

Creative Writing Guide



Welcome to this creative writing guide from Atom Learning! In this guide you'll get tips on how to frame and plan your story, then bring it to life. You will also learn how to craft a compelling story by writing brilliant beginnings, captivating characters and excellent endings.

A flexible framework

There's no wrong approach to creative writing! However, whether you're writing for fun or sitting an exam, **using a framework** can help to give you ideas of where to start. It can also help you to structure your writing as you go. As you practice your creative writing and build up confidence, you can get more flexible with how you use this approach.

1. Three-minute splurge

Start your planning by spending two or three minutes writing down all the ideas that come into your head. This technique is also known as 'free writing' and is a great way to tap into your creativity! Don't worry about punctuation or grammar at this stage – just get your ideas down on paper.

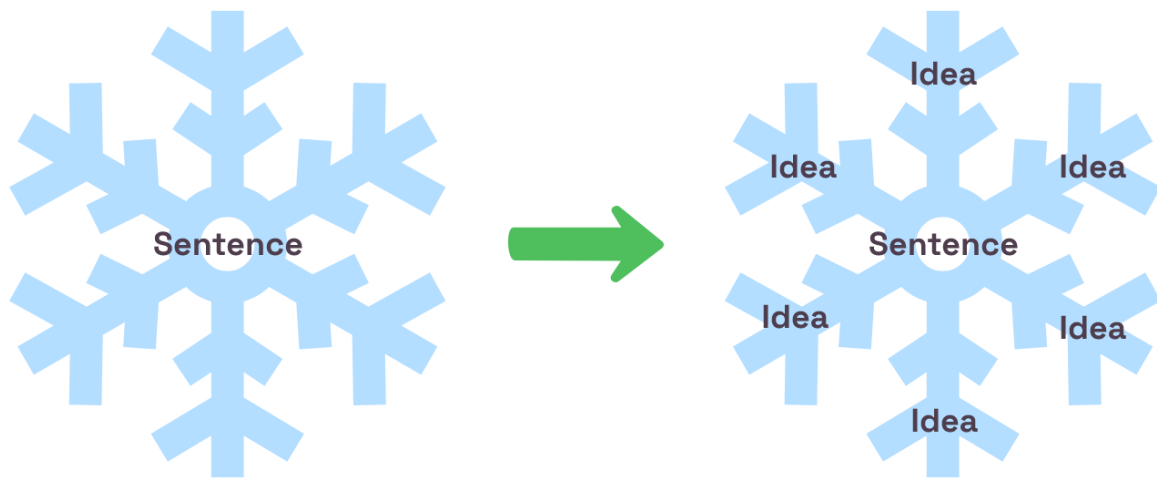
2. Plan, plan, plan

Try different planning methods to see what works for you. You can use bullet points to outline the key elements of your story. Or try the **snowflake method** of planning:

1. Write one sentence summarising your story idea. This can be a character or the situation they are in.
2. Branch ideas out from it. Each arm of the snowflake can be a character or an event. This will help more ideas come to mind as you work your way outwards.
3. When it's time to write up your story, each idea becomes a paragraph.

If you have time, you can then add more detail to your plan by deciding what you're going to write about in each paragraph.

A flexible framework (continued)



The snowflake method of story planning

Things to think about when writing your plan:

- A **problem**: what is the key conflict?
- What is the **solution**? (You might only work this out after you start writing!)
- Who are your **characters**? What are they like? How will they change over the course of the story?
- **World building**: what details are you going to include about the setting?
- What **literary devices** can you use?

3. Bring your story to life

Next, it's time to write up your story. Different ideas might come to you as you write, so you may end up straying from your plan. This is totally fine and part of the fun of writing! However, it can be helpful to keep looking back at your plan as you write, to remind you of your original idea. Remember to check through your work for any mistakes afterwards.

Writing brilliant beginnings

Why do we need a good opening to our story? We want readers to be captivated! Our aim is to keep the reader interested and reading.

There are many ways to do this. We might want to hint at **who** and **what** our story is about, or **where** and **when** it's set.

