A Beginner's Guide to Writing Romantasy

A practical guide to building a romantasy novel—from tropes to story structure.
This guide is meant to be explored, not memorized.
Start anywhere that interests you.

Table of Contents

Romantasy

The Genre and Why We Love It

Romantasy – a made up word that isn't in Google's dictionary. If you ask Google what romantasy is, you'll get an AI-generated definition and a list of book recommendations.

But if you found your way to this site, you probably already have an idea of what romantasy means.

It's the book that pulled you inside a world
and held you in the grasp of a torrid love affair.

Over the last decade, romantasy has grown from a niche subgenre into a category of its own. Its rise isn't just about dragons and love stories—it's about how those stories are told. The blend of high-fantasy stakes and sweeping romance has connected readers across generations, cultures, and genres.

Romantasy gives us magic and the prince. The hero and the sigh of true love.

The battle and the happily-ever-after.

When the real world tells us we can't have it all, romantasy writers say: yes, you can.

As readers, we know romantasy when we see it. But how does that translate to writing it?

I'm glad you asked.

In this guide, we'll break down what makes a romantasy novel work—from reader expectations and genre structure to the romance and fantasy arcs that shape the story.

Let's dive in.

Readers' Expectations

All Hail the Romance Queens

The truth is that fantasy romance has existed for decades. It was built by the romance queens who fed a multi-billion-dollar industry. To this day, romance remains the best-selling genre of fiction—a genre refined by writers and publishers who learned exactly what readers wanted.

You may meet writers who scoff at the word *formula* (if you haven't already). They have opinions about the romance industry and believe using a formula strips a story of literary integrity. They'll try to convince you that structure turns writers into machines instead of artists.

They're wrong.

Almost every book—and by almost, I mean 99%—uses some kind of structure. Stories need a beginning, middle, and end. They need conflict and resolution. Half the writers who balk at the word *formula* are already using one.

What the romance industry perfected was something even more powerful: a structure built around **reader expectations**.

In 1985, when my great aunt picked up a paperback with Fabio on the cover, she knew exactly what she was getting. She knew there would be love, a reason the couple couldn't be together, and a happily-ever-after. Like clockwork, Harlequin delivered that promise every single time.

And readers came back for more.

Romantasy builds on that same foundation. Readers may look for different tropes or themes, but they all arrive with certain expectations.

They expect:

- **High-stakes fantasy** — magic, vampires, politics, or a world-altering conflict

- **A central romance arc** — mates, enemies to lovers, destined love, or forbidden attraction

But the most important expectation—the one that separates romantasy from traditional fantasy—is the guarantee of a **happily-ever-after**.

That lucky woman in 1985 got Fabio at the end. She always does.

And readers come back for that promise again and again.

As romantasy writers, we inherit that same promise.

Fantasy novels can end in death and destruction. They can burn kingdoms to the ground because fantasy often explores themes and consequences on a grand scale.

But a true romantasy novel isn't just fantasy. It's a love story.

And in love stories, the characters reach a happily-ever-after. Not a perfect forever, and not necessarily a permanent one—but a happy ending for now.

This expectation shapes every romantasy novel and becomes the central goal of the writer.

So how do you balance epic fantasy stakes with a satisfying romantic ending?

Good question.

Let's talk about the **dual arcs of fantasy and romance**.

Dual Arcs

We Don't Take Our Romance on the Side

When we read romantasy, we want two things at the same time.
We want the world to be in danger, and we want the characters to fall helplessly in love while trying to save it.

Despite the number of novels currently labeled as romantasy, fewer than we might think actually reach this balance.

Most fall into three categories.

Fantasy with a romance on the side

If all it takes to earn the romantasy label is a romance, then George R. R. Martin writes romantasy.

The Song of Ice and Fire series (*Game of Thrones*) is full of relationships, romance, intimate scenes, and even love. But you probably wouldn't call it romantasy.

In these stories, the fantasy plot drives everything. The romance exists, but it isn't essential to the story.

Romance with fantasy flavor

Many of the spicier books fall into this category.

Yes, the big blue aliens have a world-altering plot (*Ice Planet Barbarians* by Ruby Dixon — highly recommended if you read spice), but we all know that isn't the point. The fantasy setting and stakes are mostly there to push the romance forward.

