

Save The Cat! Beat Sheet Cheat Sheet

Multi-Scene Beats

Single Scene Beats

Note: prologues are outside of this structure.

ACT I

Set-Up (1-11%)

*Introduce the A Story and most of the characters.
Establish the “ordinary” or “thesis” world.
Show the flaws and what is missing.*

Stasis = Death

Debate / Come to Terms (11-23%)

*Convince the audience of the dangers.
Challenge the protagonist’s beliefs and understandings.
What is at risk?
Make the audience root for the protagonist.
State the “tangible goal”.*

Enter the upside-down new world.

Fun And Games (26-50%)

*“Deliver on the promise of the premise.”
Positive trajectory.
Explore the upside-down world.
“Trailer moments.”
Prepare for what is believed to be the final battle.*

ACT II

Bad Guys Close In (50-68%)

*Reverse the trajectory.
Downhill spiral.
Internal and external conflicts progress.
Losing hope.
Questions are raised about the goal(s).
Internalize conflict.*

Dark Night of the Soul / Dark Decision (68-77%)

*Reflect on the losses and explore the consequences.
The protagonist learns the theme that was stated.
Set the stage for the Act 3 ultimate challenge.*

Finale / Confrontation / Aftermath (77-97%)

Beats in The Five-Point Finale are flexible in length.

ACT III

Gather the Team / Make the Plan

Make a plan and gather what and who is needed.

Executing the Plan

Everything goes pretty much to plan...

The High Tower Surprise

A twist that challenges the protagonist directly. The original plan will no longer work. The “almost” defeated.

Dig Deep Down

Protagonist faces a test of faith. Find the strength to overcome the challenge.

Execution of the New Plan

Resolve action and complete the character arc. Victory or “purposeful failure”.

Opening Image

First impression of the protagonist.

Theme Stated (5%)

Something is said, probably not by the protagonist, that hints at what the protagonist will learn before the end of the story.

Catalyst / Inciting Incident (11%)

*Something happens that disrupts the “ordinary world”.
The call to adventure.
Something happens TO the protagonist.*

Break Into Act II (23%)

The protagonist takes action that is in response to the Catalyst.

B Story (27-99%)

*The protagonist’s “internal” or “spiritual” story.

Possibly introduce a character who helps transform the protagonist. This character might be an anti-thesis to Act 1 characters.

Love interest, buddy plot, family dynamics, personal growth, fish out of water, professional revelries, reconciliation, etc.

The B Story can be the place to have characters discuss the theme.*

Midpoint (50%)

The stakes are raised. Something big.

- A kiss or major romantic development*
- Add a ticking clock*
- The threat becomes personal*
- The threat is revealed to be bigger*

The story pivots. Change trajectory from positive to negative or negative to positive.

The B-Story can negatively interact with the A-Story

All Is Lost (68%)

*The protagonist’s lowest point.
A literal or metaphorical death of someone/something.
“The whiff of death.”*

Break Into Act III (77%)

Protagonist learns/realizes something new, likely from the B Story, that changes everything or makes a bold decision.

Final Image (99%)

A reflection of the Opening Image. Show what has changed.