

Back to the Beginning!

Here you are, ready to start your novel! We know what you're thinking. You're thinking "*Okay, I've got my paper, my pencil, my lucky pencil sharpener, 15 packs of gum, a month's supply of energy drinks, and my noveling iPod playlist to get me pumped and ready to go. So now what?*"

If you are feeling a little nervous, and the blank page and you are having a staring contest, don't worry! It's perfectly natural. Many novelists will tell you that figuring out the first few lines of a novel is the hardest part. Lucky for you, you're about a million steps ahead of most novelists—you've already got your characters, your plot, your setting, *and* you know how to write some seriously awesome dialogue! Not bad for a month's work.

Like we said earlier, there are several ways to start your novel. You can begin with the inciting incident or work backwards from the resolution to the beginning. Novels are filled with flashbacks, flash-forwards, and unexpected plot twists. So feel free to begin anywhere you like!



You can:

- Start at the beginning.
- Start at your inciting incident.
- Start *in medias res* (in the middle of things).
- Start at the end.

Start at the Beginning

As you learned in the "Outlining Your Plot" worksheet, the beginning or set-up of your novel needs to introduce your characters and your conflict. Starting a novel at the very beginning is a great way to ease your readers in. So many stories and fairy tales begin this way (Once upon a time...), that readers feel right at home in your story almost immediately.

There once lived a young girl named Judy who spent almost every moment of every day dreaming about owning her very own horse. And to her surprise, on the morning of her fourteenth birthday, a genie popped out of her box of cornflakes. His name was Bob, and he smelled slightly of onions. But that was okay—she was finally going to get the horse she'd always wanted.