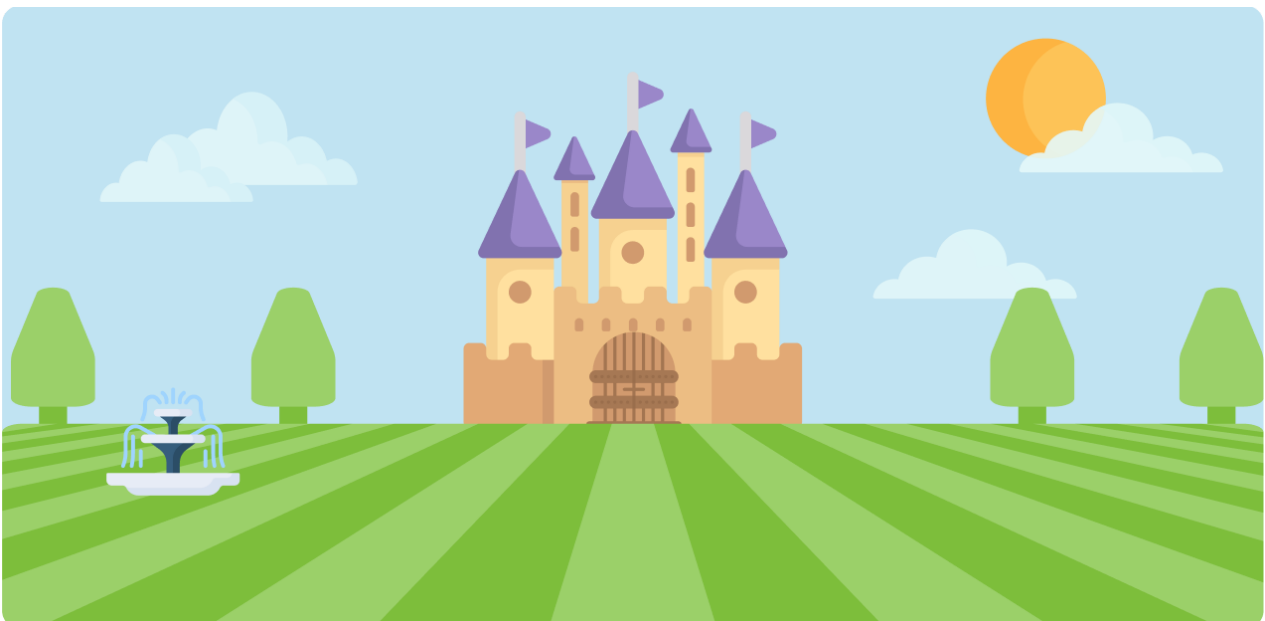
You can combine more than one of the following techniques in your opening paragraph!

Character

One way to start a story is to introduce your central character. You could start with a description of their appearance, their outfit, their personality, or give tidbits of information such as their name. This can help bring your characters to life for your reader and make them want to find out what happens to them.

Setting

You could also start your story by introducing where it takes place. You might want to describe a building, the weather, or a landscape. Think about the five senses: What can you see, hear, feel, taste or smell in the setting?



Writing brilliant beginnings (continued)

Dialogue

Your story can start by jumping straight into a conversation between two characters (make sure you punctuate it with speech marks!). How about a funny chat between friends, an argument, or your main character talking to themselves in their head?

Action

Another option is to throw your reader right into the middle of the key events of your story. Starting with a description of an action scene can get your reader excited to find out what happens next.

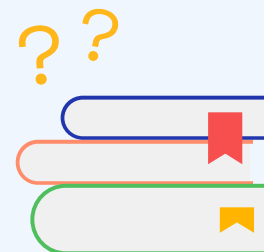
Question

A question is a thought-provoking and interesting way to open a story. You can inspire your reader, get them wondering and keen to learn more.

Looking for more inspiration on story beginnings?

[Try this quiz](#) and see if you can match the first line to the book. See if you can score more highly than your parents. But watch out, because one of the books is a decoy!

Can you match the first line to the book?



If you have an Atom Nucleus subscription, watch our [Live Lesson on Brilliant Beginnings](#) for more tips and ideas!

Creating captivating characters

Exciting and realistic characters will make your writing more interesting for your readers, and more fun to write!



Who's in the story?

Think about the types of characters you want to include. Here are some ideas:

- Protagonist (main character) – are they a hero or an antihero? (An antihero is a main character who is lacking in heroic qualities.)
- Antagonist (villain)
- Friend/supporter
- Love interest
- Mentor
- Sidekick
- Bystander

These are **archetypes** – tools that can be used in writing to represent common ideas from real life. You don't need to include all of these character types, and you might have completely different ideas!



Creating captivating characters (continued)

Give them a name

When you name your characters, it's helpful to think about:

- The **setting** and **genre** of your story
- The character's **personality**. What are their **emotions**? What kind of person are they?