The relationship is the story. The fantasy elements are decoration.

True romantasy

For a classic example, let's look at *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas — the romantasy queen herself.

If you removed either the fantasy arc or the romance arc from this book, there would be no story. The magical stakes and the relationships both drive the narrative in unison.

That's what true romantasy requires.

When you examine stories through this lens, you may realize that many of the books you've read fall into the **romance-with-fantasy-flavor** category.

And that's okay.

There's plenty of room for every kind of story. Genres and subgenres often exist on a spectrum, blending together in different ways.

There's also a reason so many books fall on either side of the line:

Creating that balance is hard.

True romantasy runs on two story arcs at the same time.

The Fantasy Arc
 The war, magic, politics, or world-altering threat.

The Romance Arc
 The relationship that grows, fractures, and ultimately resolves.

The goal is to weave these arcs together so tightly that the reader can no longer tell which plot is driving the story.

Achieving that balance requires both strong fantasy worldbuilding and the structural expectations of a romance novel — satisfying two different kinds of readers at once.

You're probably wondering: *How do I actually do that?*

I'm glad you asked.

Let's talk about structure, tropes, and what to expect as a writer developing a romantasy novel.

Novel Structure

Have Fun Storming the Castle

Are you still with me? Good. Because now I'd like to talk about your story idea.

I know you have one. It's the nagging vision that brought you here.

From this point forward, I want you to think of that idea as the foundation of a glorious castle. Your castle has stone walls, secret passages, and a library with a rolling ladder. A woman runs breathlessly down the stairs in her nightgown as banners wave from the towers above.

This is your story—the characters, mysteries, worldbuilding, and lessons. But without walls, they have no place to live.

Structure is how we build the castle.

It's the stones stacked in a certain way to form the walls of your story. As we talk about the pieces of structure, remember that it isn't a rigid set of rules decorating every room. It's the frame that holds the castle together.

And you are the architect.

Before we discuss the basics of structure, I want to impress something important upon you.

You already know how to organize a story.

If you're telling your friends about the broody silver fox you met that day, you don't start with how he asked for your number. You start with, *"So, I met this guy."*

You naturally start at the beginning.

Everything has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Commit that line to memory. Write it down somewhere if you have to—not because you need to learn it, but because it reminds you that you already know it.

This is how we organize information. It's how we learned to write sentences and paragraphs. It's how we communicate with each other every day.

As you read through this guide full of terms and definitions, remember this:

Storytelling is instinctive. You already do it.

All we're doing here is learning how to connect your inner storyteller to the process of building a novel.

Story Basics

Hit Those Beats

You may have already seen the word *beats* thrown around, but the definition isn't always explained. So let's fix that.

A story beat is the smallest structural unit of a story—a moment that pushes the narrative forward through a change in action, emotion, or information.

(Thank you, Google.)

Now let me tell you what that actually means.

A beat is the moment they kiss. The moment the villain falls.
The moment a character realizes how to solve the problem—or realizes they were wrong.

All of these moments have one thing in common: They change something.

Stories are made of moments. Which moments you choose is up to you. But when you're telling your friends about the silver fox you met that day, you don't recount every second of the encounter.

You tell them the important parts:

I met this guy.
 He said this.
 I thought that.
 Then he asked for my number.

When stories hit certain moments—beats—in the right order and at the right pace, they become compelling.

This instinct is something we already use in everyday life. It's the same awareness comedians use to deliver a punchline or actors use to land the perfect reaction. Writers use that same skill to organize the beats that propel a story forward.

But how do you know which moments to include?

That answer often depends on who you ask.

Like most creative skills, storytelling has many styles and methods. You may have already encountered something called a **beat sheet** in your research. Beat sheets break down story structure into key moments—what beats to include and what each one needs to accomplish.

For this guide—and in my own writing—I use a modified version of **Save the Cat** structure.

If you'd like a deeper explanation of the method, I recommend *Save the Cat! Writes a Novel*. It's widely available through libraries on the Libby app and through Amazon.

<u>But let me tell you why I use it—and why I modified it.</u>

I use Save the Cat because it's cinematic. The structure was originally designed for screenplays, so it naturally emphasizes strong drama and pacing. That makes it particularly useful for high-stakes fantasy stories.

However, Save the Cat focuses on a single external hero's journey, where the protagonist solves a central problem.

