

# The Novel Writer's Roadmap

A step-by-step guide to drafting your first novel  
quickly and efficiently



**KEVIN T JOHNS**  
writing coach

# The Novel Writer's Roadmap

## A step by step guide to writing your first novel

Writing a novel is not an easy task.

Having spoken with hundreds of writers from around the world, I've consistently had authors confess to me that they spent 8 years writing their first novel.

Let that sink in for a moment... 8... freakin'... YEARS!!

(You could get a Ph.D. in the same amount of time.)

Most of these writers are well-educated people – they have degrees in Journalism, Communications, or English Literature.

And those who don't have a formal education are passionate readers that have usually been writing and telling stories, in one form or another, for most their lives.

If that's the case, why does it take them nearly a decade to write their first novel?

The answer is surprisingly straightforward: **no one ever teaches writers how to write a book.**

Most aspiring authors approach the drafting of their novels without the tools, resources, or even the most basic information necessary to work in an effective and efficient manner.

The image of the tortured artist struggling along year after year until one day they're finally hit with a stroke of genius is firmly engrained into our cultural milieu.

It's no wonder so many authors struggle to get their novels written; we're told again and again that it's *supposed* to be a painful, confusing, and energy draining effort.

But do you really think Stephen King is wracked with existential angst every time he puts words to the page?

Was writing the *Harry Potter* series a horrific struggle for J.K. Rowling?

Of course not.

Professional writers like Rowling and King have established systems, structures, and foundational skill sets that allow them to do what they do best: write joyfully.

This roadmap is meant to help move YOU towards joyful writing.

It will show you what you need to do, and the order in which you need to do it.

No mystery, no confusion, and no dark nights of the soul.

Just a simple program you can follow to complete your first novel (and every novel after that) quickly and efficiently.

If you have any questions about the roadmap, I'd love to hear from you. I can be reached at [kevin@kevintjohns.com](mailto:kevin@kevintjohns.com).

Now let's get to it!

# Step One

## *Adjust Your Mindset*

Successful writing has more to do with education than it does with inspiration. Get it out of your head that writing is a magical talent handed down onto a rare chosen few by the Muse. It's not. Writing is a craft. You need to acknowledge it as such and begin educating yourself about the art form (via books, courses, workshops, articles, podcasts, coaching, etc.). You'll work to continually improve your writing skills throughout the novel drafting process, and, if you are smart, throughout your entire career as an author.



**KEVIN T JOHNS**  
writing coach

# Step Two

## *Choose a Genre*

Before you have an idea for a plot, or the concept for a group of unforgettable characters that readers are going to fall in love with, you need to know what genre you're going to be writing. Virtually every decision you make during the writing (length, tone, the use of archetypes and tropes) and marketing of your novel (cover design, sales copy, target audience) will be predicated on the requirements of your chosen genre.

# Step Three

## *Select a Story Structure*

Story structure is the underlining framework upon which all great stories are told. Not only will choosing a proven story structure (the Hollywood three-act structure, the Heroes Journey, etc.) improve your chances of writing a book readers will love, it will also make the plotting process of your novel infinitely easier.



# Step Four

## *Develop Your Characters*

It is important to know who your novel is going to be about, but even more important to know what your characters want to achieve or attain within the story. Clearly identifying your protagonists objectives, the obstacles they will face, and how they'll overcome (or succumb) to those challenges will be the lifeblood of your novel.



# Step Five

## *Piece Together the Plot*

With your character's goals and the narrative demands of your genre in mind, begin the plotting process by identifying where key plot points (or "beats") belong within your chosen story structure. With the major beats identified, start filling in the gaps and fitting together the puzzle pieces of your story. By the time you are done this process, you'll have an outline, or "beat sheet", containing all the major scenes in your novel.





