

Lubbock Author Support Group
Logline and Elevator Pitch
April 15, 2024

A. What is a Log Line?

“A logline, or log line, is a brief (one to two sentence) summary of a movie, tv show, etc. that hooks the reader in and describes the central conflict of the story.” Studiobinder

(<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/write-compelling-logline-examples/#What-is-a-logline?>)

How long is a logline: 25 words or less. First draft shoot for 40—50, then fine tune and reduce extra words until you’re down to 25.

A logline **isn’t** a synopsis. A synopsis gives the entire plot, beat by beat. A logline is a much shorter summary of what the movie is about. A sales pitch.

B. Famous Movie Log Lines (<https://www.nfi.edu/logline-examples/>)

1. **Back to the Future**: A young man is transported to the past, where he must reunite his parents before he and his future cease to exist.
1. **Casablanca**: Set in unoccupied Africa during the early days of World War II: An American expatriate meets a former lover, with unforeseen complications.
2. **Elf**: A Christmas Elf goes to New York City.
3. **Finding Nemo**: When his son is swept out to sea, an anxious clownfish embarks on a perilous journey across a treacherous ocean to bring him back.
4. **Forrest Gump**: Forrest Gump, while not intelligent, has accidentally been present at many historic moments, but his true love, Jenny Curran, eludes him.
5. **The Godfather**: The aging patriarch of an organized crime dynasty transfers control of his clandestine empire to his reluctant son.
6. **The Hangover**: A Las Vegas-set comedy centered around three groomsmen lose their about-to-be-wed buddy during their drunken misadventures, then must retrace their steps in order to find him.
7. **The Help**: An aspiring author during the civil rights movement of the 1960s decides to write a book detailing the African American maids’ point of view on the white families for which they work, and the hardships they go through on a daily basis.
8. **The Matrix**: A computer hacker learns from mysterious rebels about the true nature of his reality and his role in the war against its controllers.
9. **Pulp Fiction**: The lives of two mob hit men, a boxer, a gangster’s wife, and a pair of diner bandits intertwine in four tales of violence and redemption.
10. **Rear Window**: A wheelchair-bound photographer spies on his neighbors from his apartment window and becomes convinced one of them has committed murder.
11. **Star Wars: A New Hope**: A spirited farm boy joins a rebellion to save a princess from a sinister imperial enforcer — and the galaxy — from a planet-destroying weapon.
12. **Titanic**: Two star-crossed lovers fall in love on the maiden voyage of the Titanic and struggle to survive as the doomed ship sinks into the Atlantic Ocean.

C. Tips:

1. The **first line** of the logline should focus on your character. Consider finding two opposing adjectives to describe your character’s traits.
 - a. A beautiful assassin.
 - b. A hot-headed anchor.
 - c. A culinary-gifted rat.
2. Don’t use character names. No one knows the characters yet, unless its an already established one, Spiderman, Thomas Jefferson.

3. Next focus on what the character wants. Pose a question to get the reader thinking.
4. To add depth, consider revising to make it a specific actionable goal.
 - a. A boy enters a spelling bee. Better: Against all odds, an autistic boy sets out to win a spelling bee.
5. Use active voice to bring the idea to life.
6. Irony can add an air of impossibility to your character reaching his goal.
 - a. Elf: A Christmas Elf goes to New York City.
 - b. The Silence of the Lambs: A young F.B.I. cadet must confide in an incarcerated and manipulative killer to receive his help on catching another serial killer who skins his victims.
7. Raise the stakes. If something blows up if you fail, the stakes are pretty high.
 - a. Speed: A young police officer must prevent a bomb exploding aboard a city bus by *keeping its speed above 50 mph*.
8. It's okay to break convention and give the logline a twist. Consider:
 - a. Pirates of the Caribbean: Blacksmith Will Turner teams up with eccentric pirate "Captain" Jack Sparrow to save his love, the governor's daughter, from Jack's former pirate allies, who are now undead.
9. Use a logline generator: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/write-compelling-logline>

