

Welcome to my portfolio!

What I'm showcasing here is a quick-start guide for the book-writing software Scrivener. Scrivener is a unique program, combining word processing, outlining, and project management capabilities. It's incredibly powerful, and widely adopted by authors, but the learning curve can be steep for new users.

Goal: Walk users through a basic workflow for writing and exporting a project. As most users will go on to format their book with other software, I've focused the guide on producing a .docx file compatible with the two most popular formatting programs, Vellum and Atticus.

Intended audience: Independent authors, who are likely tech-savvy enough to perform basic computer tasks like installing the program, but may otherwise be overwhelmed by Scrivener's complex features and interface.

—Jordan Halpern

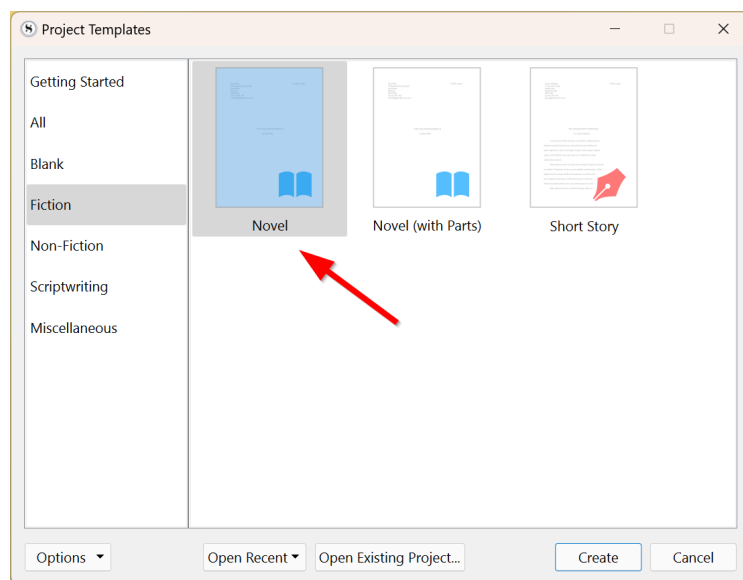
Scrivener Quick-Start Guide for Novelists (Windows)

Scrivener is a powerful software tool for writing a book. But with a host of complex features and a nearly 800-page user manual, getting started as a new user can be overwhelming. This guide is designed to walk you through the basics. It demonstrates:

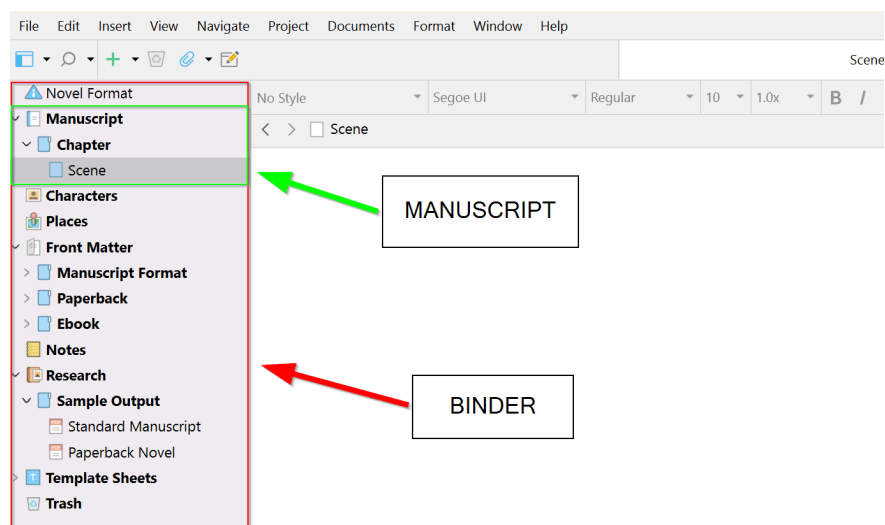
- How to set up a new project
- Best practices for writing in Scrivener
- How to export your manuscript for compatibility with two popular book formatting programs, Vellum and Atticus

Getting Started

When you open Scrivener for the first time, it will bring up the New Project window. Go to the “Fiction” tab on the left, select “Novel,” and click “Create.”



