

DAN WELL'S SEVEN-POINT SYSTEM

Building a Story

1. Have a story in mind.
 - a. Once you have a premise, develop a general idea by asking yourself the following questions:
 - i. Who are the characters?
 - ii. What is the setting?
 - iii. What is the major conflict?
2. Start at the end.

SEQUENCE	PLOT POINT	
STEP 2	HOOK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now that you know where you're going, figure out where you start. • One simple trick is to start with the opposite state: if a character is going to end strong, he should start weak. This creates an arc of progress. • This is another reason it's so vital to know your ending.
STEP 4	PLOT TURN 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just as the midpoint moves you from beginning to end, Plot Turn 1 moves you from beginning to midpoint. • Introduce the conflict • The character's world changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meet new people ○ Discover new secrets ○ Follow the white rabbit.
STEP 6	PINCH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Something goes wrong ○ Bad guys attack ○ Peace is destroyed • Force the characters into action • Often used to introduce the villain.
STEP 3	MIDPOINT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The midpoint is the exact center between the two states. It is the point at which the characters begin moving from one state to the other. • The characters move from reaction to action.
STEP 7	PINCH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply more pressure until the situation seems hopeless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A plan fails ○ A mentor dies, leaving heroes alone ○ The bad guys seem to win • These are the jaws of defeat from which your hero will be snatching victory. Make sure the teeth are sharp.
STEP 5	PLOT TURN 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move the story from midpoint to end. • At the midpoint you decide to do something, at the resolution you do it. So Plot Turn 2 is where you obtain the final thing you need to make it happen. • "The power is in you!"
STEP 1	RESOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything in your story leads to this moment • What is your story about? Where is your story going? • Make sure you know what kind of resolution you want.

The story is not complete! The above is a skeleton that needs to be fleshed out with: round characters, rich environments, the “ice monster” prologue”, try/fail cycles, subplots (depending on size).