D. How to Write a Compelling logline

1. Use a logline template:
When [INCITING INCIDENT] happens, [OUR PROTAGONIST] decides [TO DO ACTION] against [ANTAGONIST]. See the worksheet to start your logline.
2. **Character:**
 - a. Pick your main character. Multiple characters are hard to get into a concise logline.
 - b. Focus on who is the hero of the story. Whose point of view does the story show?
 - c. Use character function and one defining trait. See list of *Lajos Egri's Character Bone Structure*.
3. **Inciting Incident:**
 - a. What happens to the character? Something that takes them out of their regular life.
 - b. Don't focus on internal struggle. Loglines are for movies. We need to know what we will see on the screen.
 - c. Often the word 'must' is used to show the character's compulsion to reach the goal.
 - d. Separate the characters 'want' from the action goal. In *Inception*, the main character wants to see his kids again, but the action goal is to plant a thought in the dreamer's mind that helps him reach that goal.
4. **Theme:**
 - a. This is a bit more complicated. If you don't know the theme of your story clearly, you can skip this for now, but try to find it for your final version. Express the theme in a way that shows what your character's journey or transformation will be. How did they change, what did they learn, or what flaw did they fix?
 - b. What does the character have to overcome to reach their goal?
 - In *Bridesmaids*, the main character needs to learn "to love herself" before she can truly be the maid of honor to her best friend.
 - In *Inception*, Dom Cobb must learn "to let go of the guilt over his wife's death" before he can perform inception. See? Internal journey (theme) first, then external (goal)."
<https://loglineit.com/logline-generator/theme/>
5. **Reversal:**
 - a. This can add to your word count, but also can really strengthen your logline. What is the reversal in your story? It's usually the halfway point in the book where the failure sends your character down another path.

- b. You can use the transition, “but when” to introduce the reversal, especially if things have gone well so far.
- c. Write it as a full sentence or it doesn’t read well.
 - Example: “When a tourist is killed by a great white, a small-town sheriff must convince the community to close the beach, but when his own son is nearly taken by the shark (Event), he must go out into the ocean to hunt and kill the monster (Action).”

6. Stakes:

- a. Stakes can be either a good outcome, or disastrous. If Marla Adams doesn’t catch the serial killer, more people will die.
- b. Positive stakes are usually part of the Event and show what good thing can happen if the character reaches their goal. For Inception, if Dom Cobb is successful he will see his kids again.
- c. Negative stakes can answer the question: What happens to your character if they fail? Up it more by thinking about what is the worst thing that can happen? In Speed they blow up. In Star Wars, the planet will be destroyed.
- d. Use the word “before” and then the negative stakes to show urgency.

7. World:

- a. Does your world need explaining? Is it full of magic, or set in the future? Is it a place you can’t tell a lie?
- b. You know the voiceover cliché, “In a world where…” If important, add this, or simple, “In [name of world] then state the special feature.

Lajos Egri's Character Bone Structure

Physiology

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Height and weight
4. Color of hair, eyes, skin
5. Posture
6. Appearance: good-looking, over- or underweight, clean, neat, pleasant, untidy. Shape of head, face, limbs.
7. Defects: deformities, abnormalities, birthmarks. Diseases.
8. Heredity.

Sociology

1. Class: lower, middle, upper
2. Occupation: type of work, hours of work, income, condition of work, union or nonunion, attitude toward organization, suitability for work.
3. Education: amount, kind of schools, marks, favorite subjects, poorest subjects, aptitudes
4. Home life: parents living, earning power orphan, parents separated or divorced, parents' habits, parents' mental development, parents' vices, neglect. Character's marital status
5. Religion
6. Race, nationality
7. Place in community: leader among friends, clubs, sports
8. Political affiliations
9. Amusements, hobbies: books, newspapers, magazines

Psychology

1. Sex Life, moral standards
2. Personal premise, ambition
3. Frustrations, chief disappointments
4. Temperament: Choleric, easygoing, pessimistic, optimistic
5. Attitude toward life: resigned, militant, defeatist
6. Complexes: obsessions, inhibitions, superstitions, phobias
7. Extrovert, introvert, ambivert
8. Abilities: languages, talents
9. Qualities: imagination, judgment, taste, poise
10. I.Q

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Logline Worksheet

Use the template to start your logline. Under each section, write each element, then rework the words to fine tune it. Refer to examples, character bone structure, and tips to complete a short, final version.

Logline template

When **[INCITING INCIDENT]** happens, **[OUR PROTAGONIST]** decides **[TO DO ACTION]** against **[ANTAGONIST]**.

