

Log Lines

A log line is a **one sentence*** summary of your novel. That's right. You now have to boil down 100,000 words down to **one sentence***. Yay! Keep in mind that this is probably going to be a long sentence, but don't break any grammar rules by creating a run-on. Also, no semi-colons get to be used in this as a cheat.

(*Sometimes two sentences are needed if the tale involves a large cast or an "ensemble protagonist" but try to keep it narrowed down to the one-sentence essence of your tale.)

Log Line Uses

- Core sentence of your query letter in the "about this novel" section. I usually use my log line as the opening sentence of this paragraph and expand on the core concepts in following paragraphs.
- Useful in pitching the book verbally to agents and editors. This is usually my opening line to a verbal pitch after I establish the genre, target age, and word count. Then I'll delve deeper into the details as time allows.
- Also useful in hand-selling your book at conventions, book shows, book signings, etc.
 - NOTE: The log line for selling to readers will most likely be different than selling to agents/editors, but not always.
- Guides you through writing the book and keeps you on track for your story.
 - If you have not started your book (or have just begun) then I highly recommend writing your log line **first**. This will help guide you through the plotting and writing of the book. Keep in mind that, if, in the middle of plotting/writing, your book goes a different direction than the log line you need to do one of two things:
 1. Adjust the log line to be true to what you're writing.
 2. Adjust the writing to be true to what your initial goal was.

Log Line Pattern

This is not the **only** way of doing a log line, but it was the way I was taught by **Linda Houser** quite a long time ago and it makes sense to me.

<p>[CHARACTER] wants to/needs to/must [ACCOMPLISH GOAL] because of [CHARACTER MOTIVATION], but [ANTAGONIST] causes [CONFLICT] because of [ANTAGONIST MOTIVATION].</p>

In this case [**CHARACTER**] and [**ANTAGONIST**] are stated using an "[**ADJECTIVE**] [**NOUN**]" construct instead of a name. Sometimes the adjective can be two adjectives or none. Be evocative and potent with your adjective+noun combinations.

The reason behind avoiding using names is that they are simultaneously loaded and meaningless. A character named "Vlad" is loaded because of Vlad "the Impaler" Tepes. A character named "Jane" is less compelling and descriptive than "a scorned lawyer." Also, if a real person named Jane is severely disliked by the agent/editor/reader, then you just turned them off to your story without meaning to, and their dislike will be subconscious. Turning off a potential buyer of your story during the first impression is not something you want to do.

Log Line Purpose

Used to display not only the core concepts of the story elements, but also needs to be worded in such a way to represent the style, themes, and tone of the novel. If you have a humorous novel, amp up the funny. If it's a psychological horror story, then it's probably best to avoid humor. It's difficult to capture the full feel of your story in your log line, but at the same time it's *super* easy to misrepresent the feel of your story with your choice of words.

Log Line Examples

See if you can name the movies:

(Note: I've written some of these and others I've snagged from the Internet.)

- A young water farmer must rescue the princess in order to save the rebellion from certain destruction by the dreaded weapons of the evil empire, but a dark Sith Lord attempts to thwart his every move.
- A writer teams up with a soldier of fortune to rescue her kidnapped sister in the jungles of South America.
- After a twister transports a lonely Kansas farm girl to a magical land, she sets out on a dangerous journey to find a wizard with the power to send her home, but the wicked witch desires nothing more than to see the girl dead.
- A young woman is transported to a magical land where she kills, teams up with four strangers only to kill again and then threatens the greatest wizard in the world with exposure of his darkest secret if she is not taken home.
- When his son wishes he will only tell the truth, an attorney, and pathological liar, is magically compelled to be honest for one day and struggles to win the biggest case of his career – without telling a lie.
- After a luxury liner is capsized by a tidal wave, a group of survivors struggles to escape through the bow before the ship sinks.
- Midget destroys stolen property after being chased across the lands by the rightful owners.
- A young FBI cadet must seek the help of an incarcerated serial killer in order to catch another killer who skins his victims, but the serial killer in jail plays manipulative mind games with the cadet instead.
- A barely-trained FBI agent must work with an imprisoned cannibal to get insight into the mind of a serial killer with strange clothing habits before the serial killer adds more patches to his dress of human skin, but the cannibal just wants to mess with the agent's mind for no reason other than the giggles he gets out of the conversations.