A RESOURCE FOR WRITERS

BOOK MATH

The Numbers Behind Your Novel

PLAN YOUR STORY. PLOT YOUR JOURNEY. WRITE WITH CONFIDENCE



TURN COMPLEX INTO CLEAR. TURN IDEAS INTO NOVELS.

BY GALA RUSS

ROMANCE AUTHOR, BOOK COACH, AND PUBLISHING STRATEGIST

Dear Writer,

One of the reasons writers underestimate, or overestimate, how long writing a novel takes is because they were not told that they can do the math. A lot of us writers are not always friendly with math and the thought that it's helpful for writing might terrify some. But math really can help us.

Book Math won't write your novel for you, but it will give you realistic expectations before you begin and will help you track your progress, and act as landmarks. Think of this workbook as your novel's GPS.

Novels are made of words but also made of numbers: numbers of words, pages, chapters, weeks, deadlines.

When you know approximately:

- how long your book will be
- how many chapters you'll write
- where your major turning points should land
- and how long drafting realistically takes

That understanding removes a surprising amount of anxiety.

Happy creating,

Gala



Gala Russ
romance author, book coach,
and publishing strategist

CHOOSE YOUR TARGET BOOK LENGTH

STEP 1

Different genres have different reader expectations.
That doesn't mean every novel must hit these exact numbers, but it does give you a target.

Genre	Typical Word Count
Romance	70,000 - 90,000
Cozy Mystery	65,000 - 80,000
Mystery/Thriller	80,000 - 100,000
Women's Fiction	80,000 - 100,000
Science Fiction	90,000 - 120,000+
Fantasy	90,000 - 120,000+
Young Adult (YA)	60,000 - 80,000

My Target:

Genre: _____

Target Word Count: _____

Why this length? _____

_____

_____

ESTIMATE YOUR CHAPTERS

STEP 2

Chapters in books are not of the same length across the novel. Genre also affects their length. You can see an average length for your novel and use that number for these calculations. 2,000 words is just an example.

The Formula

Total Word Count ÷ Average Chapter Length = Estimated # of Chapters

Example: 90,000 ÷ 2,000 = 45 chapters

Quick Reference

Word Count	Approx. # of Chapters
70,000	35
80,000	40
90,000	45
100,000	50
110,000	55
120,000	60

My Chapter Estimate:

Target Word Count: _____

Average Chapter Length: _____

Estimated # of Chapters: _____

CALCULATE YOUR WRITING TIMELINE

STEP 3

This is where writers often underestimate how long a novel takes.
Instead of saying, “I’ll finish sometime this year,” let's calculate it.

1 How many hours can you realistically write each week?

Look at your real schedule, avoid wishful thinking.

2 Estimate Your Drafting Speed (Words Per Hour)

Everyone writes differently, but here are some typical drafting speeds:

Typing

- 500–1,000 usable words/hour

Dictation

- 1,500–2,000 usable words/hour

(after cleanup and editing)

3 Multiply them

Hours Per Week x Words Per Hour = Weekly Output (Words Per Week)

Example: 10 hours x 1,000 words = 10,000 words/week

My Weekly Output

Hours: _____

Words/hour: _____

Weekly output: _____

CALCULATE YOUR WRITING TIMELINE (CONT.)

STEP 3

Estimate Your Finish Date:

The Formula

Book Length ÷ Weekly Output + Buffer = Weeks to Finish

Example: 90,000 ÷ 10,000 = 9 weeks to finish
Now add at least 2-4 buffer weeks (think of holidays, vacations, potential sick days)

Estimated Drafting Time:

11 weeks, or approx. 3 months
NOTE: This calculation does not take into account planning, outlining, or revision.

Example Timelines (for 90k Draft)

Weekly Output	# of Weeks for 90k
2,500 words	38 weeks
5,000 words	20 weeks
7,500 words	14 weeks
10,000 words	11 weeks
15,000 words	8 weeks

My Timeline

_____

Hours Per Week x Words Per Hour = Weekly Output (Words Per Week)

_____

Book Length ÷ Weekly Output + Buffer = Weeks to Finish

Finish Date: _____

FIND YOUR STORY MILESTONES

STEP 4

Every story has important turning points. One helpful way to estimate where they belong is by using percentages.
These percentages are approximations, not rigid rules, and every novel will be a little bit different.

