

Plotting the HEA

On the next page is a basic romance plot beat sheet. Here is an explanation of each beat. Note that beat names aren't standard, so the ones I use here may be different from what you're familiar with. If the name of a beat doesn't make sense, rename it to something that works for you, as I have done. Consider checking out Gwen Hayes' *Romancing the Beat* for another romance plot option.

Act One:

- ◆ Opening: What's going on to set up the meet cute (inciting event)? Here we meet our characters, begin to learn their goals and conflicts.
- ◆ Meet Cute (Inciting event): This is where the lovebirds meet or re-meet (e.g. second chance), or interact (e.g. friends to lovers).
- ◆ Resistance: There's attraction or at least chemistry (e.g. in enemies to lovers), but one or both characters fight against it.
- ◆ Stuck Together: What decisions are made that will keep the love birds in the same orbit and unable to avoid each other?

Act Two:

- ◆ Fighting Attraction: Forced to spend time together, attraction grows, but they do their best to fight it.
- ◆ Waning Resistance: Resistance falters as they spend time together.
- ◆ Desire: Resistance is futile as desire leads them to consider giving into a relationship. Note this doesn't have to be sensual desire. In sweet romance, this is simply moving away from resistance to considering a relationship.
- ◆ Ut-Oh 1 (Pinch Pt 1): What problem (conflict) arises that gets in the way of achieving the goal? This is a reminder to them about why they were resisting in the first place.
- ◆ Imagining HEA (Midpoint): Despite the reminder that love is a bad idea, they're lured by the possibility of an HEA
- ◆ HEA within Reach: This is a honeymoon period, but the characters still haven't dealt with the conflicts that can threaten their love.
- ◆ Doubt/Fear: While they're wanting love, because the conflicts still exist, they begin to worry.
- ◆ Ut-Oh 2 (Pinch Pt 2): What conflict arises that makes the character(s) rethink the relationship and/or gets in the way of the goal? This is usually a bigger conflict than the first ut-oh.
- ◆ Retreat: Ut-Oh 2 causes the character(s) to retreat at least in their mind, even if they act normal on the outside.
- ◆ Black Moment: What happens that ruins everything? This is a conflict and/or the fear realized.

Act Three:

- ◆ Aftermath/Misery: Characters try to return to pre-meet cute, but find it difficult.
- ◆ Ah-Ha/Epiphany: Characters grow, and realize their love for the other.
- ◆ Grand Gesture: An act that shows risking heartbreak in an effort to grab love.
- ◆ HEA: Characters have grown, and now have a healthy relationship.
- ◆ Life after HEA (optional epilogue): Seeing the couple down the line getting engaged, married, having a baby or other event that shows they're still happy, thriving on their own and together.

Write with Harte Romance Plot Beats

Total Word Count: _____

Word Count Per Act: _____