You will then be prompted to select a location on your computer to save your project. Pick somewhere you'll remember, like a folder named “Scrivener projects.”

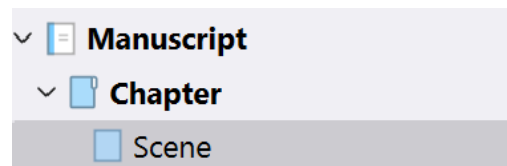


When your new project opens, you'll see a vertical bar on the left side of the screen. This is called the binder.

The Binder

In a traditional word processor, your book would be composed of one big, long text document. This makes precise navigation difficult, particularly for projects with many chapters. In Scrivener, your work is instead broken up into many smaller documents, which you can further organize through a system of folders. You access these folders and documents through the binder.

Let's take a closer look:



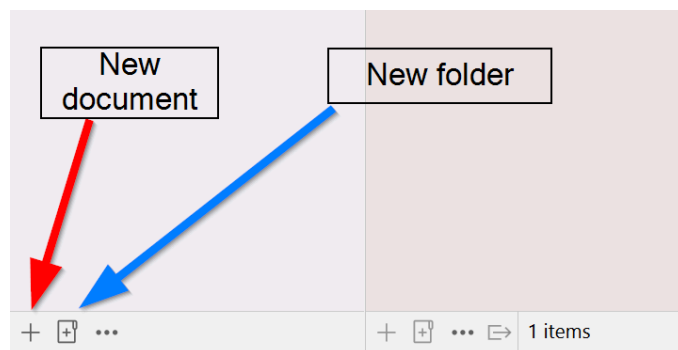
*Folders are distinguishable from documents by their blue icons and **bolded** text.*

At the top is the “Manuscript” item. This is the overarching folder that contains your entire book. As you can see, both “Manuscript” and “Chapter” have little arrows to the left of them. This indicates that they are folders containing other items. The document “Scene” is contained within the “Chapter” folder, which is itself contained within “Manuscript.”

This hierarchy is the basic way you will organize your book, and it is highly customizable. The default setup suggests a folder for each chapter, with documents inside for each scene. To start a second chapter, you simply create a second folder and place your *Chapter Two* documents inside it.

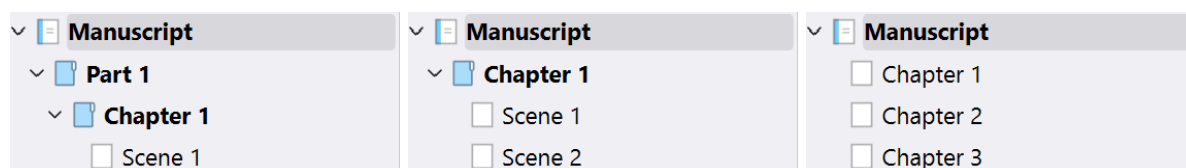
That's the most standard setup, but your options are infinite. For instance, if you had selected “Novel (with parts)” as your project template, your “Chapter” folder would be contained within a “Part” folder. You can also avoid folders entirely, and simply place a document for each chapter directly inside of “Manuscript.”

It's all up to you, and you have the freedom to rearrange things at any time.



Move items in the binder by dragging them with your mouse. To create a new folder or document, use the buttons at the bottom-left.

Take a moment to set things up in whatever structure you like best. Some examples are below:



