

How I Write That Dreaded Synopsis

Writing a compelling synopsis had always been something I dreaded. Most of the time, I would tell my husband the general story and he'd craft the synopsis for me. He was also a writer. The thing I learned from him was not to make it into a big deal. "Just hit the main story beats," he'd say.



In my mind that was almost every movement of the book, but after reading over what he'd written for me for several of my books, I finally got it. He'd developed a system without ever having given it much thought... and it worked every single time.

I formatted it using single space, with a double space between paragraphs. No tabs.

I've refined the process a bit, but this was my basic template for over twenty sold books. I started out writing these in third person, because all of my books were written in third. Now I write in first person, past, so my synopsis would reflect that if I was writing one today.

Just as an aside, I'm a pantsier or a discovery writer, so a synopsis was like tying down the wind. I'm still a pantsier, but I find that knowing these basic elements help me get to the HEA much faster... even though most of the time, that HEA may not look anything like what I'd planned.

Please remember one thing, and this is important... do not make this a dry read. These pages should sparkle and reflect your writing style. If you write humor, these five pages should showcase that. If you write suspense, these five pages should shout intrigue and suspense. Whatever your style or genre it's important to reflect that. You're selling not only the great hook of your story, but your unique ability to captivate a reader, and also an agent or editor. Always shine your brightest. It's your greatest calling card for anything you want to accomplish.

Page 1

Synopsis for (Book Title) by (Your Name)

Heroine's full name and basic description, including hair and eye color, age etc. Then a brief description of her life status, and her concrete, physical goal.

A brief description of her burning inner longing or goal, something she needs but is repressing.

Hero's full name and basic description, including hair and eye color, age etc. A brief description of his status, and his concrete, physical goal.

A brief description of his burning inner longing or goal, something he needs but is repressing.

Page 2

The meet cute, along with the first major turning point of the story. How this TP impacts the hero and heroine on their journey.

Page 3

The midpoint, and how this causes our two main characters to think everything is going to be great now... their lives are on the right track either romantically or with their outer, physical goal. However, that inner quest is still not satisfied, but circumstances are changing, so they are each hopeful.

Page 4

Dark moment when everything falls apart, and what's worse, their inner goal now seems impossible.

Page 5

Resolution or HEA. How both outer and inner goals get resolved. The resolution should swing back to that first goal and initial need. Usually, it's the inner goal or desire that gets top billing here. The outer concrete goal also gets resolved, but in a completely different way than the hero or heroine ever thought possible.

That's it, other than to make sure your name and book title is on every page in the header, and those pages are numbered in the upper right-hand corner. Also, remember you can turn this into a two- or three-page synopsis simply by editing down each turning point to a few sentences.

Good luck!