**How to Write Science Fiction**

Science Fiction has come a long way from the days of Jules Verne. It's quickly become more complex and more popular than ever before. It can be a bit challenging to write but if you keep a few things in mind then you'll be more than ready to write a great story.

### Part 1 of 3: Getting Inspiration

1. 1

**Start with some research on scientific developments.** Science fiction frequently builds on scientific developments that have already captured our public imagination. If you’re struggling to develop a really good story, a good place to start is to turn to current scientific developments. By building on the latest science, you can avoid a lot of the same old cliches and write something that people are really excited to read.

* + For example, you can follow the Reddit thread called r/Futurology. This is an online forum which follows the current developments of science. The content should give you lots of ideas of what your future world could look like.

1. 2

**Read good examples of science fiction.** Getting inspiration from the classics of sci-fi can help you in writing your own work too. Don't shy away from it because you feel like might lead you to be unoriginal: reading from others can teach you a lot about what does and doesn't work in a novel. You can also learn about the way that sci-fi novels usually look or sound, letting you decide to stick with those aesthetics or break free of them entirely.

* + Good books to read include Dune, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, and The Handmaid's Tale.
  + Try other genres of sci-fi as well. Sci-fi is a very complex genre and includes many sub-genres. You might want to check out hard science fiction, soft science fiction, steampunk, space opera, cyberpunk, and post apocalyptic.

1. 3

**Look at current events.** Science fiction is at its best when it teaches us about the world that we live in now. Sometimes when events are too close, people get too emotionally attached and they struggle to see things rationally. When you package current events in aliens and other planets, the ideas become easier to process and understand. Draw inspiration from current events that are important or interesting to you and tell the story in a way that removes some of the biases that people may have.

* + For example, the classic sci-fi Dune is really about post-WWII conflict in the Middle East, and told in a way that makes it easier for modern readers to understand the point of view of the desert people.

1. 4

**Look for a message you want to send.** You can also build your story off of a message that you want people to understand. This can actually be a really good way to build a book, because it gives you a path and a goal. When your story actually goes somewhere and has a final meaning, something for the reader to take away, it's much more likely to make an impact on them.

* + For example, maybe you want your readers to realize that grief is a toxic emotion. You could then write a story about how a starship admiral risks his career to redeem the reputation of his wife, who died betraying the Empire, and in turn loses his life instead.

### Part 2 of 3: Building Your World

1. 1

**Root your world in relatable material.** Science fiction can often look wildly different than the world we know. For many people, they have a hard time following and understanding a world so different from their own. If you want to make a story that resonates with a lot of people, write something that's rooted in the world we know.

* + For example, your main character might be from an alien race of tree people. However, your character still might emotionally struggle because it cannot find a mate.

1. 2

**Pay attention to real-world science.** Science fiction, of course, includes lots of fiction. Nothing wrong with that. However, if the science in your science fiction is too far off of what people know about how things work, they won't buy it.[[1]](http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Science-Fiction" \l "_note-1) It might even come across as poor writing, since sometimes fantastical science in science fiction is used to overcome problems with the plot. Don't give your readers an excuse to find problems with your writing: don't neglect science entirely.

* + The best example of this is the radio active spider bite. Back when Spider Man was created, people knew very little about radiation. Scientists seemed to be making all sorts of strides and who knew what they could make the substance do next. However, now people understand that if you get a giant dose of radiation, it mostly just kills you at different speeds. No super powers or rapid evolution. Don't write a radioactive spider bite.

1. 3

**Set some basic rules for your language.** If you are using an alien or other fake language in your story, it can help if you set some basic rules for how the language sounds and works. This doesn't mean you have to full Tolkien Elvish on your book, just that it helps the reader's suspension of disbelief if there is some consistency to the language included in the text.

* + For example, you don't want to have a phrase like "br'ack drack kagash met eerk" and a phrase like "lae kalai O'oro siita ai" in the same language. Even though they're fake, they're clearly too different to likely come from the same language (one is heavy on consonants, the other on vowels). This can also ruin the characterization of your language. Think of it like mixing Klingon and Elvish.

1. 4

**Build the culture.** If your story takes place on an alien world or even on an Earth very different than this one, you might want to put some thought into developing the culture of that people or world. When your story looks very similar to modern day, it's easy to just let the reader assume that the culture is much the same. However, if you have aliens making Seinfeld joke, the reader will have a much more difficult time immersing themself in your world.

* + Things you'll want to consider include the usual: music, art, what people do for fun, and religions. You might also want to think about politics and history, and how the changes in those areas might have affected race, gender equality, and other social factors that impact daily life.

