

A Quick & Dirty Guide to Revising your Novel

Lesson 2: Let's get organized.

When you finish Lesson 1 (don't worry if it takes a while!), your next objective will be to make an outline. Outlines help you see the WHOLE BOOK in a single glance--er...in a glance or two.

Being able to quickly isolate scenes and segments without flipping through the whole novel will save you time. LOTS of time. I promise--once you start outlining before revisions, you will never go back!

Supplies needed today:

- index cards
- your printed manuscript

So let's get organized, umkay?

1. First off, I suggest you make your outline on index cards.* On these cards, you will be writing a summary of each scene. If you wish to read the novel a second time to make the outline, go for it. Only you know what you're capable of--I usually have a fresh idea of the novel, so I merely skim through it to make the outline.

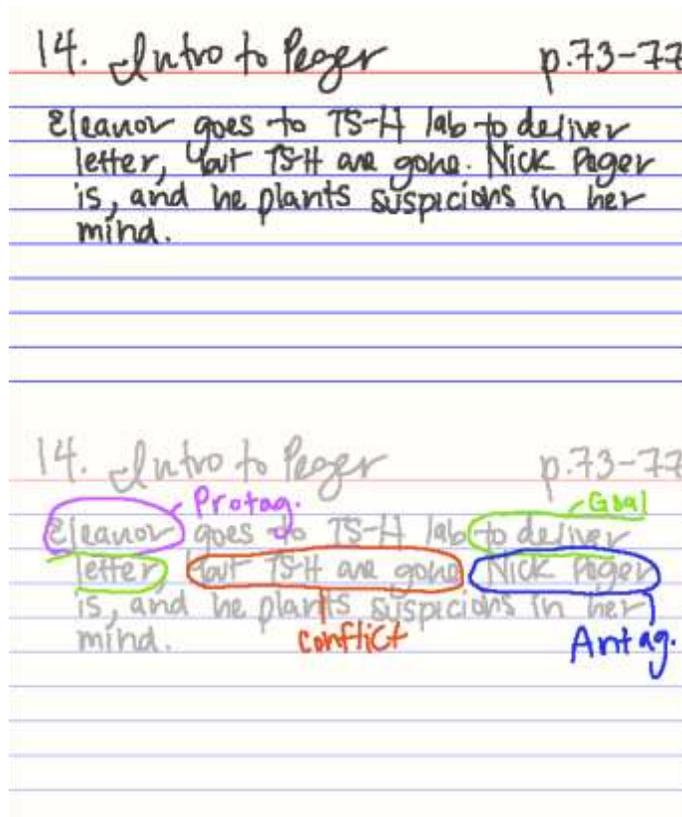
*You don't have to use index cards. If it's easier for you to just type the outline, go for it. I like index cards because they're easy to see one-at-a-time, easy to shuffle and reorganize if needed, and have plenty of space to add the post-its you'll be using later on.

2. BE SURE to number the scenes in order. You can use whatever numbering system you like (like: 4-1 = Chapter 4, scene 1; or 36 = scene 36) but the key is to *stay organized*.

3. BE SURE to include the scene pages on the card. This allows you to quickly go to the scene you're working on without having to scour the manuscript to figure out where it is.

4. On each scene card, you will include (see pictures):

- Protagonist
- Antagonist (this can be a person, thing, or situation)
- Scene Goal
- Scene Conflict (what is it that keeps the Protagonist from achieving his/her goal?)



Again, this might take some time since you're isolating lots of stuff into single sentences.

5. Now is also the time to start looking for two problems:

Scenes that do too much

Scenes that do nothing

- Scenes that do too much: These are the scenes that are simply too long. Sometimes, if the action is high energy, a 15 page scene will work. But usually, that's too much. Sometimes, having 5 new information reveals or turning points in a scene is okay, but usually that's too much.
 - To tell if you have too much, isolate how many goals are achieved/thwarted. If the scene goal changes several times, you might have too many things in that scene!
 - Also, consider length. Readers want natural pauses and endings, so you never want a reader with glazed-over eyes who's just trying to get to the end so he/she can set the book aside. No good!
- Scenes that do nothing: These are the scenes in which (as the name implies) nothing happens. The stereotype is a scene where characters sit around and drink tea. Unless that tea is poisoned or the conversation is majorly revealing, it simply doesn't belong in your novel. Every scene must further your story!!
 - To tell if you have a "nothing scene", look at your outline. If there is no scene goal or there is no scene conflict, then you've got a problem.

6. If you find you've got a scene like that, simply slap a post-it on there that explains it. Or, you can do what I do:

3. Greenhouse p.11-13
 Echo dives out work at greenhouse.
 conflict(?) antag. (?)

34. The Underground 149-159
 Echo finally gets to see the Underground, but it's a lot bigger (and scarier) than expected. Then Rain takes her to a meeting, where she argues with everyone.
 TOO MUCH!

7. Once you reach the last scene, make sure your cards/outline is organized and stowed away safely. You're done with Lesson 2!

Wrapping Up

That's everything for Lesson 2! Stay tuned for the next lesson, coming on Wednesday. In Lesson 3, we'll be **setting our goals and planning the Perfect Book!**

For now, get to work on that outline and start looking for weak scenes!