# Step Six

## *Prepare for the Drafting Process*

Writing a novel is a monumental task. It's going to be a major part of your life for an extended period of time. That's why it's important to develop a strategic plan *prior* to beginning the drafting process. You'll want to determine a deadline for when the first draft will be completed, and then break down a daily required word count goal that allows you to meet you deadline. Establish a regular writing schedule, monitor your daily word count, and adjust your word count goals or deadline accordingly.



# Step Seven

## *Seek Support to Stay on Track*

The drafting process itself can be a long, grueling, and lonely experience. Don't go it alone. Find an accountability buddy for weekly check-ups, join a writing group in your community, participate in online discussions via messages boards and Facebook groups, and/or hire a professional writing coach. Staying focused on a single project for the amount of time it takes to write a book is a major challenge, so make sure you benefit from the support a community can offer.



# Step Eight

## *Finish the First Draft... and then Celebrate!*

Finishing the first draft of a manuscript is a major accomplishment. Reward yourself! Go out for a nice dinner, buy yourself a present, or take your family on a short vacation. You've done something very few people are able to do, and you deserve to feel good about it!



# Step Nine

## *Get Back to Work via Revisions*

Revisions to your manuscript need to be completed in a series of sweeps that will result in multiple drafts of the book. Each sweep of the manuscript should focus on specific elements such as pacing, quality of prose, story logic, dialogue, etc. The fantastic thing about revisions is that every single time you work on the manuscript during this phase of the writing process your novel just gets better and better. Cool, eh?

# Step Ten

## *Engage Beta Readers*

With *at least* 3 major drafts of the book completed via the revisions process (one for you, one for the readers, and one for the haters!), you may get the manuscript to a point where you are ready to share it with beta readers. These are the first folks who will read your novel and provide you with feedback. Choose your readers wisely and pay close attention to similar criticism or feedback you receive from multiple readers, and then revise (again!) accordingly.



# Step Eleven

## *Hire a Professional Copy Editor*

This will likely be the most expensive part of the entire book production process, but it is well worth every penny. Copy editors are a dream come true for fiction authors – the singular focus of their job is to take your writing and make it even better. They are the coach in your corner of the boxing ring and the quality control team of You Incorporated. They bring a unique skill-set to the drafting and revisions process, as well as a well trained and a critical lens to your writing. Do NOT skip this step. Work with an editor to get your manuscript as polished as it can possibly get!

# Step Twelve

## *Decide How You Want to Publish Your Book*

Now that you have completed your manuscript, you are going to need to make a decision on which path to publication works best for you: traditional publishing or self (indie) publishing. There are benefits and drawbacks to both traditional and self-publishing. Investigate both options, and make a decisions that works best for you and your goals. Be sure to base your decisions not only on emotional issues, but also practical business factors. Whichever path you choose, I wish you nothing but success!

# About the Author

Kevin T. Johns is the author of [five books](#), the host of [Write Along Radio](#), and a [writing coach](#).

He works with writers from around the world to help them get their ideas out of their heads, onto the page, and into readers hands.

He lives with his wife and three daughters in Ottawa, Canada.

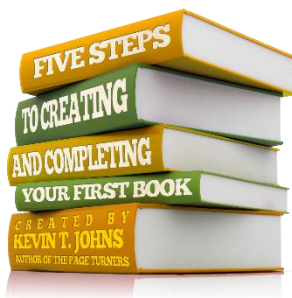
Website: [www.kevintjohns.com](http://www.kevintjohns.com)

Email: [kevin@kevintjohns.com](mailto:kevin@kevintjohns.com)

[www.facebook.com/yourfirstnovel](http://www.facebook.com/yourfirstnovel)



## THE NOVEL WRITER'S BLUEPRINT



### Take the Roadmap to the Next Level

*Wish someone could walk you through the details of every single step covered in the Novel Writer's Roadmap?*

Look no further than **The Novel Writer's Blueprint**. This online master class takes what you have learned in the road map and then dives DEEP so that you can write with the confidence of a best selling author.

[Want to write your novel in 8 weeks instead of 8 years? Learn how here.](#)

SPOTLIGHT



**KEVIN T JOHNS**  
writing coach