Chapter folders w/ parts

Chapter folders

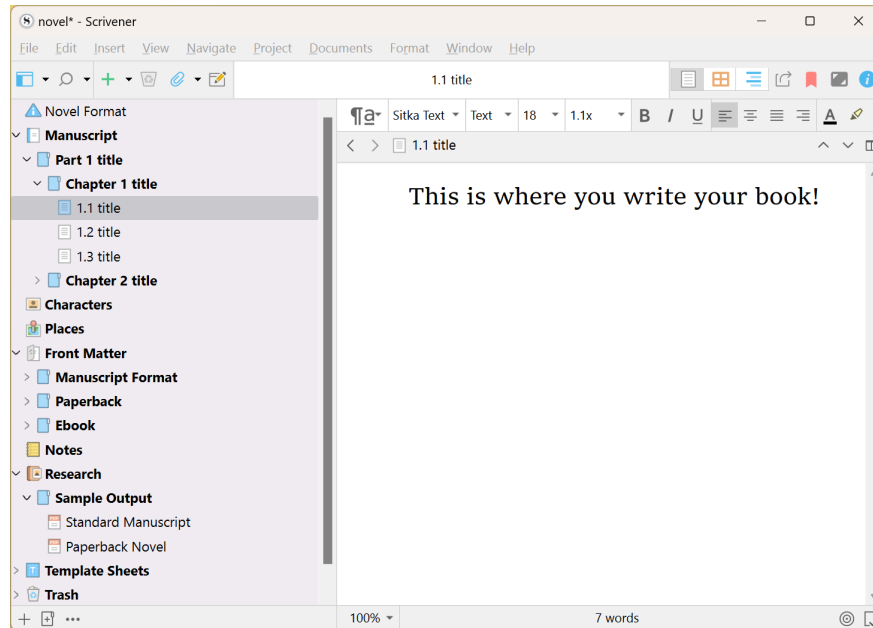
Chapter documents

For now, feel free to ignore the other items in the binder (Characters, Places, etc.) These are resources you can use, but they are not a part of your book, and can be deleted if desired. Only documents contained within the “Manuscript” folder are included in your finished work.

(“Front Matter” can typically be deleted, as most authors will add this material during formatting.)

Writing

Now you’re ready to write! You’ll notice that when you select a document in the binder, the main area of the screen turns into a blank, white page. To start typing, all you have to do is click the center of the screen. You can also press F11 to enter “composition mode,” which is a full-screen view of your document.

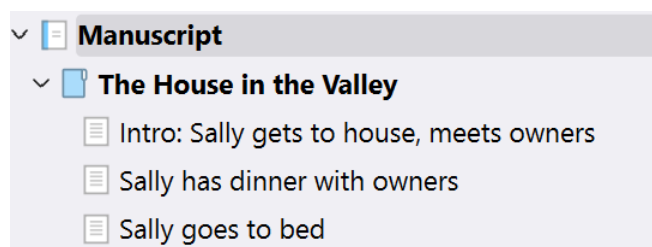


You can change the font settings, but it isn’t necessary. You’re producing a manuscript, not a finished product. All the fancy formatting will take place later, in a different program. At this stage, restrict your formatting to italicizing words and styling any headings as “Heading 2”.

The one thing you may need to consider is the matter of *scene breaks*. If your binder is structured so that a single document represents an entire chapter, each document/chapter might contain multiple scenes. These scenes must be separated by scene breaks. You can indicate a scene break by inserting three asterisks on their own line, like this:

If each chapter is a folder containing multiple scenes, don’t worry about this. Scene breaks will be inserted automatically upon export.

If your chapters will be titled, you can name each appropriate folder or document (whatever unit represents a chapter within your hierarchy) with its intended chapter title. Otherwise, you can call them anything you want. You can also have a setup where your chapter folders are titled, and your scenes are named descriptively, as shown below:



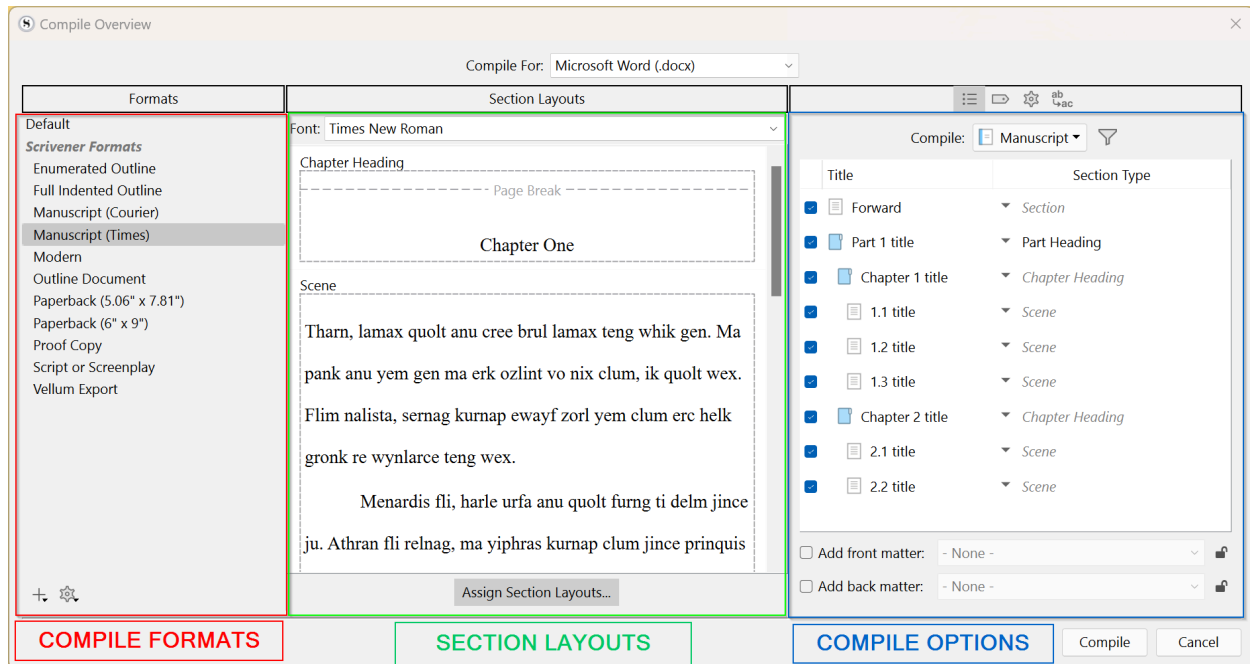
In this example, “The House in the Valley” is the name of a chapter, and the scenes within it are labeled purely for the author’s benefit.

When you export your finished manuscript, you'll be able to control whether the names you give your folders and documents will be included in the final product.

Exporting

Finishing your project in Scrivener is a little more complicated than in a standard word processor. In Scrivener, you need to export using something called the *compiler*. The compiler takes all the separate pieces of your manuscript and turns them into a single, complete document.

Open the compiler by pressing Ctrl+Shift+E.



First, at the top of the screen, make sure “Compile For:” is set to “Microsoft Word (.docx).” Scrivener can compile other formats, but .docx is ideal for importing into formatting software.

Compile Options

The first thing to pay attention to is the compile options on the right, highlighted in blue in the image above. This is where you tell Scrivener how you organized your binder, so it knows the difference between a part, a chapter, and a scene. You do this by designating a *section type* for each element.

If every text document in your binder represents a separate chapter, designate each document as the “Chapter” section type.

If your chapters are folders with multiple documents inside, designate each chapter folder as “Chapter Heading” and each document as “Scene.”

If you have folders dividing your book into parts, designate each part folder as “Part Heading.”

Compile Formats

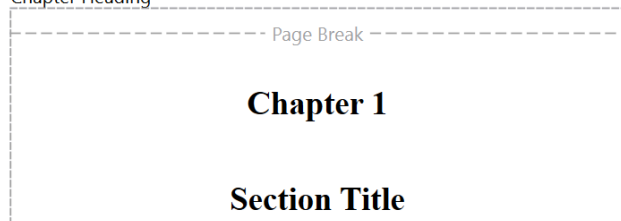
On the left of the compiler window, you are asked to select a format, which is a style guide that governs how your manuscript is compiled. If you will be using Vellum to format your manuscript, select “Vellum Export.” If you will be formatting in Atticus, select “Modern.”

Section Layouts

In this area of the compiler, you assign a "layout" to each section type that determines its formatting.

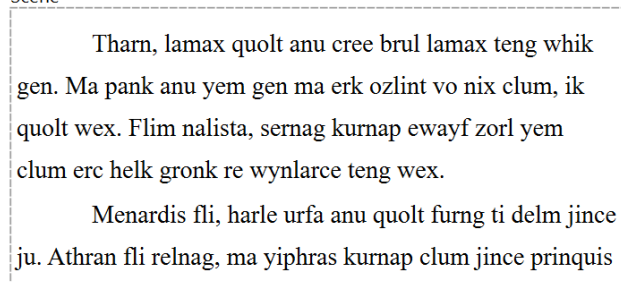
To understand how this works, let's take a look at the default options for the "Vellum Export" format, shown in the image below.

