

# Scene Brainstorming Worksheet



*Every scene has multiple options on how it might end, and our first instinct isn't always the best one. Writers often want to do what will advance the plot, which can make the outcomes too easy and predictable. Aim for the right balance between plot advancement, unpredictability, and reader surprise. Don't be afraid to repeat this exercise to really dig down and find unusual options for the scene. The most obvious answers are also the ones readers will expect and anticipate, so they won't be surprised when they happen.*

## **Character Achieves the Goal:**

*Brainstorm how it could happen. What constitutes a win in this scene? What is the best possible outcome?*

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## **IF this is your favorite option...**

*How does the plot move forward now? Is this what readers will expect to happen?*

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## **Character does NOT Achieve the Goal:**

*Brainstorm how it could happen. What constitutes a loss or failure in this scene? What is the worst possible outcome?*

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## **IF this is your favorite option...**

*How does failure affect the plot? What are the changes in the protagonist's plan or situation if they fail here?*

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### **Character Achieves the Goal, but There's a Catch:**

*Brainstorm how it could happen. What constitutes a tie in this scene? What possible outcomes would get the protagonist a step closer, but would also make them have to work harder or struggle more to win?*

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#### **IF this is your favorite option...**

*How does the catch affect the plot going forward? Is it a real conflict and problem, or just a way to delay the win? Does the delay change anything in any meaningful way?*

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### **Character does NOT Achieve the Goal, & Their Actions Make Things Worse:**

*What constitutes a major setback in that scene? What possible outcomes would cause the protagonist to fail, and also create more problems, or exacerbate the existing problem?*

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#### **IF this is your favorite option...**

*How does a major setback affect the plot going forward? Does the new or worse problem add to the existing conflict? Does it affect the characters' internal as well as external struggles?*

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### **Gut-check questions on the outcome you selected:**

- 1. Does this outcome make the story more interesting?*
- 2. Does this outcome offer multiple options to keep the plot unpredictable?*
- 3. Does this option create more conflict and a more interesting story or just delay the inevitable?*
- 4. Does this outcome feel natural to the story and characters, or does it feel forced just to "make things worse?"*
- 5. Does this outcome take the plot where it needs to go, or does it send it off on a tangent?*
- 6. If so, is that tangent worth exploring? Will it make the plot better overall?*