CHAPTER PLANNER

What does this chapter need to accomplish before you write it?

A chapter shouldn't just fill space between major plot points. Before you start drafting, know what changes, what the reader learns, and why this chapter needs to exist.

Use this planner for every chapter.

QUICK START

If you only have a few minutes, answer these five questions:

Chapter Number: _____

What happens?

What does the protagonist want?

What gets in their way?

What changes by the end?

Why does this chapter need to exist?

01. CHAPTER PURPOSE

What is the main job of this chapter?

□ Move the plot forward
□ Introduce a character
□ Develop a relationship
□ Reveal information
□ Create conflict
□ Raise the stakes
□ Slow down for an emotional moment
□ Set up a future event
□ Pay off an earlier setup
□ Change the protagonist
□ Other: _____

In one sentence, this chapter needs to:

02. WHERE ARE WE?

Chapter location:

Date / Time:

How much time has passed since the previous chapter?

Who is present?

What does the reader already know before this chapter begins?

03. THE CHARACTER GOAL

Who is driving this chapter?

“ ”

What do they want right now?

“ ”

Why do they want it?

“ ”

What are they willing to do to get it?

> “ ”

04. THE CONFLICT

Something should make the character's goal difficult.

What stands in their way?

Who or what creates the conflict?

What happens if they don't get what they want?

What choice are they forced to make?

05. WHAT CHANGES?

This is the most important question.

At the beginning:

The character believes:

The situation is:

By the end:

The character now understands:

The situation has become:

What is different because this chapter happened?

06. SCENE PLAN

Break the chapter into individual scenes.

Scene

What Happens?

1

2

3

4

Purpose

1

2

3

4

Conflict / Tension

1

2

3

4

Outcome

1

2

3

4

Scene Test

For each scene, ask:

Does something change?

□ Yes □ No

Does someone want something?

□ Yes □ No

Is there tension, discovery, emotion, or movement?

□ Yes □ No

If the answer is "no" to all three, ask whether the scene actually needs to be there.

---

07. CHARACTER & RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Which character relationship is affected in this chapter?

What happens between them?

What do they say?

What do they actually mean?

What remains unsaid?

Does the relationship become:

□ Closer

□ More distant

□ More complicated

□ More hostile

□ More trusting

□ Broken

□ Unchanged

08. INFORMATION & REVEALS

What does the reader learn in this chapter?



What does the protagonist learn?



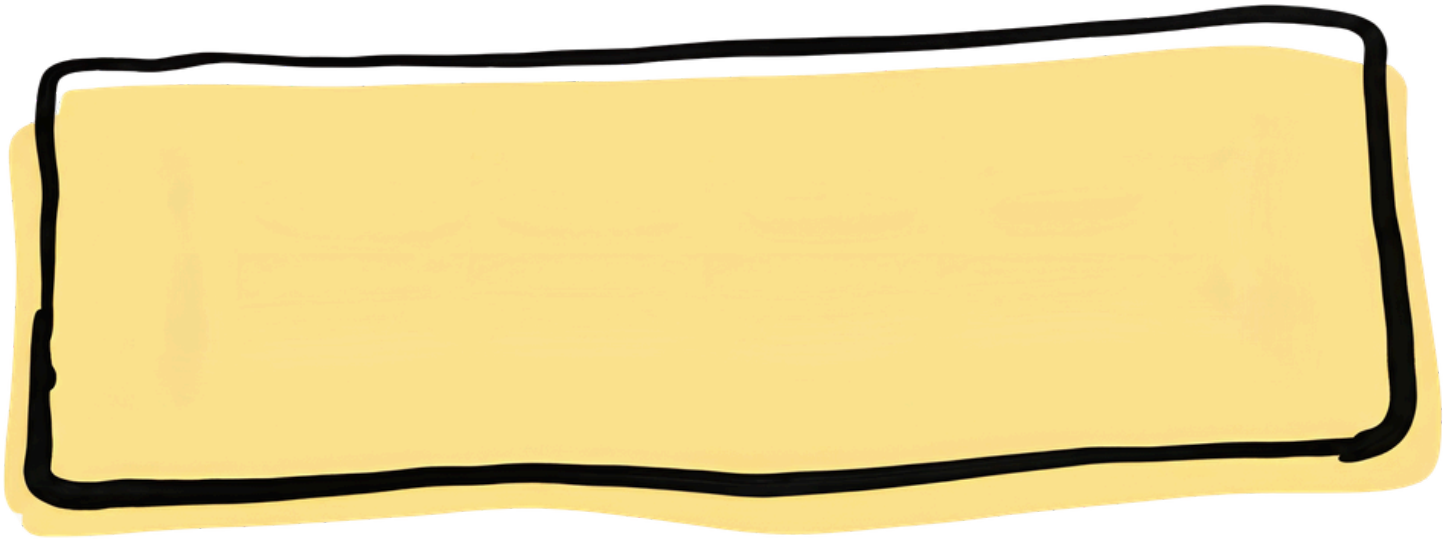
Is there something the reader knows that the character doesn't?