1. Inciting Incident:

2. Our Protagonist: (No names unless a famous character)

3. To do action:

4. Antagonist

KJ Waters Consultancy Elevator Pitch/Book Hook

A. What is an Elevator Pitch/Book Hook?

One sentence describing your book that hooks the listener into asking, “Tell me more!” The elevator pitch is what you say to a big player in the industry during the few minutes you have in an elevator. Book hook is the written version of that for readers, marketing professionals, agents, publishers, and more.

The pitch is an essential part of marketing your book. Boiling your entire novel into one sentence makes you focus on the essence of the story. The hook needs to grab as many readers IN YOUR GENRE as possible. To find out what other authors in your genre are doing, do your research.

Like the logline, it is not a summary of your book. It is a marketing element to get the listener/reader to want more.

It should be 20 words or less and take 30 seconds to pitch.

B. Famous Book Hooks

Book Hook examples: <https://blog.reedsy.com/guide/book-hook/hook-examples>

1. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey

“In the Fall of 1963, a Korean War veteran and criminal pleads insanity and is admitted to a mental institution, where he rallies up the scared patients against the tyrannical nurse.” (IMDb)

2. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini

“After spending years in California, Amir returns to his homeland in Afghanistan to help his old friend Hassan, whose son is in trouble.” (IMDb)

3. *The Other Boleyn Girl* by Philippa Gregory

“Two sisters, Anne and Mary, are driven to advance their family's power by courting the affections of the King of England and a ruthless rivalry develops between them.” (Prime Video)

4. *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green

“Two teenage cancer patients begin a life-affirming journey to visit a reclusive author in Amsterdam.” (IMDb)

5. *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* by V. E. Schwab

“France, 1714: in a moment of desperation, a young woman makes a Faustian bargain to live forever—and is cursed to be forgotten by everyone she meets.” (Amazon)

6. *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline

“When the creator of a virtual reality universe called the OASIS dies, he leaves his immense fortune to the first person to find a digital Easter egg he has hidden somewhere in the OASIS, sparking a contest that grips the entire world.” (Prime Video)

7. *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley

“In a utopia whose perfection hinges upon control of monogamy and privacy, members of the collective begin to question the rules, putting their regimented society on a collision course with forbidden love and revolution.” (IMDb)

8. *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown

“A murder inside the Louvre, and clues in Da Vinci paintings, lead to the discovery of a religious mystery protected by a secret society for two thousand years, which could shake the foundations of Christianity.” (IMDb)

9. *The Shining* by Stephen King

“A family heads to an isolated hotel for the winter where a sinister presence influences the father into violence, while his psychic son sees horrific forebodings from both past and future.” (IMDb)

10. *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn

“With his wife's disappearance having become the focus of an intense media circus, a man sees the spotlight turned on him when it's suspected that he may not be innocent.” (IMDb)

Childrens

11. *Where The Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak

“Yearning for escape and adventure, a young boy runs away from home and sails to an island filled with creatures that take him in as their king.” (IMDb)

12. *The Cat in The Hat* by Dr. Seuss

“When Sally and her brother are left alone on a rainy day, they think they are in for a dull time — but then the Cat in the Hat steps onto the mat, bringing with him madness and mayhem.” (Amazon)

Memoir

13. *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed

“A troubled young woman seeks to find herself and overcome her past by hiking the grueling Pacific Crest Trail.” (Prime Video)

14. *American Sniper* by Chris Kyle, Jim DeFelice, and Scott McEwen

“Navy S.E.A.L. sniper Chris Kyle's pinpoint accuracy saves countless lives on the battlefield and turns him into a legend. Back home with his family after four tours of duty, however, Chris finds that it is the war he can't leave behind.” (IMDb)

C. Five things your elevator pitch should be:

1. Reduced to one sentence
2. Clear and concise
3. Have a compelling hook
4. Needs to pose an exciting combination of introducing a problem and providing a solution
5. Written to entice your target audience

