

KN LITERARY ARTS  
**3 CLASSIC  
BOOK  
OUTLINES**

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# Congratulations!

The fact that you're interested in these outlines means your book is definitely on its way.

We are so excited for you!

A book can mean so many things:

**A dream coming true.**

**A life's work captured in a permanent way.**

**Or—just one less thing on the old bucket list.**

But that book isn't going to write itself.

That exciting, exasperating, and oh-so-rewarding job is YOURS.

Our hope is that this guide will help you gain momentum in your book-writing journey.

It's designed to offer you the first, most important thing you're going to need.

## **STRUCTURE.**

Structure is the extra-special secret sauce of the book-writing world.

But unless you're an insider, you might not know how important it is.

No matter what kind of book you're writing, the first step is the same. Writing the outline.

Your outline is a blueprint for your book. It's key to getting dialed in before you put pen to paper.

Don't get us wrong. "Free-writing" can be helpful to get the juices flowing. Jotting down ideas or vignettes can help capture your ideas in the early stages.

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But once you're ready to get serious about crafting a full-length book, it's time for a solid outline.

We're talking 15-20 pages of delicious organizational bounty.

Wait, really? An outline? (Cue freshman year English class PTSD.)

Surely you can get by without one...right?

Nope. Sorry. It's called planning ahead. And we all know what happens when we neglect to plan ahead.

**We get to Hawaii without a swimsuit.**

**We get to the big presentation without our handouts.**

**We get to the safari without the (ridiculously expensive) binoculars we bought specifically for this trip.**

We once worked with a writer who downloaded 80,000 words in three weeks and called it a book. His ideas were great—they were just all over the place and he didn't even know it.

We sent him back to the drawing board. That's right. He had to rewrite the whole darn thing.

New writers frequently make the same mistake: failing to craft a detailed outline prior to putting pen to page.

The result?

A book that feels like Swiss cheese—full of holes. And if a book doesn't hang together well, there's only one remedy.

Ya gotta write that puppy all over again.

How about we avoid such a fate for you? Let's get it right the first time—by writing an outline.

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**A properly prepared outline will help you:**

- **Focus your train of thought**
- **Cover all the relevant plot points and thought points**
- **Make strategic transitions between ideas**
- **Avoid tangents**
- **Craft consistent, symmetrical chapters**
- **Elegantly guide your reader toward the experience you want them to have.**

This handout contains three classic outline templates.

**Together they cover some of the most popular publishing categories:**

- 1. Prescriptive Nonfiction: self-help, health/wellness, business, how-to, spirituality**
- 2. Teaching Memoir: a combination of memoir and prescriptive nonfiction**
- 3. Fiction or Narrative Nonfiction: novel or memoir**

Using one of these outlines will prepare you to write the best book you're capable of writing. Ahem—the first time.

Enjoy the ride, and let us know if we can help you along the way!

Xx,  
*The KN Literary Team*



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## Outline Template #1 Prescriptive Nonfiction

A prescriptive nonfiction book speaks directly to the reader about their life.

It might offer a new technique for overcoming chronic pain, a new method for working through relationship difficulties, or a series of practices intended to cultivate more success at work.

Your outline may take many different forms, depending on your topic.

The outline we've included in this section is well suited for a book structured around a set number of principles or steps that ideally solve a problem for the reader.

Note that the number of chapters and number of subtopics within each chapter are entirely dependent on the topic you've chosen.

This outline is meant as an example—feel free to break it up or move things around.

Your job is to create an outline that's perfect for YOUR book!

## Outline ONE Starts Here!

Title

Subtitle

By \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction: "THE PROBLEM"

- Opening story to introduce the concept of this book
- Inspiring vision of what's possible with the book
- Background story—why should we trust that you know what you're talking about?
- What the reader can expect if s/he uses the info in this book
- How this book is organized (brief chapter-by-chapter overview)
- How to use this book/exercises
- What you hope for the reader as s/he dives into the book

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## Chapter 1: “INTRODUCING YOUR SOLUTION”

- Opening Story—what your/a client’s life was like before they did what you are suggesting
- Topic #1: Why do what you suggest?
- Topic #2: Overview of how to do it, the details of which will be explained in the chapters that follow
- Topic #3: What they need to know to get started
- Exercises/Practices
- Conclusion/Transition to next chapter

## Chapter 2: “FIRST STEP TOWARD SOLUTION”

- Opening story—choose one that represents what it looks like when your reader does what you are suggesting
- Overview of chapter theme
- Topic #1:
- Topic #2:
- Topic #3:
- Exercises/Practices
- Conclusion/Transition to next chapter

## Chapter 3: “SECOND STEP TOWARD SOLUTION”

- Opening story
- Overview of chapter theme
- Topic #1:
- Topic #2:
- Topic #3:
- Exercises/Practices
- Conclusion/Transition to next chapter

