

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Working Title:

Working Genre(s):

Working POV Specification:

Estimated Length of Book/Number of Sparks:

High-Concept Blurb:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

BEGINNING STORY SPARK:

Identifying the Main Character(s):

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Character Overviews:

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Description (Outside POV):

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Description (Self POV):

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Occupational Skills:

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Enhancement/Contrast:

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Symbolic Element:

First Character:

» *Character- and/or Plot-Defining:*

Second Character:

» *Character- and/or Plot-Defining:*

Third Character:

» *Character- and/or Plot-Defining:*

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Setting Descriptions:

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Character Conflicts (Internal):

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Evolving Goals and Motivations:

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

Plot Conflicts (External):

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

MIDDLE STORY SPARK:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Character Conflicts (Internal):

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Evolving Goals and Motivations:

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character

Plot Conflicts (External):

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

END STORY SPARK:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Character Conflicts (Internal):

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

CHECKLIST 1

STORY PLAN CHECKLIST

Evolving Goals and Motivations:

First Character:

Second Character:

Third Character:

Plot Conflicts (External):

COHESION CHECKLIST

How do you know if your characters, settings, and plots are truly cohesive? Once you finish your Story Plan Checklist, check the obvious first:

- Does your Story Plan Checklist read like a mini version of the novel?
- Are there any sections on the checklist you didn't fill out?
- Did you leave important characters off the list? If you put them on now and filled out their basics, and external and internal monologues, would the story be more cohesive?
- Are your story sparks intriguing enough, or can you punch them up more?
- Do your settings truly fit the characters and plot, or are they simply there?
- Do beginning, middle, and end internal monologues follow a progressive, logical course?
- Are resolutions logical? Predictable? Would a twist ending be more effective and exciting?

If you're satisfied that your story is cohesive, try one final test to be absolutely sure. On the next page, circle the answer that best fits your reaction to the question. Remember, anything but a resounding "Yes!" to each question means you need to go back to that element of your story and work in more cohesion.

COHESION CHECKLIST

QUESTION	ANSWER	AREAS TO REWORK
Are conflicts, goals, and motivations defined enough to pinpoint within a high-concept blurb?	Yes! No Not Sure	Conflicts Goals and Motivations High-Concept Blurb
Do internal and external conflicts, goals, and motivations intersect, collide, and impact?	Yes! No Not Sure	Internal and External Conflicts Goals and Motivations
Do characters have believable, identifiable, and compelling conflicts, goals, and motivations they care about deeply?	Yes! No Not Sure	Characters Conflicts Goals and Motivations
Are the character's conflicts, goals, and motivations urgent and causal (can't have one without the other)?	Yes! No Not Sure	Characters Conflicts Goals and Motivations Plot
Do the characters have the skills to achieve the goal if sufficiently motivated?	Yes! No Not Sure	Characters Occupations Goals and Motivations Plot

COHESION CHECKLIST

Are the main characters directly involved in resolutions of internal and external plot conflicts?	Yes! No Not Sure	Characters Conflicts Goals and Motivations Plot
If the story was set anywhere else, would the setting make the characters and plot less cohesive?	Yes! No Not Sure	Settings Characters Conflicts Goals and Motivations Plot

PUNCH CHECKLIST

Items that need to be attended to in the revision or in the editing and polishing.

STORY TITLE: _____

PROBLEM	HOW TO FIX	CHAPTER/PAGE #

REVISION CHECKLIST

You should pay special attention to a number of items as you're evaluating and revising:

- Structure
- Character, setting, and plot credibility and the cohesion of these elements
- Depth of conflicts, goals, and motivations
- Scene worthiness
- Pacing
- Effectiveness of hints, tension and suspense, and resolutions
- Transitions
- Emotion and color
- Hooks and cliffhangers
- Character voice
- Consistency
- Adequacy of research
- Properly unfurled, developed, and concluded story threads
- Deepening of character enhancements/contrasts and the symbols of these

EDITING AND POLISHING CHECKLIST

The process of editing and polishing involves any or all of the following:

- Rearranging sentences or paragraphs
- Showing, not telling, where most needed
- Tightening sentences and individual words (such as changing passive to active, and dull to impacting; cleaning up repetitiveness)
- Smoothing out roughness and making purple prose more natural
- Punching up tension and suspense
- Ensuring variation in sentence construction and length
- Word enrichment

Additionally, evaluate these areas as you edit and polish:

Description

- Have I interspersed character descriptions throughout scenes instead of in a single block?
- Have I described characters from another character's POV? (i.e., characters are not describing themselves)
- Have I mentioned descriptive details (hair and eye color, etc.) only once or twice within the story?
- Have I kept adjectives in descriptions to a minimum?

Dialogue

- Have I used external and internal dialogue effectively?
- Have I avoided dialogue bullets except to create extreme tension?
- Have I used dialogue to reveal my characters' personalities, goals and motivations?
- Does each character's dialogue fit that character?
- Would my story or the individual scenes be more effective if started with intriguing dialogue?
- Do all of my characters "speak" differently?

EDITING AND POLISHING CHECKLIST

Introspection

- Have I effectively used introspection to allow readers to get inside my characters' heads?
- Have I written with such emotional impact, readers will experience the same emotions as my characters?

Miscellaneous

- Have I varied my sentence length and structure?
- Have I written each sentence in an active voice that ensures the most impact?
- Are my scenes compellingly shown, with telling reserved only for those instances in which a scene doesn't need to be built around a minor point?
- Have I cleaned up as many adverbs as I can?
- Have I revised sentences to avoid as many of these overused words (*was/wasn't, were/weren't, did/didn't, have/haven't, is/isn't, are/aren't, to be/been*) as I can?
- Have I removed unnecessary clutter, particularly in changing *was going to* to *would*?
- Have I fixed as many overused idea stringers, like *when, as, realized, wondered, occurred, felt, seem, appear, and look*, as possible?
- Have I revised passive sentences that begin with *There was/were, It was, They were, He was*?
- If I'm writing a contemporary novel, have I used contractions?
- Do I have any long, hard-to-absorb sentences? Can they be revised as two or more sentences for more immediacy?
- Have I defined exactly what "it" is, especially at the beginning of sentences?
- Have I avoided careless repetition, unless the repetition drives the impact deeper?
- Does anything I've written make it sound like I used the thesaurus too freely?