1. 5

**Create your environments.** One of the main draws of science fiction is the feeling that the reader gets, like they're escaping from the world that they know into one which is more interesting. This means that you'll want to work to create an engaging world with enough depth to draw in a reader.

* + Think about things like geology, ecology, biomes, cities, countryside, and of course non-terrestrial locations as well like ships and stations. Whatever is best for story. Think about what makes those places tick and the kinds of problems that people might encounter when they exist in an environment like that.
  + For example, Fran Herbert's Dune is incredibly effective at drawing in readers with the image that he paints of a desert planet. Its vast sands, rocky mountains, giant worms, and subterranean oceans create a magical feeling that makes the plot even more engaging.
  + Consistency within the environment where your story takes place will also help your story feel more immersive and believable. You wouldn't want to stick Alice's Wonderland right next to the jungle of Apocalypse Now and if you did, you'd want it to make a lot of sense within the story.

### Part 3 of 3: Developing Your Story

1. 1

**Choose your conflict.** Conflict is one of the most important drivers of a story and there are all types of conflict that you can choose, depending on the kind of story you want to tell. The type of conflict tells the reader a lot about what you see as the important message of the text and what sort of themes they're meant to take away.

* + One example of type of conflict is Man Against Nature. This kind of story, which might be able a woman getting stranded on an alien planet, is generally about our struggles against all of the normal challenges in our life.
  + You can find more information about types of conflict [here, in Step 2](http://www.wikihow.com/Begin-Writing-a-Book" \l "Organize_Your_Plot_sub)

1. 2

**Hone the sound of your narrative.** Writing a book is about more than just typing up sentences that are technically correct and tell a story. The words that you choose

* + Choose a narrative point of view. Narrative point of view is who is telling your story. Your options include first person, second person, and third person narrators. This will make the most noticeable difference in how your story reads. It will also play a huge role in what you do and don't share with your readers. For example, a first person narrator will not know what another character is thinking. You can use this to hide information from your audience, so that it can be revealed when needed.
  + Choose a narrative time. This is whether your story is being told in the past, present, or future. You can even mix within a book, using one for some chapters and another for others (doing this a lot, however, is not recommended). Each poses its own challenges or helps in other ways.
  + Choose a narrative voice. Narrative voice is how the story is told. Is it told as the narrator thinks it? Is it told through email (since letters are probably out for a science fiction)? Is the narrator reliable or unreliable?

1. 3

**Stick to a style.** A writing style is all about the words that you choose to tell your story. Now, most people will do it naturally, but you'll want to look out for sections in your story where the styles don't match. This happens most commonly when you write it over a great deal of time, as you experience different emotions and influences. However you're telling your story, it should be the same all the way across or experience only subtle changes that make sense within the context of the story itself.

* + Read your story and compare different sections. Is it told in a funny way, like Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy? Is it told in a serious way, like Dune? Do the characters talk like they come from a Shakespeare play or do they talk like teens in an 80s movie?

1. 4

**Choose a structure.** The structure of a story is how it is told more broadly. The most common way to think of this is like the acts in a play, since many novelists still use this format for writing their own stories. You'll have the first section (where the story is introduced), the second section (where the story is developed), and the third section where the story is concluded. Now, there are more options than that particular structure of course, but that is the most common one.

* + The structure described in the step is called the "three act structure". You can also have two or four act structure, a cyclical structure (monomyth), or a nonlinear story.
  + So, for example, let's say you want to try the four act structure. This would be very similar to the three act, but between the beginning and conclusion acts, you'd have an act which establishes the stakes and then an act which develops the conflict.

1. 5

**Maintain good pacing.** Pacing is how quickly the important events of the story happen. Pacing is crucial to any work of fiction and is especially key for works of science fiction (which are traditionally longer than most novels, at an average of around 100,000 words[[2]](http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Science-Fiction" \l "_note-2)). If the pacing is off, the reader can have a hard time staying engaged as it makes the book too slow or too intense for real attachment to the characters to form.

* + If you struggle with pacing, make yourself a plot chart. Break your story into three acts, then break down each act into three arcs. Each arc is then broken down into three significant actions or plot points. For example, with Star Wars, an arc might look like "The droids are captured by the Jawa, Luke finds the message from Leia, Luke meets Obi Wan" or "Luke sneaks onto the Death Star, Luke saves Leia, Obi Wan is killed".

