

A Quick & Dirty Guide to Revising your Novel

Lesson 4: Planning the attack.

So, you figured out what your Perfect Book would be in Lesson 3. Now we're going to take that and apply it to your novel.

This part is fun--like, no joke, this step is one of my favorites for the ENTIRE novel-writing process. You're calling on your left-brain for organization, and you're calling on your right-brain for creativity.

Plus, by creating this **Plan of Attack**, you are ensuring you get through revisions as quickly as you possibly can. There's a reason I meet all my editorial deadlines *early*, and this is it.

Supplies Needed Today:

- Your outline (either in index cards or printed/written out)
- Multicolored post-its or sticky-tabs (as I mentioned in [Lesson 1](#), I color-code *everything*)
- Your Plot Holes worksheet
- Your fan letter to yourself
- Your Perfect Book worksheets
- Your Other Problems worksheets

Fixing Plot Holes

As you may recall from the Intro, we approach our manuscript hierarchically. Biggest problems taper down to little things, and the biggest problem of all is **plot**.

Why? Because plot--or the *events* in the story--affects your novel's structure. You might be adding scenes, cutting scenes, rearranging scenes, rewriting scenes, etc., and if you spend time tweaking a character only to *cut* the scene...well, that's an inefficient use of your time.

1. So, take your Plot Holes worksheet, your Perfect Book synopsis, and your outline. What you are going to do now is figure out **WHAT** you have to add in/subtract to make your novel into the Perfect Book.

2. There are two ways to approach this:

- **By Plot**

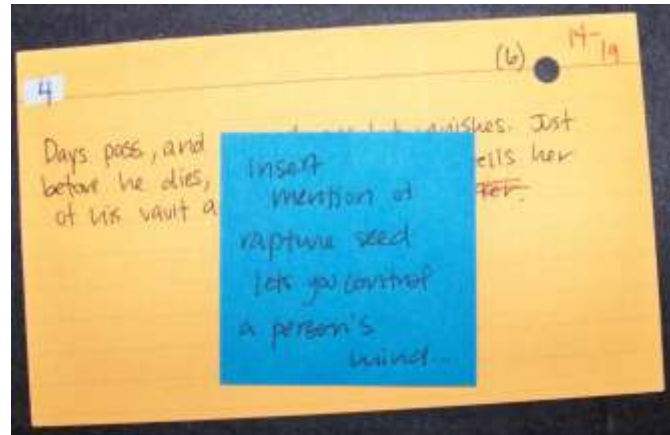
- You separate your outline based on which plot and subplot it falls into. To do this, you will need to:
 1. Sort out how many subplots you have and assign them a letter (or #, name).
 2. Start with the **main external plot**, so take all cards that apply to that plot thread, and stack them up.
 3. Once you finish this step with the main plot, you'll put the cards back together and pull out all cards that have to do with **subplot A** (or whatever you named it).
 4. Move down until you've covered every plot.
- I recommend this step if it is your **FIRST TIME REVISING**.

- **In Order**

- Simply move from one card to the next in order.
- You have to have a pretty good feel of how your plots and subplots are working together, so I don't recommend this step to beginners. If you are a **MORE EXPERIENCED** writer/reviser, then this step might work for you.

3. You are now going to sort out **what needs to be added** and **what needs to be removed**. (If you wish to use a worksheet, then head here. You will need to transfer all this information onto your outline.)

4. Using blue (or whatever your Plot Color is) post-its or sticky-tabs, you're going to make a quick note about what must be added (or removed) and you will stick it onto the specific scene's index card.* (See the picture-- BUT, keep in mind, I ran out of white index cards, so the color of the index card here has no significance.)



*Note: if you wish to write *more* than you can fit on a post-it note, then feel free to code your post-its and write a full summary elsewhere.

5. If you are going to ADD a scene, then you'll get a new index card and fill it out just like the rest of your outline. I like to make sure I *know* it's a new scene by adding some blue around the edges.

If you are going to REMOVE a scene, remove it from the stack (don't lose it, though! You might change your mind).

6. Keep adding blue post-its/stickers until you reach the end of the outline and have worked through every plot thread.

Fixing Characters and Relationships

7. Get your Fixing Character worksheets and your outline.

8. There are two ways to approach this:

- **By Character**

- You separate your outline based on which character appears in the scene. To do this, you will need to:
 1. Sort out how many characters you have that need fixing.
 2. Start with the **biggest character** (if your main character needs tweaking then it will be him/her), so take all cards in which that character appears, and stack them up.
 3. Once you finish this step with that character, you'll put the cards back together and pull out all cards that have to do with **next biggest character**.
 4. Move down until you've covered every character that needs fixing.

- I recommend this step if it is your FIRST TIME REVISING.

