

PLOT PROSE

The Romance Plot Outline Template

Your step-by-step blueprint for plotting a page-turning
romance — from meet-cute to happily ever after

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Introduction

"After plotting 200+ romance novels, I've learned that every great love story follows a pattern. Not a formula — a pattern. The difference matters. A formula feels predictable. A pattern gives you freedom to create within a structure that keeps readers turning pages until 3 AM."

— Coral Hart, PlotProse

What This Template Covers

- The Romance Beat Sheet — 9 essential story beats from opening hook to HEA
- Character Chemistry Worksheet — Define your hero, heroine, and the conflict that binds them
- Tension Building Checklist — The "3 Almosts Before the Real Thing" framework
- Trope Selector — Quick reference to the most popular romance tropes
- Subgenre Quick Guide — Find the right category for your story

How to Use This Template

1. Print it out or use a PDF editor to fill in the blanks digitally.
2. Work through each section in order, or jump to whatever inspires you first.
3. Use it for brainstorming, detailed plotting, or as a revision checklist.
4. Revisit it with each new book — the beats stay the same, but your stories never will.

Tip: This template works for any heat level — from sweet to steamy. Adjust the beats to match your story's tone.

1 The Romance Beat Sheet

Fill in each beat to create your romance story's backbone. Leave nothing blank — even a rough idea counts.

1. The Hook / Opening Image

What is the protagonist's life BEFORE love?

2. The Meet-Cute

How do they first encounter each other?

3. The Reluctance

Why can't / won't they be together?

4. The Growing Attraction

3 key scenes of increasing closeness

5. The First Kiss / Turning Point

When do they cross the line?

The Romance Beat Sheet (continued)

6. The Deepening

What makes them vulnerable to each other?

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7. The Dark Moment / All Is Lost

What tears them apart?

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8. The Grand Gesture

How does one fight for the relationship?

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9. The Resolution / HEA

How do they choose each other? What's changed?

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2 Character Chemistry Worksheet

Great romance is built on characters who need each other to grow. Define both sides of the equation.

The Hero

Core Wound:

False Belief:

What They Want:

What They Actually Need:

Character Chemistry Worksheet (continued)

The Heroine

Core Wound:

False Belief:

What They Want:

What They Actually Need:

The Conflict

External Obstacle:

Internal Obstacle:

Why They're Wrong for Each Other:

Why They're Actually Right:

3

Tension Building Checklist

The "3 Almosts Before the Real Thing" Framework

Readers crave anticipation. Give them three near-misses before the real payoff.

Almost Kiss #1

Setting:

What Interrupts:

Emotional Impact:

Almost Kiss #2

Setting:

What Interrupts:

Emotional Impact:

Tension Building Checklist (continued)

Almost Kiss #3

Setting:

What Interrupts:

Emotional Impact:

The Real Thing

How It Pays Off All the Tension:

Why NOW Is the Right Moment:

Emotional Impact:

4

Trope Selector

Circle or highlight the trope(s) that fit your story. Mix and match for a fresh twist.

Enemies to Lovers

They start with conflict, clashing at every turn, until passion breaks through the hostility.

Second Chance

Former lovers reunite, older and wiser, to face what went wrong the first time around.

Forced Proximity

Stuck together by circumstance — a cabin, a road trip, a job — they can't escape each other.

Fake Dating

A pretend relationship becomes dangerously real when the lines begin to blur.

Friends to Lovers

Best friends who've always been there suddenly see each other in a whole new light.

Forbidden Romance

Society, family, or duty says no. Their hearts say yes.

Age Gap

The years between them don't matter — until someone says they should.

Marriage of Convenience

A practical arrangement that was never supposed to involve real feelings.

Grumpy / Sunshine

One broods. One beams. Together, they balance each other out.

Boss / Employee

Power dynamics and professional boundaries make every stolen glance electric.

5 Subgenre Quick Guide

Knowing your subgenre helps you meet reader expectations. Here's a quick overview of the most popular categories.

Contemporary Romance

Set in the present day with relatable, everyday characters. Think small-town charm, big-city career women, and the boy next door. Reader expectation: modern dialogue, realistic conflict, and emotional authenticity.

Historical Romance

Set before 1960, most commonly Regency, Victorian, or Medieval. Rich world-building, period-accurate detail, and social constraints that heighten the stakes of forbidden desire.

Paranormal / Fantasy (Romantasy)

Magic, shapeshifters, vampires, or epic fantasy worlds where love transcends the ordinary. High-stakes plots with world-building that enhances the romance arc.

Romantic Suspense

Love under pressure. A mystery or thriller plot runs parallel to the romance, creating urgency and danger. The hero or heroine (or both) face real physical or emotional peril.

Small Town Romance

A tight-knit community where everybody knows your business — and has an opinion about your love life. Cozy settings, quirky side characters, and a strong sense of place.

Sports Romance

Athletes, competition, and the tension between public persona and private vulnerability. Whether it's football, hockey, or MMA, the sport adds stakes and structure.

Dark Romance

Explores morally complex themes, power dynamics, and intense emotional territory. Not for the faint of heart. Reader trust is essential — content warnings matter here.

Ready to Turn This Outline Into a Published Novel?

Here's how PlotProse can help you go from outline to "The End"

01

16+ Romance Writing Courses

From first draft to final polish — master every stage of the romance writing process with structured, self-paced courses.

Visit plotprose.com

02

AI Academy for Authors

Learn how to use AI as your writing partner. Write faster, brainstorm better, and overcome writer's block without losing your voice.

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03

Live Classes (\$50/class)

Get personalized feedback and real-time instruction from Coral Hart. Small groups, big breakthroughs.

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04

Daily Tips on Instagram

Quick, actionable romance writing advice delivered to your feed every single day. Join a community of 10,000+ romance authors.

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Your love story deserves to be told. Let's write it together.