Choosing a name that reflects this will help your character to be more memorable. For example:

- At the start of *Harry Potter*, the author wants us to know that Harry is an ordinary boy. This is emphasised by Harry Potter's very normal name!
- In Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, the antagonist is called Miss Trunchbull. This name gives us the impression of a very unpleasant person!

Choose verbs and adverbs

Another great way to convey your character's personality and emotions is through the verbs and adverbs you choose to describe their actions and dialogue. Take a look at this extract:

"I don't know who you think you are," Mr Biggins snapped coldly.

What do the words "snapped" and "coldly" tell us about Mr Biggins's personality?

Give them an arc

How might your character's personality change over the course of the story? This is known as a **character arc**. The change can be positive or negative.

Having a character arc helps your story to have a message. Your readers will feel like they have learned something interesting.

For example, in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, the character of Scrooge changes from being miserly and greedy at the start of the story, to being joyful and helpful at the end.

Think about your main character's arc when you're planning your story. Does your protagonist turn from a normal person into a hero? Does your villain learn a lesson and become a nicer person? Or do your hero's motivations change and they turn out to be a villain?

Writing excellent endings

When it comes to writing a story, the end is as important as the beginning. It can be tempting to go down the 'it was all just a dream' route, but at Atom, we want to encourage you to write endings that will leave a lasting impression on your reader (and have them wanting to read more!).

Plan the end of your story before you start writing

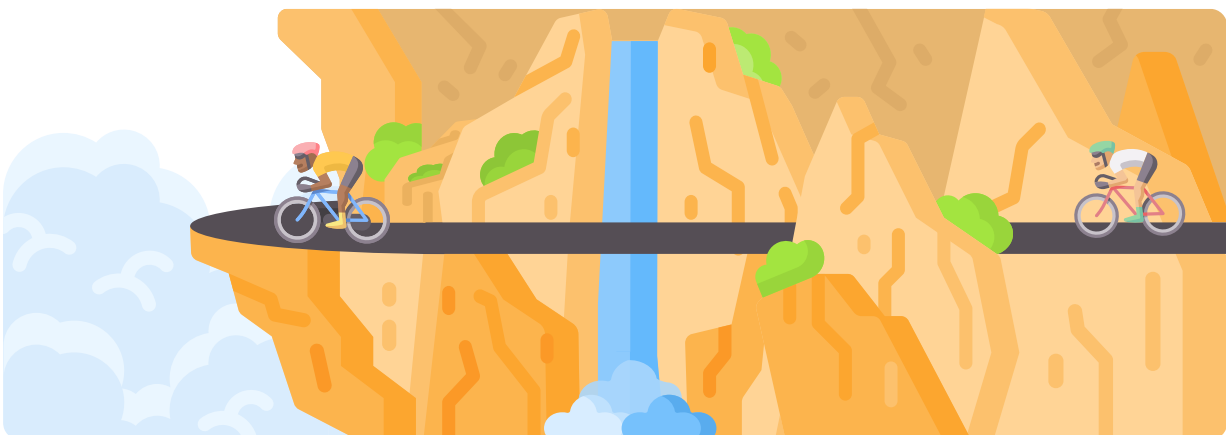
It's easy to jump straight into writing and lose track of what you would like your characters to experience. You don't need to spend hours planning every tiny detail, but it can be helpful to plan the structure of your story before you start. This will help you avoid having loose ends.

Get inspiration from your favourite books

Have a brainstorm of your favourite stories and look closely at their endings. How did you feel when you finished reading? What did the writer do that you might be able to imitate in your own story?

Decide on a resolved or unresolved ending

If your plan is to reveal everything to your reader (a resolved ending), make sure you tie up any loose ends. But if you want to have an **ambiguous** ending (i.e. not clear, or undecided), make sure you leave something unresolved for the reader. This is particularly important if your story is going to have a sequel!



Writing excellent endings (continued)

Match your ending to your genre

Are you writing a mystery, a comedy, a fantasy or an adventure story? It's important that your ending matches up with your genre. If you're writing a comedy, you will want to make your reader laugh. Why not try ending with a joke? If your story is a mystery or a thriller, try ending with a plot twist to create excitement.



Link the end with the beginning and the middle

This is where planning is very important. If your story's ending introduces new people or ideas that you haven't explored earlier in the story, your reader will end up feeling confused. After writing your ending, read back through your whole story to check that it makes sense as part of the whole context.

Happy writing!