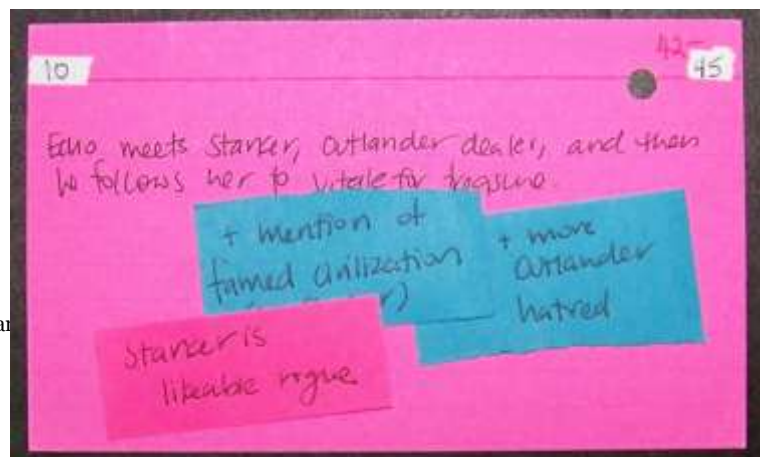
- **In Order**

- Simply move from one card to the next in order.
- You have to have a pretty good feel for when your character appear, so I don't recommend this step to beginners. If you are a MORE EXPERIENCED writer/reviser, then this step might work for you.

9. You are now going to sort out **what needs to be changed**. What about the way this character acts/speaks/interacts must be altered so this character can become the person you want them to be. Keep your Fixing Character worksheets handy for this!

10. You will also be dealing with character relationships here. If the romance isn't what you wanted, if the mother/daughter relationship isn't coming across right, or if the villain is just too cruel to the hero, you're gonna deal with that here.

11. Using pink (or whatever your Character Color is) post-its or sticky-tabs, you're going to make a quick note about what must be changed about the character and



you will stick it onto the specific scene's index card. (See the picture--notice it has 2 PLOT and CHARACTER post-its.)

12. Keep adding pink post-its/stickers until you reach the end of the outline and have worked through every character and relationship.

Fixing Setting

13. Get your Fixing Setting worksheets and your outline.

14. There are two ways to approach this:

- **By Setting**

- You separate your outline based on which setting in which a scene is set. To do this, you will need to:
 1. Sort out how many settings you have that need fixing.
 2. Start with the **biggest setting** (the setting that most frequently appears in the novel--and is therefore, the most important), so take all cards in which that setting appears, and stack them up.
 3. Once you finish this step with that setting, you'll put the cards back together and pull out all cards that have to do with **next biggest setting**.
 4. Move down until you've covered every setting that needs fixing.
- I recommend this step if it is your **FIRST TIME REVISING**.

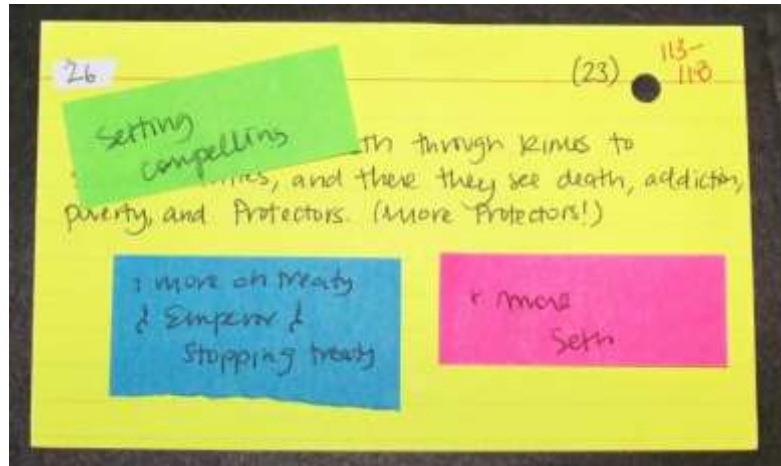
- **In Order**

- Simply move from one card to the next in order.
- You have to have a pretty good feel for the setting's weight, so I don't recommend this step to beginners. If you are a **MORE EXPERIENCED** writer/reviser, then this step might work for you.

15. You are now going to sort out **what needs to be changed**. What about the way this setting appears, the way the story/characters interact with it, must be altered so the setting is vivid and compelling. Keep your Fixing Setting worksheets handy for this!

16. Keep in mind that the **less important** a setting is, the less time you should devote to describing it. If only one scene is set there, then it shouldn't warrant much description. If half the book is set there, then you need to get pretty detailed.

17. Using green (or whatever your Setting Color is) post-its or sticky-tabs, you're going to make a quick note about what must be changed about the setting and you will stick it onto the specific scene's index card. (See the picture--notice there are now PLOT, CHARACTER, and SETTING post-its.)



18. Keep adding green post-its/stickers until you reach the end of the outline and have worked through every setting.

Fixing Other Stuff

19. This is for all that *other* stuff you dealt with.

20. With orange post-its (or whatever color you want), you'll go through every single scene card and point out if something needs to be tweaked.

21. For example, if a scene you know you'll be keeping is just plain TOO SHORT, you'll indicate that.

Putting it all Together

22. Put all your scene cards back together and in order. You've got a new outline--an outline for the Perfect Book!

23. Your outline should be VERY colorful now! And you should be very PROUD now! You just did a *lot* of work, and now you're ready to get started on the actual REVISING.

Wrapping up

In the next lesson, we'll be taking our new outline and getting started with **writing in our changes**. There are two approaches to doing this, and once I explain those, you'll be ready to sink your teeth into your novel!

So for now, get started planning your attack! Go team!