

Getting Unstuck



Quick Tricks

- Take a break: do some writing exercises
- Put your 'pantser' pants away and plot
- Create a narrative timeline
- Complete character sheets: clarify motivations and arcs
- Map out what must happen before the next major plot point
- Talk it through with a trusted person
- Come back to your tools: mind-mapping, storyboarding
- Ask yourself the hard questions and answer honestly: would my character really do this? Is this essential to the plot?

Unplotting

Unplotting is dissecting your plot in order to work out what's gone wrong.

- Go back to pre-plot when all you had was a premise or a couple of characters. Pull out the notebook or notes document. What is the premise? What's crucial or unstable about the premise – what's the bit that's gotta give? What's the fatal flaw in your character that's got to cause a fall? What do you need to resolve (or not resolve)?
- Micro-plot each chapter, including the next 3 or 4 chapters. This may involve creating a timeline for each chapter, including rising and falling action and resolution within the chapter. Map the overall plot structure using Freytag's pyramid and spot the holes.
- Check the minutiae. Cut the fat.
Wind it back a chapter – cut the whole chapter your working on and see what the story looks like.
Sometimes we write a dud chapter or get sidetracked. We can write ourselves into a corner, unwittingly creating a new subplot instead of furthering our main plot. See where this chapter sits on the plot map.