Romance requires something more. It requires a second arc: the relationship.

Traditional romance structures include specific emotional beats that Save the Cat doesn't always address. By combining elements of both approaches, we can create a structure that supports **both the fantasy arc and the romance arc**.

In short, blending the two creates a balanced framework for a romantasy novel.

If you'd like to explore these beats in more detail—including the modified version I use— you can download my **Romantasy Beat Sheet**, where each beat is explained step by step.

Containers
Just One More Chapter

So we've learned that novels are made up of beats. But we don't read in beats, do we?

We consume in chapters.

You might be wondering how those beats combine to build the books we love. The answer is simple: we place them inside containers. Like files in folders, beats connect inside a structure that looks like this:

Beats → Scenes → Chapters → Acts → Novel

This nesting structure gives us a clear way to build our castle from the foundation up, with each container serving a specific purpose.

Let's walk through them.

Scenes

A **scene** is a container for beats.

You probably know the word from books—and definitely from movies. In both cases, scenes work the same way. They're the rooms where story moments happen.

But a scene includes more than just the setting. It also includes the circumstances.

If the beat is the moment our characters kiss, the scene contains the **where**, the **when**, and most importantly the **how** that made the kiss possible.

In simple terms: A scene is a moment in time and place where characters act, react, and move the story forward.

Sometimes a scene holds several beats. Sometimes a single beat unfolds across multiple scenes.

Chapters

If scenes are the rooms where beats live, **chapters are the wings of the castle.**

A chapter groups several rooms together and gives them a purpose. It might be the royal suite, the guard tower, or the ladies' quarters—a section of the castle where related events unfold.

Chapters help organize the story and guide the reader through it without forcing us to explain every shift in time or location.

If you remember nothing else from this section, remember this line:

Scenes are for writers. Chapters are for readers.

When we imagine stories, we rarely picture them in chapters. We see scenes: two characters arguing, a confession of love, a dangerous discovery, or a quiet conversation that changes everything.

But a single scene is rarely enough for a full chapter. That argument or confession usually needs the moment before it—and the moment after it—to feel complete.

Chapters gather those scenes together so the reader experiences them as one meaningful section of the story.

As readers, we think in chapters. As writers, we build in scenes.

If chapters feel confusing, break your story into its natural pieces—the rooms of the castle. Once you start building one room at a time, the structure of the larger wing will take care of itself.

Personal confession: Transitioning my own process from chapters to scenes was a life-altering shift. At first it looks like more work. In reality, it liberates your creativity.

You no longer have to stretch an idea to fill an entire chapter. Instead, you suddenly have the right-sized container for the moments that come to you.

My story grids are designed around this process, using fill-in-the-blank cards that let you place those moments where they belong and see how they connect in the larger story.

Acts

If chapters are the wings of the castle, **acts are the floors.**

Each floor represents a different phase of the story. When the narrative moves from one act to the next, something significant has changed. The stakes rise, the goal becomes clearer, or the situation shifts in a meaningful way.

You've probably seen the phrase **Three-Act Structure** before.

Remember our beginning, middle, and end?

This is the same concept on a larger scale, and it's a structure commonly used in both novels and screenplays.

Now our castle might look something like this:

Act One – The first floor of the castle

Wings: Chapter   Chapter   Chapter

Rooms: Scene Scene Scene Scene Scene Scene

Moments: Beat   Beat   Beat   Beat

Before we move on, I want to be clear about something.

All of this may look intimidating, but it's actually how we naturally tell stories. The terms and definitions simply help writers understand how to translate that instinct onto the page.

It's the difference between having a vague idea of how a castle is built and knowing how to read the blueprint.

Research. Read. Experiment. See what works for you.

Becoming a builder of castles is as much a process as the building itself.

Just keep going. You'll be an architect before you know it.

Tropes

Yes, Please

So — what's your favorite trope?

Come on, you can tell me. Mine? I'm an enemies-to-lovers kind of girl, preferably with a fae king involved.

If you found your way here, you probably already know what a trope is. But since this is a teaching guide, let's start with the official definition.

According to Google: *A trope is a recurring theme, plot device, character archetype, or narrative pattern that readers instantly recognize.*

What this definition helps us realize is that tropes appear in many different forms.

