problem in the story or the antagonist. This should be one of the most exciting parts of the story.

Darkest Moment: The main character is struggling, and suffers a huge setback. This is the moment where readers are going to worry if the main character is going to be able to succeed.

Triumph: They take everything they've learned and the ways they've improved over the course of the story, and they win!

Returning and Reflecting: The main character begins the journey home, and they reflect on everything they've gone through and how it's made them grow and learn as a person.

Life is Different Now: The main character returns to their normal life, but they're different now. A lot of times, you'll see them face a similar situation as in the beginning of the story, but they handle it differently. In a lot of kids stories, you may see the main character get bullied at the beginning of the story and they don't stand up for themselves, and then at the end of the story the bully tries again, but the main character stands up for themselves.

My Story Planner	
Idea	
Working Titles	
Events	
Beginning	
Normal Life	
Call to Adventure	
Getting Help	

Story Planner Title Page 2	
Middle	
Early Challenges	
Growing and Learning	
Greatest Challenge	
Darkest Moment	
Triumph!	
Ending	
Returning and Reflecting	
Life is Different Now	

Creating Your Characters

Guide to the Character Planner

This is a tool I use to plan out characters for a story. It's also useful to look back at as you write so you can remember certain details as you write. Here's an explanation of how to use each section of the planner.

Name: The character needs a name. Here's where you write it.

Age: This doesn't always have to be exact. You can just write kid or adult.

Role: Who are they in the story? The main character? The mentor? The antagonist? Write it here.

Physical Description: Here's where you can write or draw what the character looks like. What color hair do they have? How tall are they? How do they dress? This will help prevent you from accidentally switching certain details halfway through your story.

Traits: What words describe the character's personality? Brave, cowardly, impulsive, calm, compassionate, cruel, charismatic?

Motivation: What does the character want? Why do they do the things they do in the story?

Arc: A very short description of how the journey in the story changes them. You may say something like, "They go from being very fearful to becoming a brave leader."

On the following page, there are two character planners for you to print and use on your own, or just draw it in your own writer notebook.

Characters

Name:	Age:	Role:
Physical Description:		
Traits:		
Motivation:		
Arc:		

Name:	Age:	Role:
Physical Description:		
Traits:		
Motivation:		
Arc:		

Characters

Name:	Age:	Role:
Physical Description:		
Traits:		
Motivation:		
Arc:		

Name:	Age:	Role:
Physical Description:		
Traits:		
Motivation:		
Arc:		

Types of Characters Stories Need

You don't need every single one of these in every story, but it's a good guide for the types of characters that often show up in stories.

The Hero	
The Villain	
The Mentor	
The Love Interest	
The Sidekick	

Types of Villains

Here are some ideas for types of villains that could show up in your fantasy stories.

The Mastermind

This villain is smart, manipulative, and plans ahead. They may be a highly educated wizard, or a brilliant strategist.

The Monstrous

This villain is simple. It's a big strong monster. It doesn't need to be smart, or even have a great plan. The fact that it's big and powerful is enough to make them dangerous.

The Fallen Hero

This type of villain wasn't always bad. They were a hero and then something happened to them that changed them. Maybe they were magically corrupted. Perhaps after years of fighting evil, they gave up and switched sides. Maybe they failed on an important quest and it changed them completely.

The Mad Scientist

Much like the mastermind, this villain is very smart. They're trying to use science and technology to change the world or to give themselves power. Maybe they've found a way to blend magic and technology to create an army of robotic henchmen. Maybe they've created a potion that can turn someone into a monstrous beast.

The Rival

The rival is a character who is similar to your hero, but goes against them in important ways. This type of villain may have a redemption and eventually join the hero.

**Building
Your World**

Building Your Fantasy Setting

Part of what makes fantasy so fun to write is that you get to build your own fantastical world, which can be both amazing and intimidating at the same time. It helps to start small, and build the world out from there. Here's a little flowchart to help you get started.

Start with...

A village

A magic school

Then think about the tone. How will this place feel?

Peaceful

Dangerous

Exciting

Dark

Whimsical

Then ask yourself, "How will I make my setting feel that way?"

Now that we have your setting started, go to the village page if you're starting with a fantasy village, or the school page for a magical school.

Building Your Fantasy Village

Who's in charge?

Next, ask who is in charge of this place? Does the village have a council of elders, or is there one person who is running things? Do they make decisions by voting, or do the people in charge choose for the other people there?

Where do people get what they need?

If buildings are made of wood and stone, where do they get the materials?

What do people eat and where does that food come from? Is there a farm, a series of gardens, do they hunt in the woods, or do they buy their food from another village?

If someone is sick or injured, is there a doctor or someone who can help them?

Who helps when there's danger?

Does the village have guards, if so, are there a lot or just a few people there to protect the village in times of danger?

What do people do for fun in your village?

Are there any fun festivities that are an important part of the village?

Building Your Fantasy School

Do students live there or commute?

Is it a boarding school where students live at the school and only go home for vacations? Or is it a school where students show up in the morning and go home at the end of the day? If so, how do they get to and from school?

Who's in charge?

Here are a few names for different types of people who are in charge of schools and the differences between them.

Principal:

Headmaster:

Dean:

What do they learn?

Do they just learn magic, or do they have math, reading, writing, and science too?

How difficult are the classes?

Are there any clubs, activities, or extracurriculars?

What do students do at this school besides go to class?

Building Your Magic System

Magic shows up in countless ways across the fantasy genre. Here are some questions to ask yourself when you decide how magic will work in your setting.

How common/powerful is magic in your setting?

Can everyone do magic?

What can magic do?

What can't magic do?

How do people feel about magic in your setting? Is it strange and frightening, or whimsical and fun?

How does someone get to do magic?

Are they born with it or do they have to study or train to get it?

If they're born with it, why do some people get it and some don't?

If they have to train or study, what does that training look like?

What does magic look like in your setting?

Do mages have to say magic words in order to cast a spell?

Do they need a tool like a spellbook, wand, or staff?

How bright, loud, and flashy is it when someone casts a spell?

Tips, Tricks, & Tables

Use Inspiration, but Make it Your Own

Copy/Paste my Superman/Goku example here...

Tables

Here are some tables of names, ideas, and other things that may help you out if you feel stuck.

Character Names			
Aleks	Agata	Aldona	Basia
Filip	Ceri	Alys	Elin
Jan	Gareth	Halldor	Elisa

Village Names			
Dragon's Nest	Wyndmere	The Valley of Light	Umaha Village
Magehaven	Duskbrook	Thunderfall	Bronzbury

Fantasy Village Jobs			
Apothecary	Farmer	Guard	Doctor/Healer
Innkeeper	Merchant	Blacksmith	Carpenter

Magical School Names		
Magespire Academy	Faehollow School	Ravenwing Academy
Springwood School	Grimsby School of Magic	Runeweaver School

Magical School Jobs			
Dean/Headmaster	Teacher/Professor	Student	Custodian
Chef	Apothecary	Nurse	Coach

A few notes and disclaimers

None of this guide was created using any form of generative AI. All writers, editors, and artists were lovely human creatives. We support human creativity and that's why we made this guide.

While this guide is available online and has been purposely made to be printer-friendly, it will be available in print soon.

A Note For Teachers: I am also an educator, so please feel free to reach out for additional resources, to discuss curriculum alignment, or to make suggestions for how I can improve this from your perspective in future editions.