

PLOT: PACING YOUR STORY

Pacing is **the speed at which the story unfolds**. This is the rhythm and flow, the rise and falls of the plot points and events, and how quickly or slowly you're telling the story to your readers. You need a balance of both slow and fast paced sections to create a good flow that engages readers consistently. It's like a roller-coaster – you need ups and downs, you need speed and slow moments, like right before a huge drop. And like a roller-coaster, different people will prefer different paces – some readers enjoy slow paced stories and others enjoy fast paced. The only thing you can do is **use the pace most adequate for the story you want to write**.

Part 1) Pacing within the story

In the table are some of the **ways you can hasten/slow down the narrative**:

	<i>Sentence structures, writing</i>	<i>Changes to the narrative</i>
<i>Faster</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Shorter sentences, paragraphs, or chapters ➤ Active language for faster pace, suggestive verbs, cutting unnecessary words for faster pace ➤ More verbs ➤ <i>Dramatic</i> writing: when you describe quickly what happened 'offstage' (summarizing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Higher stakes: builds suspense, reader wants to read faster (your pacing may not increase, but their reading speed will) ➤ Sense of urgency or danger ➤ Ending on a cliffhanger ➤ Removing certain subplots (pulls focus back to main storyline) ➤ Jumps in time (scene cuts) ➤ Incidents in rapid succession ➤ Summarizing action that happened between events (time jumps) ➤ Removing characters ➤ Cutting out scenes ➤ Making the timeline shorter (instead of everything happening over six months, it happens over six days) ➤ Character development: adding dialogues
<i>Slower</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Longer sentences, paragraphs, or chapters ➤ Adding more descriptions ➤ <i>Scenic</i> writing: when you describe everything happening in the moment ➤ Language can be more lyrical ➤ Mixing up the pacing: characters have a dialogue on their way somewhere, and they note things they observe which slows the pace of the (otherwise quick) dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On a single moment: heighten the attention to detail, slow-motion movie shot, focus on each visual aspect, allow the reader to experience the moment in exquisite detail (very effective when juxtaposed with a fast paced scene, draws attention to climatic moment) ➤ Adding subplots: secondary storylines decrease the progress of the main storyline. The more you add, the longer it will take to resolve the main one. ➤ Adding flashbacks, backstory ➤ Character development: Adding inner monologues, introspection, stream of consciousness – can reveal motivations and craft believable characters (helps control the pace of the story + contributes to character development); Delve deeper into the characters

Part 2) Pacing the narrative: The Three-Act Structure

Outlining your novel's plot before getting down to writing can help make the process less daunting. Some writers prefer to write organically and see where the story leads them. Do whatever works for you!

The three-act structure is one of the ways you can plan your storyline. It works in threes: the story has three acts, a beginning, middle, and end, which are then further divided into three blocks of three chapters for a total of 27 chapters. Each set of three follows this structure: a set-up, a conflict, and its resolution. This can be a helpful guideline for writers to follow, and many successful stories follow it (*Hunger Games* follows it almost perfectly). Of course, feel free to change the structure around to suit your story: if your plot twists make more sense earlier/later, edit accordingly!

THREE ACT STRUCTURE

<i>Acts</i>	<i>Blocks</i>	<i>Set-Up</i>	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Resolution</i>
<p>Act 1: Set-Up Introduce the world your characters live in, set up upcoming conflict.</p>	<p>Block 1 <i>Introduce your hero in their ordinary world.</i></p>	<p>Chapter 1: Introduction Set up your hero in their ordinary world.</p>	<p>Chapter 2: Inciting Incident An important event or decision sets your hero along the path of your narrative.</p>	<p>Chapter 3: Immediate Reaction Hero reacts to the incident.</p>
	<p>Block 2 <i>The problem disrupts the hero's life.</i></p>	<p>Chapter 4: Reaction Hero reacts and reflects on the long-term impacts of the inciting incident.</p>	<p>Chapter 5: Action As a result of the reflection, hero decides to act and do something to change their situation.</p>	<p>Chapter 6: Consequence Immediate consequences of the action the hero took in Chapter 5.</p>
	<p>Block 3 Hero's life changes direction.</p>	<p>Chapter 7: Pressure Hero's life has changed as a result of the action taken in Chapter 5, creating a lot of pressure and stress in Chapter 7.</p>	<p>Chapter 8: Pinch First pinch / plot-twist occurs (something unexpected).</p>	<p>Chapter 9: Push As a result of the twist, hero is pushed into a new world on Chapter 9.</p>
<p>Act 2: Conflict Character development is crucial: the hero at the end of Act 1 does not yet have the tools to success in Act 3 (which may be emotional, physical, or literal items). Act 2 is all about the journey.</p>	<p>Block 4 Hero explores new world.</p>	<p>Chapter 10: New World Introduce the reader to the new world, what has changed and how does the hero feel about it?</p>	<p>Chapter 11: Fun and Games Hero can take a little break and do something they have never done before; an event happens to them.</p>	<p>Chapter 12: Old World Contrast Hero compares their current world with how things were at the beginning.</p>
	<p>Block 5 Crisis of new world: it's all about the midpoint, the main crisis/conflict of the novel.</p>	<p>Chapter 13: Build-Up Building up to the midpoint.</p>	<p>Chapter 14: Midpoint The midpoint occurs and dramatically changes the hero or impacts their life in a negative way.</p>	<p>Chapter 15: Reversal Immediate reaction or consequence of the midpoint.</p>
	<p>Block 6 Finding a solution.</p>	<p>Chapter 16: Reaction Hero reflects on the long-term impacts of the midpoint.</p>	<p>Chapter 17: Action Hero decides to take action to resolve the problems created by the midpoint, however, they realize the enormity of the task when things (maybe) don't go according to plan.</p>	<p>Chapter 18: Dedication Hero decides they will succeed no matter what.</p>
<p>Act 3: Resolution Hero finds solutions to the conflict created by the midpoint. Tie up loose ends.</p>	<p>Block 7 Victory seems impossible.</p>	<p>Chapter 19: Trials Hero faces significant trials that are extremely difficult for them/they have never experienced this before.</p>	<p>Chapter 20: Pinch Second pinch: hero experiences something completely unexpected which makes everything worse.</p>	<p>Chapter 21: Darkest Moment The thought of success is incomprehensible.</p>
	<p>Block 8 Hero finds power.</p>	<p>Chapter 22: Power Within Having hit rock bottom, hero remembers their desire to succeed from Chapter 18 and finds the power to continue.</p>	<p>Chapter 23: Action Hero acts.</p>	<p>Chapter 24: Converge Action from Chapter 23 causes the plotline to converge and come together.</p>
	<p>Block 9 Hero fights and wins.</p>	<p>Chapter 25: Battle Hero has one last battle.</p>	<p>Chapter 26: Climax Final climax, decision hero makes here will impact the rest of their life, it is the point of no return.</p>	<p>Chapter 27: Resolution Resolution, immediate reaction to the hero's decision in Chapter 26.</p>

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