<u>In romance, we see enemies to lovers, fated mates, and forced proximity.</u>

<u>In fantasy, we see magic schools, chosen ones, dragons, and fae (sigh).</u>

Something readers don't always notice is that tropes also appear inside the structure of a story.

Every book about finding a magical object is a quest. A deadly competition? Trials. Traveling across the land to defeat a great evil? The hero's journey.

Looking for a morally gray man? That's a trope too — a character archetype. So are grumpy/sunshine, the mentor, and the warrior.

Once we broaden our definition of trope, we start seeing patterns everywhere. Some we love, some we hate, but they repeat because they work—within both genre and storytelling structure.

A trope isn't just a catchy theme used to attract readers. It's also a structure — a repeatable way to tell a certain kind of story. Instead of listing the pros and cons of tropes, let's look at an example.

Story premise

A woman enters a competition to marry the fae king and become queen of the land.

You may be thinking: *I've read that book.*

We all have. And that's exactly why we love tropes.

If our story is a castle, then a trope is a premade wall. It's a section we don't have to build brick by brick because someone else has already worked out the design.

Better than that, the design has been tested. It's sturdy. It holds up in all kinds of weather.

Tropes are time-tested pieces of story that readers instantly recognize.

For writers, they provide a framework we can build a plot, a character arc, or a relationship around.

That's the appeal. And the danger.

Eventually, a design stops looking like a castle and starts looking like a manufactured house. There's nothing inherently wrong with a house. It's proven sturdy and perfectly reasonable to live in.

But it isn't a castle. And we all know it.

I've read several variations of our competition premise. That's what makes it feel *tropey*. The fact that Google recognizes the word *tropey* but not *romantasy* should probably be a warning to us all.

So how do we use tropes without becoming tropey?

We use the plans for the wall, not the wall itself.

I've read about the woman competing for the fae king.

I haven't read the one where she enters the competition to steal his magic amulet and overthrow his government.

Now you have a reader's attention.

Notice that I didn't remove the trope of the competition or the fae king romance. In fact, I added another familiar element — the magical object. But I changed how those pieces fit together. I took the plans for the wall and built something new.

The Rule of Three

Now let's apply the Rule of Three. (Yes, this is a *Craft or Charmed* reference. Pick your witches, wisely.)

If you explore my other resources, you'll notice I apply the Rule of Three to several things. We naturally organize ideas in threes. We structure stories in three acts, and when it comes to tropes, I like to follow the same principle.

Pick up to three familiar tropes — but make the fourth wall your own.

Applied to our example, it might look something like this:

A woman enters a competition to marry a fae king so she can steal his magic amulet and overthrow his government.

Except the amulet around his neck is a fake.The real one is held by his supposedly dead brother — the true villain of the story. The king himself is actually at the brother's mercy and is using the competition as a distraction while he secretly prepares his own rebellion.

Same premise. Same recognizable tropes. But an entirely different structure.

We didn't buy a manufactured house. We built a castle.

And yet, we still know roughly what will happen inside.

After some banter and shenanigans, they'll realize they're on the same side and overthrow the brother together.

I know it. You know it. The reader knows it.

But we don't know how. And that's the fourth wall.

That's what keeps readers coming back to tropes again and again: familiar stories told in new ways.

The final conclusion on tropes

Use them. Love them. Just don't make your castle look like the house next door.

Word Counts

We Like Them Chunky

We've talked about genre, structure, and tropes. But how much real estate do we actually need to build this castle?

Before we talk square footage, let's clear up an important distinction:

Word counts are for writers. Pages are for readers.

Because of formatting, page counts are almost useless when writing a novel. If you look up your favorite book and search for its page count, you may not get a straight answer. Between ebooks, hardcovers, paperbacks, and special editions, page numbers vary widely.

Word count, however, stays consistent. And when you're trying to decide how many scenes to write—or where to add or trim your story—that consistency matters.

There's also another truth worth remembering: A story takes as many words as it takes.

Books come in all shapes and sizes across every genre. There are ranges, industry standards, and publisher guidelines, but a good story ultimately takes the space it needs. Don't lock your idea inside a rigid word count. Instead, think about how many scenes you need to create a balanced story.

For the purpose of this guide, we're discussing word counts in relation to **story structure**.

You wouldn't start building a castle without knowing how much land you have. And you wouldn't start decorating rooms without taking measurements first.