Is there something being deliberately hidden?

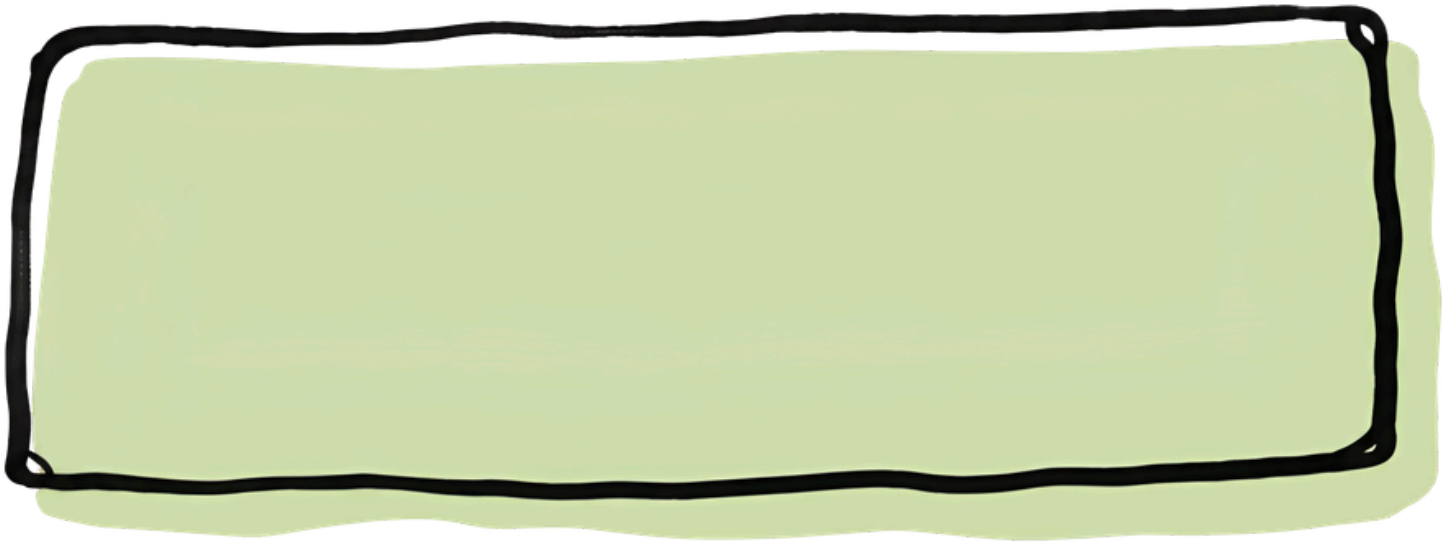


What question should the reader now have?

