

Scene Structure Checklist

- **Ultimate Writer Sin #1: If you're writing genre fiction, never, ever violate reader expectations for that genre.**
- **Ultimate Writer Sin #2: Never, ever confuse the reader.**
- The basic building block of a novel is the scene.
- A scene is a unit of conflict or struggle lived through by a single character (the Point of View, or POV, character) in a single location in a limited time frame.
- Each scene must achieve two things: keep the reader interested and advance the story.
- While there is no hard-and-fast rule on scene length, most writers write scenes about 5 to 8 manuscript (ms.) pages long.
- These are guidelines, not never-break-'em rules.
- Point of View (POV) is the perspective that a scene is written from; the POV character in a scene.
 - Staying in one character's POV in the scene increases the reader's emotional engagement with your story.
 - The correct POV character for a scene is usually the character most affected by the events of the scene or the one most emotionally engaged with the action.
 - All information presented in the scene must be only that information the POV character perceives, feels, or infers.
- All scenes have a fundamental structure of four pieces: Goal, Motivation, Conflict, Failure.
- GOALS:
 - The story goal is the fundamental question that your story will answer.
 - The story starts when the main character asks the story goal question.
 - The story ends when the goal is either achieved or not achieved.
 - The scene goal is the next step in the POV character's plan to achieve the overall story goal.
- MOTIVATION:
 - You need to ensure that the POV character has a solid, believable reason for doing anything he or she does. Even if he's trying to blow up the world.
 - You can take your story ANYWHERE you like as long as you motivate the characters to do so.
- CONFLICT:
 - Every scene must have someone or something that opposes what the POV character is trying to accomplish.
- FAILURE:
 - Until you get to the very last scene where the story's resolution happens, every scene has to end in failure.
 - There are two kinds of failure:
 - NO! where the scene goal is not accomplished.
 - YES, BUT where the scene goal is accomplished, but the POV character realizes that they are now in worse situation than before.