With time and practice, writers develop an instinct for word counts. Personally, I find it easier to build a **range** into my scene structure. It gives me a clear target without forcing the story into an exact number.

So how many words are we talking about?

A typical romantasy novel usually lands somewhere between **90,000 and 130,000 words**.

I know what you're thinking: *That's a lot.*

But did it feel like a lot when you were reading it? Probably not.

That's because romantasy has a lot of work to do:

- Immerse readers in an epic fantasy world

- Develop a romance arc with conflict and resolution

- Introduce and escalate an external conflict

- Resolve everything in a satisfying happy-for-now ending

If you've ever read a truly satisfying romantasy novel (and I'm sure you have), then you know most of those pages were necessary to reach the finish line.

But just like the genre itself, there's a spectrum.

Amazon is full of **shorter romantasy stories**—often novella-length works ranging from **50,000 to 80,000 words**. Many of these fall into the *cozy fantasy* category by keeping the worldbuilding smaller and the cast more contained.

So what's the difference between these smaller stories and larger epic romantasy novels?

The key word is **epic**.

Once you introduce multiple POVs, several countries (or planets), different species, and a political conflict, the story naturally expands. The more complicated the plot and character arcs become, the more space you need to develop them.

Epic romantasy often includes:

- Multiple POV characters

- Larger worlds or multiple regions

- A bigger cast

- A more complex external conflict

But complexity is not a requirement of the genre.

One of my favorite cozy romantasy series is **The Undertaking of Hart and Mercy** by Megan Bannen. These are full-length novels set in a wonderful fantasy world that balance both a strong romance arc and an external fantasy plot.

I highly recommend them—not just because they're great stories, but because they're excellent examples of storytelling craft. The worldbuilding and emotional arcs are beautifully balanced.

Smaller and less complicated stories can absolutely thrive in this genre.

They often feature:

- A single POV

- A smaller cast of characters

- A more contained setting

- One central external conflict

In a genre currently dominated by books like *Fourth Wing* and *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, it's easy to assume every romantasy novel must be massive.

But don't forget that smaller, lighter stories exist too.

There's room on the spectrum for every kind of tale. The real challenge is discovering where your story belongs.

What we're aiming for is **balance between the arcs**, not equal page time.

In the books we've mentioned, the fantasy conflict pushes the characters together—or pulls them apart—while their relationship choices influence how the larger conflict unfolds.

That's the real requirement. And the sweet spot.

My story grids include built-in word count ranges aligned with scenes and beats. They're available in both **Full-Length Novel** and **Novella-Length** formats.

They do the math for you and organize beats and scenes inside a three-act structure, helping ensure that—whether your story is epic or cozy—you hit all the right moments along the way.

Common Mistakes

Here Comes Mary Sue

Throughout this guide, I've tried to point out misconceptions and pitfalls, but I wanted to highlight a few common mistakes made in the fantasy and romantasy genres.

Self-Insert Characters

These are commonly referred to as **Mary Sue** or **Gary Stu** characters. This happens when a fantasy version of the writer is dropped into a story so they can live out their dreams on the page.

Now hold on—before your feathers get ruffled because your main character is modeled after you—let me explain.

Every character we write contains a piece of us. Even our villains reflect what we fear, hate, or believe we're capable of. But our main characters are especially close to our hearts. We pour ourselves into them. That's perfectly natural. It can even be therapeutic. But that isn't the same thing as a self-insert character.

A **Gary Stu** is the male character who is the best at everything. He's never wrong. He never loses. He's the strongest, smartest, and most capable person in the room. He gets the girl, defeats the villain, and earns his happy ending with little to no effort. Think of him as an early comic-book superhero.

In romantasy, the female version often appears as the **chosen girl** trope. I discuss this more in another article, but typically a **Mary Sue** is naturally good at everything. She's special and chosen simply because she is. Her world is full of men who find her quirks adorable. She defeats villains no one else can defeat and earns a happy ending because she has a little attitude and a sword (or dragon).

Both versions of these characters lack something crucial to a good novel:

Internal conflict.

No one likes a perfect person. They aren't relatable, and self-insert characters often come across as smug—or worse, unintentionally cringe.

The best solution is simple: Be honest with yourself.