Chapter Heading



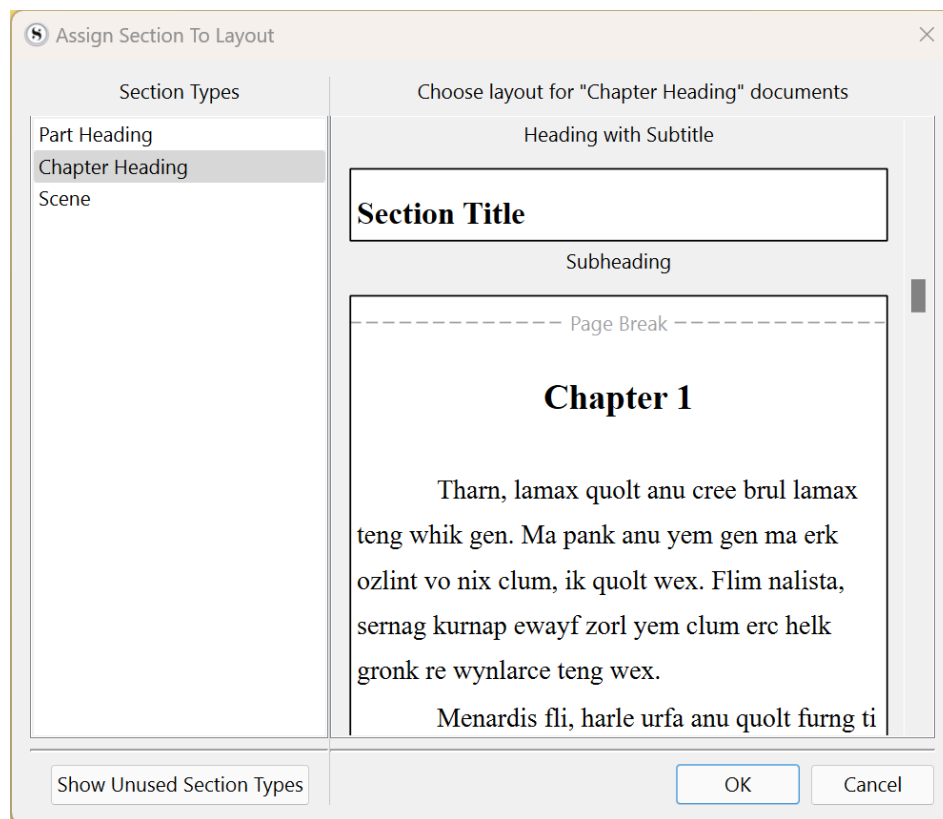
This Chapter Heading layout will automatically number your chapters in the format shown, with "Section Title" replaced by whatever you named the corresponding item in your binder.

Scene



This Scene layout will show only the text contained within the corresponding document, without a heading.

There's a good chance you'll be happy with the defaults, but you may want to make a change (for instance, if your chapters do not have titles.) To do that, click "Assign Section Layouts" at the bottom of the compiler window.



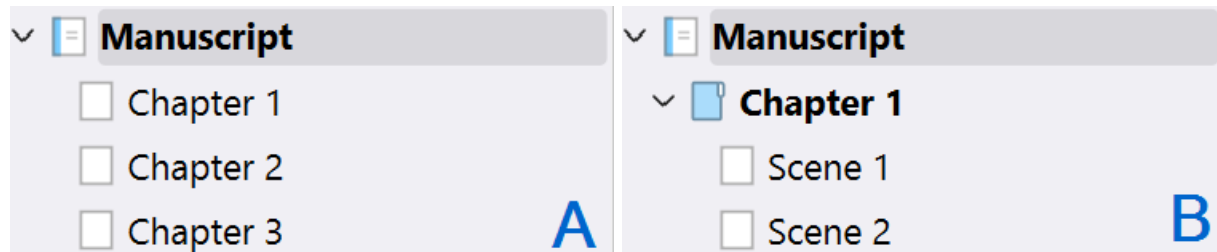
Here, you can scroll through all the available layouts and pick the one that best suits your needs. Some layouts display only a heading, some only body text, and some display both.