## Chapter 4: “THIRD STEP TOWARD SOLUTION”

- Opening Story
- Overview of chapter theme
- Topic #1:
- Topic #2:
- Topic #3:
- Exercises/Practices
- Conclusion/Transition to next chapter



## Chapter 5-8: “NEXT STEPS TOWARD SOLUTION”

- Opening Story
- Overview of chapter theme
- Topic #1:
- Topic #2:
- Topic #3:
- Exercises/Practices
- Conclusion/Transition to next chapter

## Conclusion/Chapter 9: “HOW TO TAKE WHAT THEY’VE LEARNED INTO THE WORLD”

- Overview of chapter theme (Note: In the last chapter, you can go deeper and/or speak at a higher level of abstraction)
- Topic #1:
- Topic #2:
- Topic #3:
- Benediction/vision for the reader



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## Outline Template #2 Teaching Memoir

A teaching memoir offers the reader specific wisdom, conveyed through your own life story.

It may be organized chronologically, with a different life lesson or set of lessons being revealed to the reader in the same order they were revealed to you, or it might be organized by theme, where you tell different stories from your life based around a set of lessons or principles you want to impart.

Note that the number of chapters and the number of teaching points you want to include are entirely up to you.

The topics suggested below are examples—they are meant to explain what a subtopic might look like. You are likely to choose entirely different subtopics!

While Exercises/Practices are included here at the end of each chapter, you may choose not to include them.

## Outline TWO Starts Here!

Title

Subtitle

By \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction: "WHO I AM AND WHY I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY"

- Opening story to introduce the theme of the book
- Inspiring vision of what became possible for you once you lived this story and learned these lessons
- Overview of your story—gives a high-level view of your narrative and why we should listen to you
- How the book is organized (brief chapter-by-chapter overview)
- How you recommend reading the book/undertaking the exercises (if any)
- What you hope for the reader as s/he dives into your story

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## Chapter 1: “FIRST STEP ON MY JOURNEY” or “FIRST LESSON I LEARNED”

- Opening Story—what your life was like before you set out on the journey, and the “call to adventure” that changed everything
- Topic #1: ex: How you didn’t heed the call, and what that cost you
- Topic #2: ex: What you had to overcome in order to take the first step
- Topic #3: ex: What you learned—and how the reader can avoid the mistake you made
- Exercises/Practices
- Wrap-up this lesson/Transition to next chapter

## Chapter 2: “NEXT STEP” or “LESSON/PRINCIPLE TWO”

- Opening story—the moment when you discovered the second principle and how it operates
- Overview of chapter theme/lesson/principle
- Topic #1: ex: Sub-story of how this lesson operated in your family of origin
- Topic #2: ex: What happens when you don’t apply this principle
- Topic #3: ex: Three ways to identify this lesson in your own life
- Exercises/Practices
- Wrap-up/Transition to next chapter

## Chapter 3: “THIRD STEP/PRINCIPLE/LESSON”

- Opening story
- Overview of chapter theme
- Topic #1:
- Topic #2:
- Topic #3:
- Exercises/Practices
- Conclusion/Transition to next chapter

## Chapter 4: “FOURTH STEP/PRINCIPLE/LESSON”

- Opening Story
- Overview of chapter theme
- Topic #1:
- Topic #2:
- Topic #3:
- Exercises/Practices
- Conclusion/Transition to next chapter



## Chapter 5-9: “NEXT STEP/PRINCIPLE/LESSON”

- Opening Story
- Overview of chapter theme
- Topic #1:
- Topic #2:
- Topic #3:
- Exercises/Practices
- Conclusion/Transition to next chapter

## Conclusion/Chapter 10: “HOW TO TAKE WHAT I’VE TAUGHT YOU INTO THE WORLD”

- Review of what they’ve learned
- Topic #1: ex: How to take these principles into the world— examples of others who have
- Topic #2: ex: Practical next steps for the reader, now that the book is over
- Topic #3: ex: What to expect, now that they have your tools for transformation
- Benediction/vision for the reader, based on where you are in your life today



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## Outline Template #3 Narrative Memoir or Novel

This template follows Christopher Vogler's simplification of the Hero's Journey, as originally conceived by mythologist Joseph Campbell.

Each of the plot points listed below is found in the major mythologies of almost every culture in human history.

It tells the story of being a human, so if you follow this journey your readers will recognize themselves regardless of whether they've walked in your specific shoes.

While they are listed here in the classic order, feel free to shuffle the plot points around as needed to fit your story.

For lots of good information about the hero's journey, check out Christopher Vogler's book, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*.

If you are writing fiction, consider plotting your story using the narrative arc and character development discussed below.

If you are writing a memoir, choose the period of your life where you experience the most conflict—and use the narrative arc here to tell us what it was like before, what happened, and what it was like afterward.