Pour your flaws into your characters. Your fears. Your insecurities. Your darkest desires.

If writing fictional characters teaches you anything, let it be this: The things we try hardest to hide are usually the most interesting parts of us.

Mistaking Action for Structure

This mistake is more common in fantasy and romantasy than in many other genres.

We've been fed a steady diet of epic battles and sword fights, so it's easy to confuse **action** with **forward plot movement**. We hear writing advice like *"show, don't tell"* and assume every scene needs an explosion.

But here's the truth: We often lean on action because it's easier.

Internal conflict and emotional resolution are far more difficult to put on the page than a sword fight. Weaving those elements into the plot requires nuance and a deep understanding of your characters' motivations.

Trust me when I say the effort is worth it. No matter how incredible of a world you've built, you don't have a story without the emotions driving your characters forward.

"It's Not Big Enough"

This is my personal writing insecurity. I can plot out an entire novel and still ask myself: *Is this big enough?*

If you love romantasy, you're probably a **go big or go home** kind of person. But that mindset can trick us into thinking that *big* requires constant action. When we imagine our stories, we usually picture the dramatic moments. The battle. The argument. The final confrontation.

We rarely picture the quieter moment when the male lead realizes he chose duty to his family over the woman he loves. Instead, we imagine the argument before it or the sword fight afterward. But without that quiet realization, those scenes don't connect.

That "small" moment isn't small at all. It's the emotional hinge of the entire story.

Measure the weight of your scenes by how they move the story forward—not by how much action happens inside them.

**And for the love of whatever gods your world worships,
don't blow something up in every scene.**

You Don't Read Enough

Neither do I. I know—*read more* is generic advice repeated by every author on the internet.

Unfortunately, it's also true.

What I want to remind you (and myself) is that the only reason we want to build castles is because we've seen other people's castles. We wouldn't even know what a castle looks like if someone else hadn't built one first. By studying how they built theirs, we learn how to build our own.

We learn how to write by reading.

It's a process—and mostly a subconscious one. The more stories we absorb, the more our storytelling instincts develop.

You might think: *I don't want to visit someone else's castle. I want to live in mine.*

Same, girl. Same. It can be difficult to pull ourselves out of our own worlds to visit another.

Not to mention their castle sometimes looks nicer than mine and gives me those green jealousy vibes.Nothing humbles a writer faster than reading a brilliant novel and thinking:

I'll never be this good.

Here's the reminder we all need: We don't have to be **their** version of good.

We just have to become **our** version of good. And that requires reading.

I'll have another article with tips for reading more, but here are a few strategies that help.

Read samples.
 Most digital platforms offer sample chapters. Fifty pages is better than zero pages.

Use a book tracker.
I'm not big on public reading goals or competitive reading lists, so I bought a colorful Google Sheets tracker on Etsy. It's private, visual, and I can add little cover images. Organizing it is actually fun.

Find the format that works for you.
 Ebooks. Paperbacks. Audiobooks. Kindle. Your laptop. Whatever makes reading easiest and most comfortable.

I've learned that forcing myself to read usually backfires, so my advice is simple:

Lean into whatever methods work for you.

Despite everything in this section, **I encourage you to make mistakes.**

Write thousands of words that go nowhere. Chase storylines that make no sense.

Do it wrong. Then go back and do it wrong again. Because that's how writers learn.

In the words of Ms. Frizzle: **"Take chances, make mistakes, get messy."**

Resources

Tools for Building the Castle

Most of us don't write in notebooks anymore.

Now don't get me wrong—I love a good notebook (who doesn't?)—but the tools for constructing a novel have evolved over the years.

Personally, I've stored story ideas on almost every format imaginable, from floppy disks to the cloud. I've lost entire stories to the infamous blue screen of death when hard drives failed. And I've messaged Google support begging them to restore my trash after realizing I accidentally deleted something. (FYI: they can do this.)

During my more recent years as a "serious" writer, I went hunting for a **do-it-all system** —something I'd happily pay a monthly subscription for if it kept my writing organized and safe.

I discovered that finding this system is much harder than it should be.

Most programs try to do too much. They lean heavily into things like AI-generated writing, formatting tools, or massive worldbuilding databases. The learning curve can be steep, even for someone tech-savvy.

And as writers, we're not trying to master a new software program.

We're trying to create.