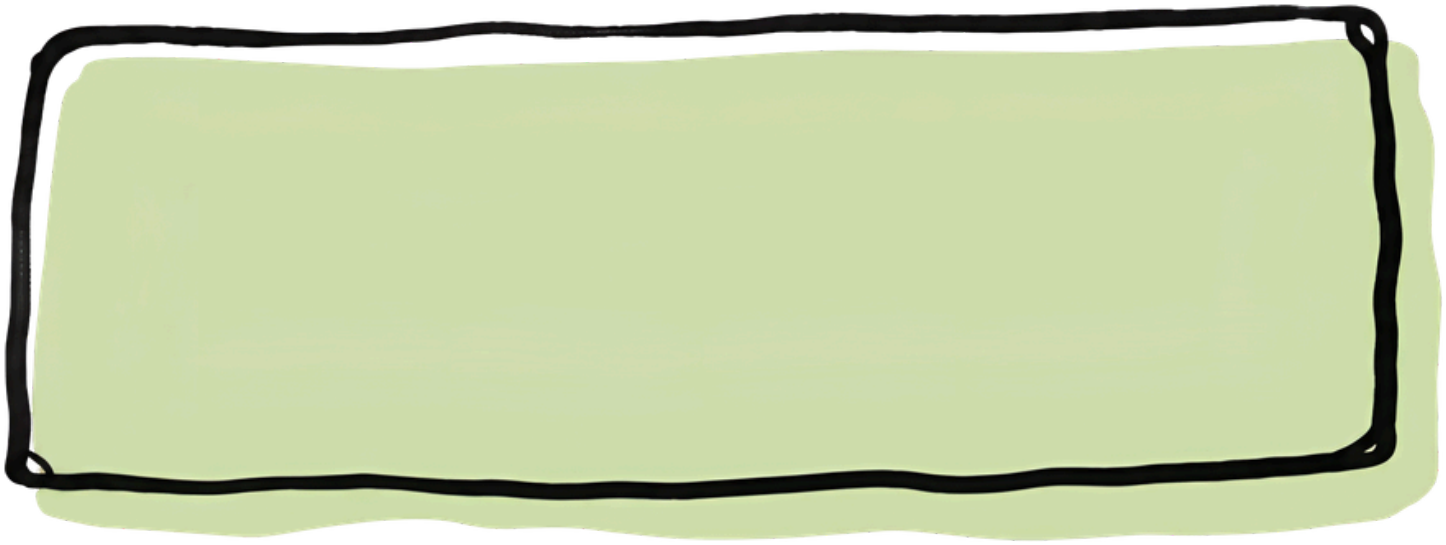


09. EMOTIONAL ARC

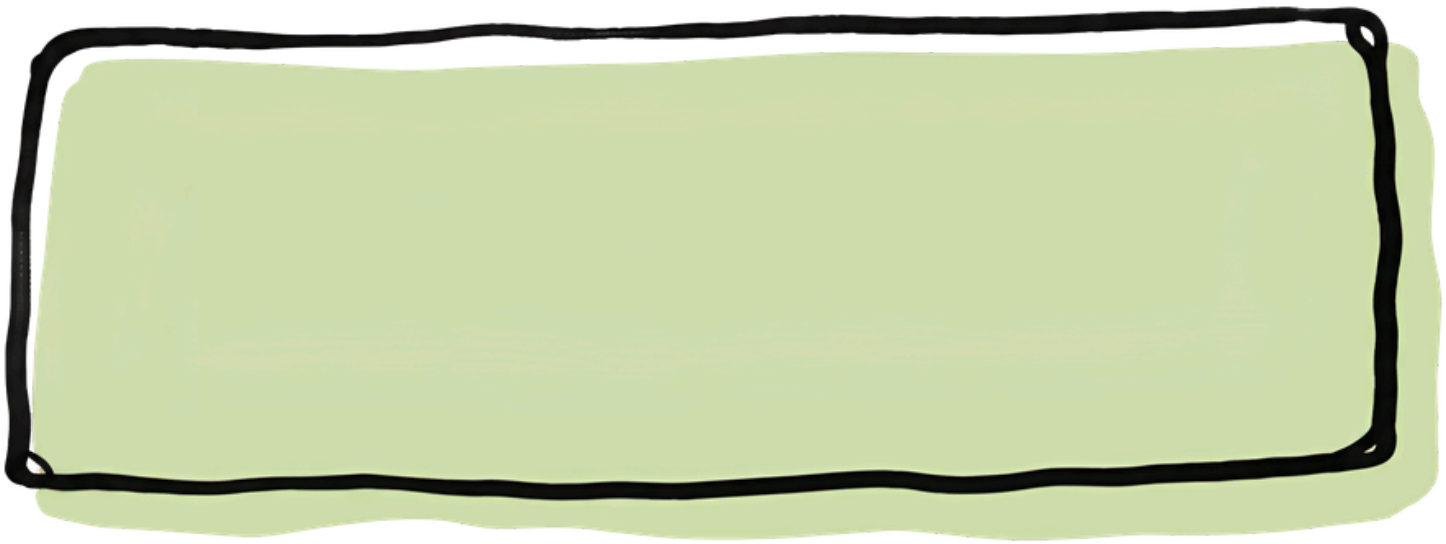
What should the reader feel at the beginning?