## Outline THREE Starts Here!

Title

By \_\_\_\_\_

### THE ORDINARY WORLD: Protagonist Is Seen In Their Native Environment

The reader is introduced to the protagonist in their ordinary world. The protagonist is naïve or unaware of greater forces in the world that are at odds, even as s/he is being impacted by the clash between them. While we like the character, we see how they need to grow emotionally or psychologically – that they are not yet “an adult” who can have the thing they want most. The reader clearly understands the “Prize” the protagonist is seeking, which will be “won” at the end of the story.

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## **THE CALL TO ADVENTURE: Protagonist is Forced From Ordinary World**

Something changes in the protagonist's circumstances, often in their external world (a loved one dies, they lose a job, their house burns down, etc.). Sometimes the change is internal (they find their life looks good on the outside, but inside they are unhappy). They've now seen too much to stay in the naïve world from which they came. Something has to change.

## **REFUSAL OF THE CALL: Protagonist Faced with a Difficult Choice**

The protagonist is torn between staying in the ordinary world, which has become unsatisfying or is no longer hospitable, and setting forth on an unknown journey. At first, the protagonist decides not to go—it seems too scary or dangerous. But soon s/he realizes the promise of attaining the "Prize" is worth whatever danger they might encounter. Eventually, the decision is made to leave.

## **MEETING WITH THE MENTOR: Protagonist Receives Helpful Information from a Guide.**

The protagonist finds their way to a guide or mentor, who often knows more than they do about the journey they are on. The mentor offers wisdom in the form of words, teachings, magical powers or tools that will help the protagonist along the way. We see the protagonist receive help from the outside, while simultaneously reaching within for their own source of wisdom.

## **CROSSING THE THRESHOLD: Protagonist Leaves the Ordinary World and Enters the Extraordinary World**

Here the protagonist enters a new world, full of different norms, values and expectations. Often the hero will encounter one or more threshold guardians—people, beings or events that challenge the hero's resolve to set forth on the journey. Once the protagonist has entered the new world, complications start to arise, or are foreshadowed.

## **TESTS, ALLIES + ENEMIES: Protagonist Meets His/ Her New World**

The protagonist develops relationships with characters in the new, unknown world s/he has entered—some of whom will be helpful, while others will try and thwart the hero's journey. The journey looks promising, but still daunting. The hero may experience a setback (an "early death") but continues on. Complications continue to grow over the course of this section, until the protagonist is brought to his/her next choice point.

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### **APPROACH: The Protagonist Prepares for the Trial**

The protagonist is led to the edge of the greatest trial they will encounter along the journey. S/he wants to turn back, but continues anyway, calling upon alliances built in the previous section for support. The complications increase to the point of crisis.

### **ORDEAL: The Protagonist Confronts His/Her Greatest Fear [Midpoint]**

The hero makes their way to the center of the non-ordinary world and faces their greatest fear. The fear is often the opposite of the prize s/he is seeking. All feels lost, and the future looks hopeless. The protagonist descends and hits bottom. A new choice must be made. This section is sometimes referred to as “the Death.”

### **THE REWARD/SEIZING THE SWORD: The Protagonist Transforms and Acquires the Prize He/She Has Been Seeking**

By facing their worst fear, the protagonist wins the prize they have been looking for from the beginning of the story—but they cannot yet enjoy it (and may not even recognize it yet) because they are still in the center of the non-ordinary world. Any celebration is tempered with the very real dangers that still lie ahead.

### **THE ROAD BACK: The Protagonist Is Driven to Complete the Journey**

Knowing they cannot enjoy the prize until they return to the ordinary world, the hero continues on. There is an urgency to their mission; they must get home or the journey has been for nothing. Obstacles arise; the hero may experience small setbacks, but the trajectory is toward returning home.

### **THE RESURRECTION: The Protagonist Must Die Again**

Just at the threshold of returning to the ordinary world, the protagonist must undertake one more devastatingly difficult trial. The hero dies and is reborn one last time, in an act of purification. Through his/her sacrifice, the greater forces that were at odds in the world are reconciled, and the journey is complete.

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## THE RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR: The Protagonist Brings the Prize Home

Now having transcended fear and death, the protagonist has been transformed internally, and often externally, as well. We see evidence of change when the hero re-enters the normal world and behaves differently than s/he had before setting out on the journey. They have triumphed over the greatest challenge they can face, have won the prize they sought, and have become a better version of themselves in the process. They may be ready for new adventures or may be happy to settle back into their old life, seeing it as if for the first time.

## ARCHETYPAL CHARACTERS

**Hero:** The protagonist of the story

**Herald:** The one who signals the call to adventure

**Mentors:** Wise guides who show the hero to look within for the wisdom they will need

**Allies:** The friends, compatriots and sidekicks who help the hero throughout the journey

**Enemies/Shadows:** Those who try to thwart the hero's journey, for small or large reasons

**Dark Mentor:** The character who reflects back to the hero his/her worst fear

**Threshold Guardians:** Those who try and keep the hero from making big leaps in progress

**Tricksters:** Characters who complicate matters for the hero, unexpectedly leading the hero toward new and necessary learning

**Need help developing your outline?**

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