What I Use Now

My current method is a hybrid system. Maybe that's simply the reality of writing tools right now, but I do use a cloud-based program to draft and organize my novels.

It's called **Dabble Writer**. And no—I'm not an affiliate or anything. It's just the program I personally use. It's cloud-based, has a clean design, and automatically formats pages. It also includes a few helpful tools for organizing a novel and some templates to get you started.

A quick side note about Dabble: the people behind the platform are super nice. They run something called **Dabble Campus**, which offers support, courses, and forums for writers. They genuinely seem invested in helping writers succeed, which is one of the main reasons they continue to earn my subscription fee each month.

That said, I eventually outgrew their built-in organization tools for my own process.

That's why I created my **story grids**.

They're an expanded version of the corkboard and index-card planning methods writers have used for decades. Mine just happens to live in **Google Sheets** and is designed specifically for romantasy novels.

The setup allows for **clean planning in one place and clean writing in another**.

Would it be nice to have everything in one place? Absolutely.

But building a system that connects every piece while still allowing full customization for each writer's process is incredibly difficult. Right now, the hybrid method seems to be the most flexible solution available.

A Note About Word Processors

I completely understand that paying a monthly subscription when you're just starting out can feel like a tough pill to swallow.

And honestly, with **Google Docs** readily available, it's often unnecessary in the early stages.

So here are a few tips if that's the route you take.

Google Docs tends to lag once a document reaches about **40,000 words**. Let's not talk about how I know that.

It's also not ideal for formatting. However, the **tabs and outline features** have improved quite a bit over the years, and with a little effort they can help organize a novel.

If you're writing in Google Docs, a helpful method is to create:

- one document for each **act**

- a separate document for your **outline**

With links and split views, you can usually keep everything connected. It requires a little setup, but the payoff is better organization and less lag.

(I'm also working on a template for this.)

Copies and More Copies

If you're part of a younger generation, you might not know the pain of losing **50,000 words** to a computer crash. But you probably do know the feeling of being locked out of an account because you forgot the password. If you aren't storing your writing inside a dedicated writing program, backing up your work regularly is essential.

Save an extra copy to your hard drive. Save another to your cloud storage.

Do it once a week. Take the time to protect your work. *You can thank me later.*

Courses, Classes, and Systems

Please be very discerning before handing anyone your money.

A $1,500 writing course with a famous author's name attached to it is rarely what you think it will be. Anyone promising to make you a bestselling author is almost certainly selling a dream.

These people are often not in the business of writing—or even teaching writing.

They're in the business of selling courses.

That doesn't mean all courses are bad. But I strongly encourage you to read descriptions, reviews, and evaluate where the information is coming from.

(Including from me. Please read my note from the creator and judge what I offer based on how useful it is to you.)

Books on Writing

I've already recommended **Save the Cat! Writes a Novel**, but your local library is full of excellent writing books.

When browsing, look for books that include:

- **Specific craft instruction**, not just general advice
- Focus on **genres, structure, or storytelling techniques**
- **Exercises or worksheets** that allow you to practice what you learn

There's a lot of generic material out there, but if you keep searching, you'll find some real gems. And those nuggets are worth the hunt.

Insert Shameless Product Plug Here

Have you figured out that I'm selling something yet?

Seriously—I created **story grids**, and I have more digital tools coming.

They include pictures and video instructions, are reasonably priced, and are delivered through Google Sheets so you get your own permanent copy.

My goal was to create something that helps writers organize their novels without needing complicated software.

So if that sounds useful, check them out. And if you have questions, I'm always happy to help.

Conclusion

If you had even one **"aha" moment** while reading this guide, then writing it was worth it. I hope you found something useful here and leave this page feeling like you can build your story.

I want to leave you with one final thought: **Enjoying your stories is what this is all about.**

If you're anything like me, you wake up every morning wanting to do one thing:

Write.

Your mind is full of beautiful worlds and fascinating characters that beg to be brought to life on the page. That's what motivates me to keep improving as a writer. I may never be rich or famous, but I can still do justice to the worlds that live inside me.

And I believe you can too.

I wish you all the luck of a **Chosen Girl**, all the confidence of **destiny**, and hope every magical object falls perfectly into your lap.

Most of all, I hope you enjoy bringing your worlds to life as much as I do.