

Writer's Block Detox

Task 8: Speed-Outlining

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You're going to choose your own adventure in week 4, and one of the options is to write a complete short story through the week (so it will probably be a longish short of a few thousand words). If that sounds appealing, or if you just want to prepare for doing one later, try this quick exercise.

- Take 10 minutes. Read this week's writing and your responses to the Exploring Ideas exercise. Choose just one of these to work on next week and then jot down 3 possible directions or endings for your story. Fill in answers to the questions on this page.

- Take another10 minutes. Write a start and end situation/scene/image, then quickly fill in all of the points you can think of that your story will need to hit to get there.

It doesn't matter how many points you have or what form they take. It might be logical to map exposition, rising conflict, climax and resolution, but equally you could map actions/consequences or just incidents, thoughts or feelings. Write your ideas in a way that makes sense to you and captures everything you want to include to achieve the end result or effect. Don't worry too much about it. You can re-order, refine or change it later. Just get the ideas out first.

Walk away and let it settle. Do you like this story? If not, what would you most like to write instead? Change your mind and do another speed-outlining session if you need to. Don't over-think it or worry about it being 'good' though; it's often the telling that makes the story rather than the idea itself. Also, it's just one story out of thousands that you're going to write over your lifetime. The important thing is for you to enjoy it.

Who is/are your character/s?

What is the setting?

What is the story about?

What is the conflict/problem/question at play?

Starting situation or image

What happens? What do you want to show?

Final situation or image

Congratulations, you've got yourself a rough plan!