

Character Planning Sheet

This character planning sheet is designed to help you flesh out your main characters and think about how they can evolve over the course of the story by setting up their **Goals, Motivations, Conflicts, and Stakes (GMCS)**. GMCS is one way to think about character growth over the course of your story, while **Values** and **Memories** are ways to develop your character's backstories and think about what ideas guide their behaviours.

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Goals	
<p>What is it your character wants most in the world? What do they long for? They don't have to be conscious of all their goals, but they should be conscious of some of them. The point of this exercise is to set up your character's big story-level goals that will inform the whole plot of the story. These big goals can form a touch point to shape your character's chapter and scene level goals and actions. If you're ever stuck on what happens next, come back to this page and think about how your character might approach the next phase of their big story goal.</p>	
External Goals:	<p><i>External Goals are things your character wants in the wider world, and will depend on the genre, tenor, and scope of your story.</i></p>

Internal Goals:

Internal Goals have to do with your character's emotions and how they view themselves in the world. They can be connected to the External Goals, but they don't have to be. This is the emotional tenor of what your character is striving for.

Motivation

What drives your character towards their goals? Why do they want what they want? This is especially important for external goals. There may be overlap between "motivation" and "internal goals;" that's ok! The important thing is to think about the character's *why*.

Conflict

What's preventing your character from achieving their internal and/or external goals? Why can't they get there? What's blocking them? Often, a character can be their own block. This can happen when their internal and external goals are in conflict with each other, or when their fears and hopes are in conflict with each other, etc. The conflict can and should evolve as the story progresses: as the character gets closer to their Goals, new blocks emerge that they have to work through at each step.

Stakes

What's at stake if your character doesn't achieve their goals? What could happen? Make these stakes clear to the reader, ideally from early on in the story. Stakes are a big part of why a reader feels connected to a story and why they care about what happens next, so make sure to spend some time demonstrating that to your reader in order to pull them in.

Hopes and Fears

Another way to think about GMCS is to think about what your character hopes for and fears. What is the one thing they long for more than anything else in the world? What is the thing they're most deeply terrified of? Through the course of the story, make them confront and move through their greatest fear in order to grasp their greatest hope.

Physical Description

Include as much or as little detail as you like here. You can think about what your character looks like, but also think about how they see themselves and how they carry themselves and how that changes based on the environment they're in.

Memories

Describe 4 memories that are important to your character and their understanding of their life. What happened to make your character the person they are today? Why are these memories formative? How did these experiences shape your character? Choose a balance of positive and negative memories to explore your character's hardships as well as their resilience and joy.

Memory 1:

Memory 2:

Memory 3:

Memory 4:

Values

What does your character value? What ideas or principles does your character hold close to their heart? How do their behaviours align with their values? How do their behaviours *fail* to align to their values? The ways characters fail at their values offer important information on where and how they might grow over the course of the story.