The Nine Story Miletones

Plot Point	Percentage
Hook	**1%**
Inciting Incident	**12%**
Plot Point 1	**25%**
Pinch Point 1	**37%**
Midpoint (Plot Point 2)	**50%**
Pinch Point 2	**62%**
Plot Point 3	**75%**
Climax	**88%**
Resolution	**100%**

To learn more about the nine story milestones and chiastic (ring) story structure get on my waiting list, and I will let you know when the Sotry Structure Resource is Available: https://gala-russ-38yst6.subscribepage.io/

FIND YOUR STORY MILESTONES (CONT.)

STEP 4

Convert Percentages into Words:

The Formula

Book Length x Percentage = Word Count 'Location'

Example:
90k words, midpoint
90,000 x 0.50 = 45,000 words

Example Word Count 'Locations' (for 90k Draft)

Plot Point	Word Count
Hook	900 words
Inciting Incident	10,800 words
Plot Point 1	22,500 words
Pinch Point 1	33,300 words
Midpoint (Plot Point 2)	45,000 words
Pinch Point 2	55,800 words
Plot Point 3	67,500 words
Climax	79,200 words
Resolution	90,000 words

CONVERT YOUR PLOT POINTS INTO CHAPTERS

STEP 5

If you know approximately how many chapters you'll have, you can estimate where each milestone belongs.

Example: For a 90k-word novel, if the average chapter is 2,000, and the total number of chapters is 45, the plot point distribution would be approximately:

Example Chapters (for 90k Draft)

Plot Point	Chapter
Hook	Chapter 1
Inciting Incident	Chapter 5-6
Plot Point 1	Chapter 11
Pinch Point 1	Chapter 17
Midpoint (Plot Point 2)	Chapter 22-23
Pinch Point 2	Chapter 28
Plot Point 3	Chapter 34
Climax	Chapter 39-40
Resolution	Chapter 45

CONVERT YOUR PLOT POINTS INTO CHAPTERS (CONT.)

STEP 5

My Story Milestones:

The Formula

Book Length x Percentage = Word Count 'Location'

Plot Point	Word Count	Chapter
Hook		
Inciting Incident		
Plot Point 1		
Pinch Point 1		
Midpoint (Plot Point 2)		
Pinch Point 2		
Plot Point 3		
Climax		
Resolution		

WORKBOOK EXCERCISE

Now put everything together!

My Genre: _____

Target Word Count: _____

Estimated # of Chapters: _____

Average Chapter Length: _____

Weekly Writing Hours: _____

Words Per Hour: _____

Weekly Output: _____

Estimated Finish Date: _____

Reflection

How does seeing the math change the way you think about your novel? _____

_____

What surprises you most? _____

_____

What feels more achievable now? _____

_____

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

Book Length → Chapter Length → # of Chapters

Book Length	Chapter Length	# of Chapters
70k	1.5k	47 Chapters
75k	2k	38 Chapters
80k	3k	27 Chapters
85k	2.5k	34 Chapters
90k	4k	23 Chapters
95k	3.5k	27 Chapters
100k	5k	20 Chapters
110k	4k	28 Chapters
120k	6k	20 Chapters

Plot Point Percentages

Plot Point	Percentage
Hook	1%
Inciting Incident	12%
Plot Point 1	25%
Pinch Point 1	37%
Midpoint (Plot Point 2)	50%
Pinch Point 2	62%
Plot Point 3	75%
Climax	88%
Resolution	100%

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

Writing Timeline Formulas

Total Word Count ÷ Average Chapter Length = Estimated # of Chapters

Hours Per Week x Words Per Hour = Weekly Output (Words Per Week)

Book Length ÷ Weekly Output = Drafting Weeks

Drafting Weeks + Buffer = Estimated Finish Date

Book Length x Percentage = Word Count 'Location'

Final Thoughts

Your novel is a project, and projects become much less overwhelming when they're broken into manageable pieces.

Book Math supports creativity by giving you realistic expectations, clear milestones, and a way to measure progress. Book Math is a guideline. Update it as your book or life circumstances change.

Whether your first draft takes three months or three years, every writing session moves you one step closer. My hope is that you will spend less time being unsure and more time writing the story only you can tell.

Keep Writing,

Gala



Gala Russ

romance author, book coach,
and publishing strategist

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OR BOOK A 15-MIN FREE DISCOVERY CALL