

Romance Beat Sheet

ACT 1:
0-25%

1.

THE SETUP

- Introduce the reader to how the Protagonists function in their ordinary life.
- Include something about their life that displeases each Protagonist or appears wrong to the reader.
- Identify the Protagonists' conflicts and goals
- What is holding them back from love?

2.

MEET CUTE

- The Catalyst/Inciting Incident, which sets the tone for future interactions/conflict.
- Make it memorable—this is the story they will share with their grandchildren one day.
- Hint at how right the Protagonists could be for each other and why now is not the time.

ACT 2:
25-50%

3.

A SEXY COMPLICATION

- A new development raises the stakes.
- The characters' internal needs and external goals should conflict with each other.
- One or both characters begin to see each other in a different light, raising the romantic tension.
- Begin attacking your characters' false beliefs

4.

MIDPOINT

- A situation irrevocably binds the Protagonist with the Love Interest.
- This is usually the false high. It appears as though the Protagonists can have both their internal and external goals at the same time.
- This should shift the relationship immensely!

ACT 3:
50-75%

5.

THE SWIVEL

- The stakes reach their highest point as the romantic relationship's importance jeopardizes the Protagonist's chance to succeed at their stated goal
- The intimacy is growing, but plant seeds of doubt.
- Make this beat intersect with their internal fears and false beliefs.

6.

THE DARK MOMENT

- The consequences of the swivel decision yield disaster.
- The opportunity to transform came, and instead of opening their hearts, the Protagonists recoiled back to their old self.
- The "what have I done" moment that leads them to finally learn their lesson.

ACT 4:
75-100%

7.

THE HEA

- A reconciliation that reaffirms the primal importance of the relationship
- A happy ending that implies a serious commitment, often at the cost of some personal sacrifice to the Protagonist (grand gesture)
- Close the character arcs and show how they have changed

EPILOGUE (OPTIONAL)

- Show how happy the Protagonists are now that some time has passed.
- Let readers see why this was the outcome that was needed all along.
- Give us a glimpse of the characters' new ordinary life that mirrors the beginning.