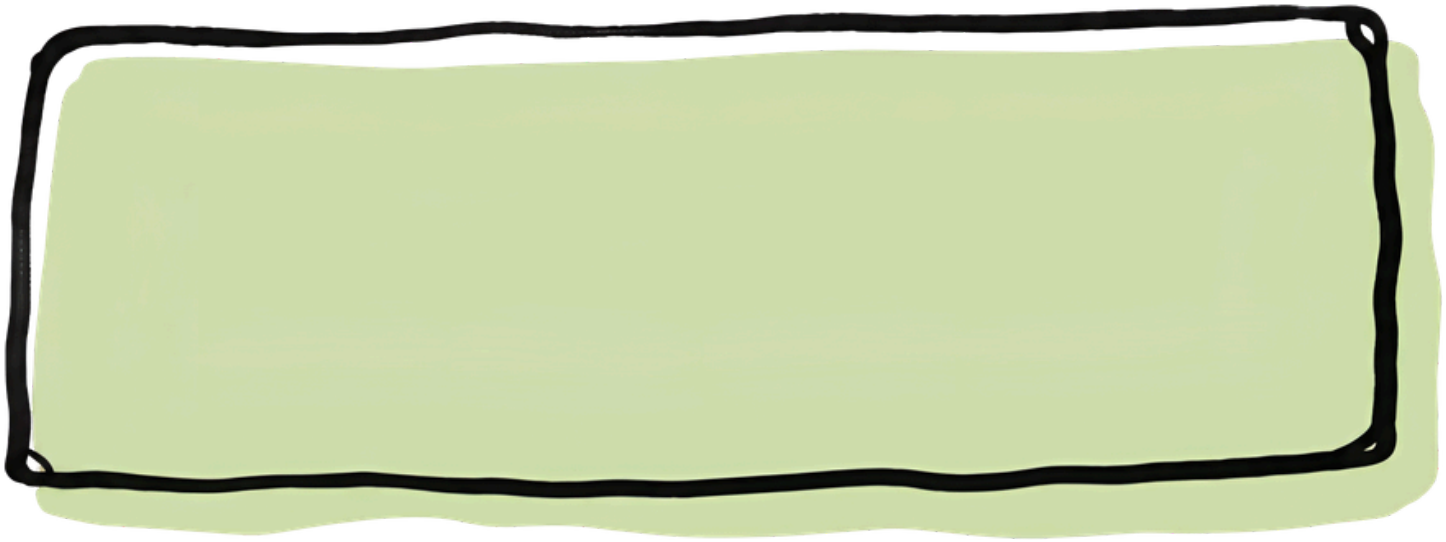
What emotional moment matters most in this chapter?



What should the reader feel at the end?



What emotion is the protagonist trying to hide?



10. SETUP & PAYOFF

Is this chapter setting something up?
What are you planting?

Where might it pay off later?

Is this chapter paying something off?

What earlier detail, promise, conflict, or question is being resolved?

11. THE ENDING

Don't just stop the chapter. Give the reader a reason to continue.

What is the final beat?

What changes in the final scene?

What new question, problem, discovery, or emotion should carry into the next chapter?

Possible chapter endings:

□ Revelation
□ Decision
□ New problem
□ Emotional shift
□ Betrayal
□ Cliffhanger
□ Consequence
□ Quiet emotional moment
□ New goal
□ Other: _____

12. CHAPTER CHECK

Before you start drafting:

□ I know why this chapter exists.

□ Someone wants something.

□ Something gets in their way.

□ Something changes.

□ The chapter affects the larger story.

□ Characters behave consistently.

□ Important information is revealed at the right time.

□ The emotional movement feels intentional.

□ The ending gives the reader a reason to continue.

THE CHAPTER IN ONE LINE

At the beginning, _____

but then _____

so the protagonist _____

until _____

and by the end _____

FINAL QUESTION

If I removed this chapter completely, what would the story lose?

_____

_____

If you can't answer that, the chapter may need a stronger purpose.

REMEMBER

Every chapter doesn't need a huge twist. But every chapter should change

something.