

The Fast-Draft Planning System

Four steps from Fast-Draft Your Memoir · Rachael Herron

STEP 1 Six Pivotal Moments

Write down the six moments that most shaped you as a human being. No more, and no fewer — *this exercise is about choosing*. There's no wrong answer, and no one else will see this list.

1

2

3

4

5

6

STEP 2 Six-Word Memoir

Distill your story into six words. Write as many as you like — then circle or star the one that feels like your book. (*For sale: baby shoes, never worn.*)









STEP 3 Big Personal Change

Every memoir needs a narrator who changes. That's you. Look at your starred six-word memoir above, and fill in the blanks below.

I started out...

I ended up...

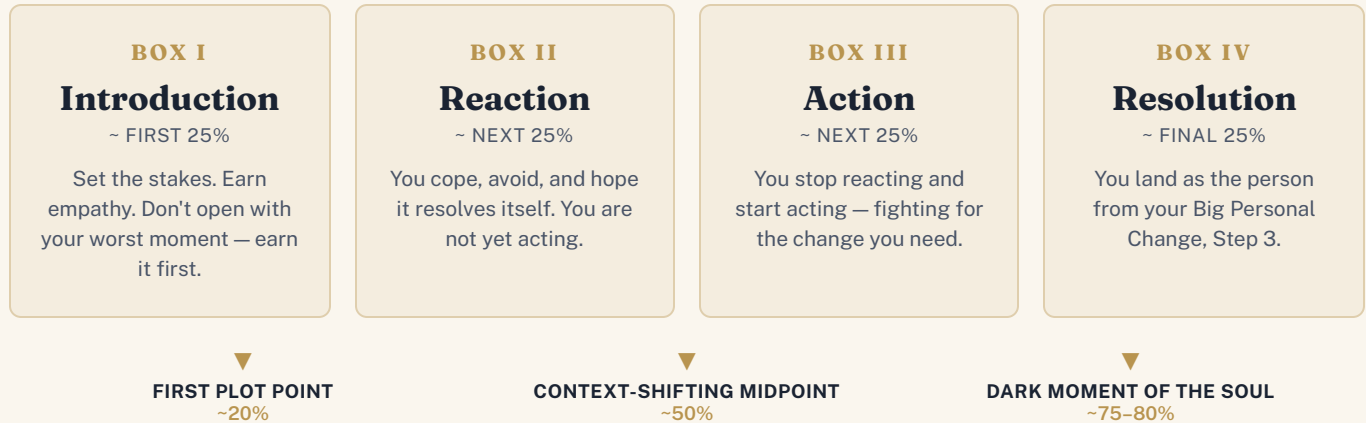
STEP 4 Two-Sentence Elevator Pitch

If you had one elevator ride to pitch your book to an agent, what would you say? Keep your six-word memoir and your change in mind.

See the Whole Shape

Step 6 • The Four-Act Structure

Steps 1–4 give you the raw material. Step 5 turns it into a ten-chapter outline. *Step 6 is the shape that outline grows into* — the four-act structure behind almost every memoir that works, adapted from Larry Brooks's *Story Engineering*. Each box is roughly a quarter of your book.



TRY THIS

Go back to your Six Pivotal Moments. Which one is big enough to force real change — your First Plot Point? Which one reshapes everything you thought you knew — your Midpoint? Which one is the worst moment before things turn — your Dark Moment? Once you can name those three, you already know the shape of your outline.

“No one can tell your story but you.”

— RACHAEL HERRON, *FAST-DRAFT YOUR MEMOIR*