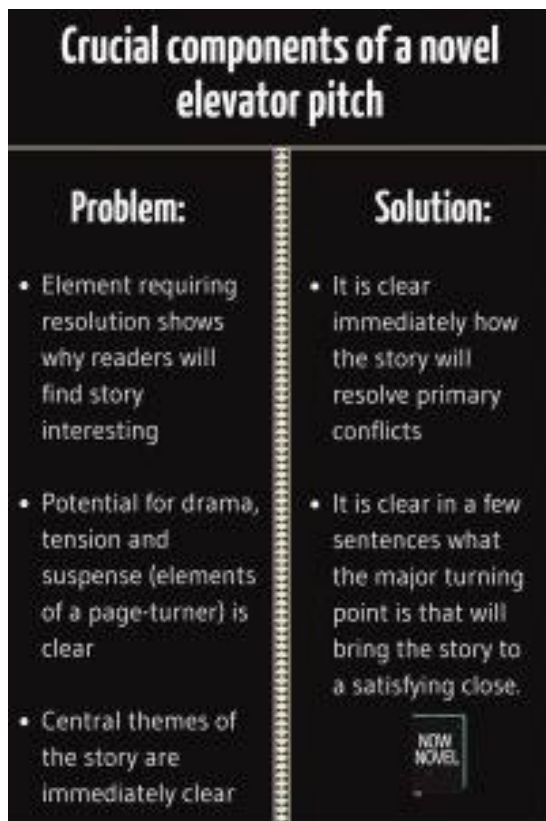
Tips:

- What makes your book unique?
- Make it memorable.
- Boil it down to the essential elements of the story. They don't need to know plot, other characters, the bad guy. Just a quick hit on what makes the book fresh, different and something to consider.
- Take your book description and remove everything except the part that is the most intriguing to the reader.

D. Five Steps to Creating your Pitch

1. What is your book about?
 - a. Fiction: Capture the plot. Non-fiction: What will the reader learn and what is the main idea?
 - b. Emphasize the essential conflict.
 - c. Hint at the change the character will undergo in the story.
2. What is the context?
 - a. Give the reader a feel for what they can expect in the story. Where are you taking the reader? Is it a historical fiction novel, political intrigue? Does the story take place in the future?
 - b. Memoirs should be in third person. Even if your book is in first person, it's standard to have the elevator pitch in third person.
3. Why should your reader care?
 - a. Readers know what they want to read. Know your genre and write it for that reader.
 - b. If it's an inspirational book, tell them how they'll feel after reading the book
 - c. Compare your book to similar titles so they know what they're getting.
 - d. For nonfiction, tell them what the takeaway is. What will they learn?

4. Make it shine
 - a. Rewrite until it is polished. Remove extra words. Replace boring words with exciting descriptive words.
 - b. Show your unique voice in the pitch.
5. Questions to ask:
 - a. What makes my book different? Does it have a unique angle? Characters are opposite of what you'd expect?
 - b. What makes my book weird? What sets it apart?
 - c. What is the #1 most interesting thing about my book?
 - d. Is my elevator pitch easy to grasp? Is it clearly written?
6. Remember the elements from a logline:
 - Character
 - Inciting Incident
 - Theme
 - Reversal
 - Stakes
 - World
7. Formula: Set in **[place and time period]**, the story follows **[protagonist]**, who wants to **[goal/motivation]**, but **[conflict]** doesn't make that easy, putting **[stake]** at risk.



8. Resources:
 - <https://jerichowriters.com/how-to-write-an-elevator-pitch-for-your-novel/>
 - <https://insights.bookbub.com/steps-to-writing-a-killer-elevator-pitch-for-your-book/>
 - <https://kindlepreneur.com/story-hook-examples/>
 - <https://www.writing.ie/resources/how-to-write-an-elevator-pitch-for-your-novel-really-useful-links-by-amanda-j-evans/>
 - <https://insights.bookbub.com/steps-to-writing-a-killer-elevator-pitch-for-your-book/>

- <https://kindlepreneur.com/story-hook-examples/>
- <https://www.nownovel.com/blog/how-to-create-a-novel-elevator-pitch/>

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Elevator Pitch Worksheet

Use the template to start your pitch. Under each section, write each element, then rework the words to fine tune it. Refer to examples, character bone structure, and tips to complete a short, final version.

Elevator Pitch Template

Set in **[place and time period]**, the story follows **[protagonist]**, who wants to **[goal/motivation]**, but **[conflict]** doesn't make that easy, putting **[stake]** at risk.

1. Place and time period:

2. Protagonist: (First name are okay)

3. Goal/Motivation:

4. Conflict: