

Worldbuilding Wikipedia

As a writer, it's essential to have a clear understanding of the different elements that make up your world and how they fit into the narrative and the lives of your characters. This worksheet was designed to help you build out the scale and specifics of your world, while helping to determine which pieces of information are crucial to integrate into your chapters. Remember, a world doesn't have to be a literal planet: it could be as small as a coffee shop or an office, or as big as a kingdom or a galaxy.

There are two phases to this worksheet. The first phase is a Wikipedia-style breakdown of your world where you'll have the opportunity to dive deep into the historical, geographical, and cultural aspects of your setting. This phase gives you the opportunity to get as granular as possible. Brainstorm as few or as many details as you feel you need and feel free to add info that doesn't necessarily relate directly to your story. This section is for anything and everything about your world. Most of your creative output from this phase will not make it to the text of your story—this half of the exercise is meant to stimulate your creativity and isn't constrained by the limitations of what will be directly included in the narrative. Here, you can let your imagination run wild, exploring every nook and cranny of your world without the pressure of immediate practicality.

In the second phase of this exercise, you will pick the details of your world that are most important to your character's journey and outline the specific ways in which your world affects your plot. Because the world exists to serve the story and readers care more about characters than settings, it's key to focus on the essential elements of your world that have a direct impact on the protagonist's development and the progression of the plot.

Phase 1

What major events shaped the history of your world? Are there any significant wars, revolutions, or cultural shifts that have left a lasting impact? What are the key historical figures or legendary heroes that are revered or vilified in your world's past? Or, if your setting is smaller, what is the history of the neighbourhood your story is set in? How have local events, past conflicts, or notable community members influenced the neighborhood's character and shaped the lives of its inhabitants?

Describe the physical landscape of your world, including any notable geographical features. Are there any unique or fantastical elements in the environment? How does the geography affect the daily lives and activities of the inhabitants?

What are the various cultures and societies that coexist within your world? How do different cultures interact with one another? Are there any tensions or conflicts between them?

What are the prevailing cultural values and beliefs within society? How do these values shape the behavior and attitudes of the people?

Phase 2

What are the three most important worldbuilding from Phase 1 that directly impact your character and their pursuit of a goal? Describe how each element is integrated into the world and how they affect the story/characters.

How does the world's history or cultural norms present challenges or opportunities for your character? Are there any specific obstacles or conflicts rooted in the geographical features or technological aspects of your world that your character must confront or overcome? Are there any pivotal moments or revelations tied to your world's history, culture, or geography that drive your character's development?

How does your character's background and cultural upbringing influence their perspective and choices? Are there societal expectations or norms that conflict with your character's personal ambitions? Does your character face discrimination, prejudice, or challenges due to their social status or affiliations?

How does the political landscape affect your character's journey? Are there political figures or factions that impact your character's decisions or pose obstacles?