1. 6

**Use the Hero's Journey.** A final tool you can put in your toolbox is the Hero’s Journey (sometimes called Monomyth). This is the theory, put forward by the famous mythologer Joseph Campbell, that all stories are basically the same story. Many good stories do fit into a basic format and you can use this as a skeleton to build off of when your plot feels aimless.

* + The basics of the monomyth should feel familiar to you. The hero is going about living a normal life when suddenly something changes and they're forced to venture into the unknown. The hero meets a cast of characters, has to endure some trials, but ultimately learns something that they can use to overcome some great challenge. With their task complete, they can return with this new wealth of experience to regular life.

## Tips

* You can combine several different ideas to base your book around; you don't have to stick to just one.
* Don't be afraid to write about something that would probably never happen. Science is the basis, but it is also fiction, so you can stray from the facts a bit. The bigger deal is to make your characters believable.
* Don't feel like you absolutely have to put it in the physical world we know. A lot of sci-fi has been successful within made-up worlds.
* Your audience will usually accept one major violation of real-life science. Choose it carefully, and use it to explain all the other fantastic events and technologies in your book. You might even get away with tweaking the laws of physics a bit; the trick there is to create a significant difference, but to do so in a way that current technology wouldn't spot.
* When you describe your world, make sure your worlds are written clearly and try to make it easy for the reader to imagine that world in their head.
* Read a lot of sci-fi before you begin, just to get a feel for it. Some good role models for beginners are Madeline L'Engle, Michael Crichton, Garth Nix, Robin Cook, Philip Pullman, Margaret Peterson Haddix, and James Patterson. (Note: Some of these authors write in other genres as well as science fiction). For more experienced readers, Frank Herbert, Eoin Colfer, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Orson Scott Card, Steven Baxter and Robert A. Heinlein are suggested.
* Don't be afraid to write a parody of the genre. What many people consider the best sci-fi book of all time, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, is actually a parody.
* Learn about what you write. Examples:
  + Never let an Earthling go outside his/her spacecraft without spacesuit, especially not in space but also on planets or natural satellites with strange atmosphere for them (living creatures in space leaving spacecraft without suit should be avoided, except a character like Superman). An Earthling should go out of his/her spacecraft without spacesuit only on Earth and other celestial objects with an atmosphere similar to Earth.
  + Only stars shine natural. Planets, asteroids and natural satellites only shine with reflected starlight.

## Warnings

* If your main character (or even a supporting character) is a scientist, make sure you don't just make him/her a go to guy for all things science. Science in multidisciplinary. This means that a biologist may know nothing about robots, or vice versa. State the scientific field that he specialises in and limit his expertise to that field. He may know something about some other fields but you shouldn't have a quantum physicist trying to give advice about poisonous alien plants. If you must make your science-officer a "jack of all trades", then make sure to also make him "but master of none".
* Many science fiction writers think that their main character has to be a scientific super-person. That's not true. Normal people are okay, too.
* A scientist is not the same thing as an engineer. A scientist can think up theories. An engineer will determine if it can be built. Don't have your physicist character building a contraption from scratch based on a particle theory that they just came up with. Advanced electrical engineering is not normally within the training of your typical physicist.
* When you get writer's block, don't give up on the story. Give it some time. If you give up, you'll regret it later.
* Take inspiration from other writers, but don't steal their ideas. That might not be technically plagiarism, but after a while of one idea, it gets cliche. Avoid it.
* Real science is not at all dramatic. It involves a lot of paperwork, networking, bureaucracy, and red tape. And most scientists go home at the end of the day to families or single lives involving hobbies, love lives, friends, bills, a mortgage, and all the other things that everyone deals with. Most scientists are not dashing adventurers like Reed Richards or Bernard Quatermass. Also, avoid the cliched depiction or the reclusive creepy obsessed weirdo or the extreme nerd. Scientists have passion for their topics.
* Don't stray too far from science fact. There is a limit to what you can convince people to believe.

## Article Info

Categories: [Fiction](http://www.wikihow.com/Category:Fiction)

Recent edits by: Colecrane, Donagan, Little\_birdy

In other languages:

Português: [Como Escrever Ficção Científica](http://pt.wikihow.com/Escrever-Ficção-Científica), Français: [Comment écrire de la science fiction](http://fr.wikihow.com/écrire-de-la-science-fiction), Deutsch: [Wie man Science Fiction schreibt](http://de.wikihow.com/Wie-man-Science-Fiction-schreibt), Español: [Cómo escribir una novela de ciencia ficción (para principiantes)](http://es.wikihow.com/escribir-una-novela-de-ciencia-ficción-(para-principiantes))