



Where To Start - Fiction

Beginning a novel can feel overwhelming, but you don't need a full blueprint before you write your first chapter. What helps most is having a rough sense of the story's shape - the key moments, the people involved, and the direction you think the book might travel. Think of this as sketching a map, not carving anything in stone.

Start With the Heart of the Story

Every novel has a central thread. It might be:

- a problem that needs solving
- a relationship under pressure
- a mystery to uncover
- a character who wants something

If you can name the core of your story in a sentence, you've already found your starting point.

Identify a Few Key Scenes

You don't need to know every chapter, but it helps to picture a handful of important moments. These might include:

- how the story begins
- a turning point
- a confrontation
- a revelation
- the ending you *think* you're heading toward

These scenes act like anchor points. You can write toward them, around them, or even change them later, but having them gives you direction.

Meet Your Main Characters

Before you start writing, get to know the people who will carry the story. Ask yourself:

- What do they want
- What stands in their way
- What are they afraid of
- What makes them interesting to follow

You don't need full biographies. A few strong traits and a sense of their voice is enough to begin.

Leave Room for Side Stories

Most novels grow sideways as well as forward. Supporting characters, subplots, and unexpected detours often appear once you're writing. Make space for them. They add depth, texture, and life to the main story.

Sketch a Loose Path

Some writers outline every chapter. Others prefer to discover the story as they go. You don't need to choose a method, just sketch a path that feels comfortable:

- a list of scenes
- a rough three-act shape
- a timeline
- a few bullet points per chapter

This isn't a contract. It's a guide.

The Best Start Is Simply Starting

Once you have a sense of the story's direction, begin writing the scene that feels most alive even if it isn't the beginning. Momentum matters more than order. You can always rearrange later.

A Quick Exercise to Bring Your Characters Alive

Write a short bio for one of your characters, just a few lines about who they are, what they want, and what makes them tick. Then write a couple of hundred words showing them doing something completely ordinary. They might be walking to the station, watching a dripping tap, or lying awake at night unable to sleep.

The point isn't the scene itself. It's to let the character breathe in your imagination. Once they feel real to you, they'll feel real on the page.