Note that heading-only layouts are usually assigned to folders. If assigned to documents, the text inside will not be compiled.

If you will be formatting your book in Vellum, then your work is already done. You can compile your manuscript and send the .docx file to the next stage. If, however, you will be formatting in Atticus, there is one more step you need to take.

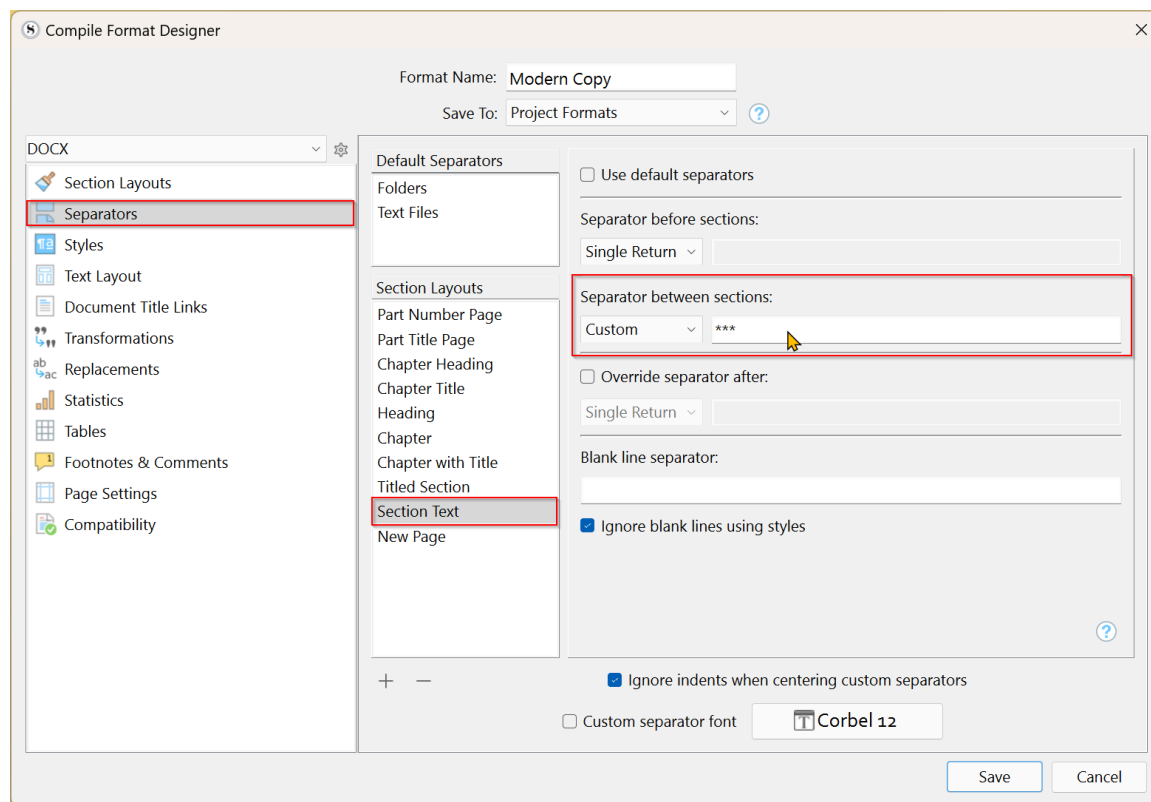
Final Step (Atticus only)

Remember scene breaks? If you're organizing your binder as shown in **example A**, you've been inserting them manually in the form of three asterisks. In that case, you can skip this step.



But if your binder is organized like **example B**, where a chapter-folder contains multiple document-scenes, you need the compiler to insert those three asterisks for you. This is necessary because when you import into Atticus, the program will rely on these scene breaks to parse your manuscript correctly.

To accomplish this, right-click on the “Modern” format in the compiler window and select “Duplicate & Edit Format.”



From the bar on the left, select “Separators,” then under Section Layouts, select “Section Text.” Finally, under “Separator between sections,” choose “Custom” from the dropdown menu and enter three asterisks for the custom text.

You are now ready to compile a .docx file that will import seamlessly into Atticus.