



Welcome

HI, I'M GWEN HAYES.

I write kissing books.

I am also a freelance editor. My clients write kissing books.

Guess what I read for fun? Kissing books.

I wrote a book called *Romancing the Beat* that you can find [here](#). It's about writing the romance arc in romance or books with romantic elements. Some people really like it.

This template is intended to supplement the writing experience after reading the book. If you haven't read the book—I hope the template is still useful to you. I tried to put mini-explanations on the front of each beat card. These beats are only for the romance arc of your book. If you have a complicated external plot outside of the romance, you'll want to braid it to these beats.

I'm freely sharing this information—but it's still copyrighted. If you find it helpful—and I hope you do—let me know. I'm on Twitter the most [@gwenhayes](#). But you can always drop me a line at gwen@gwenhayes.com or say hello on my [Facebook page](#). For information about all my books and activities: [Gwen Hayes](#) and to hire me as a story consultant and editor [Fresh Eyes Critique](#).

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Phase 1: Set up



Introduce H1

- ~Introduce protagonist in a way that makes that character compelling.
- ~Show your character's slice of life but throw a hitch in it
- ~Give or introduce your character's external goal.
- ~Introduce or hint at what your character needs.

Introduce H2

- ~Introduce protagonist in a way that makes that character compelling.
- ~Show your character's slice of life but throw a hitch in it
- ~Give or introduce your character's external goal.
- ~Introduce or hint at what your character needs.

Meet Cute

H1 and H2 meet for the first time on page. Make it memorable—this is the story they will share with their grandkids one day.

No Way 1

The argument your character voices against falling in love. It sets up the romance arc for the reader. The character basically says, either out loud or in internal dialogue, the reason that he or she will not fall in love. Not now, not ever, but especially with the character from the Meet Cute.

Adhesion

This beat pushes you into the second act. It's a plot thrust. They cannot walk away from the other now. Not until they see this conundrum through. Make sure your glue is sticky here.

Phase 2: Falling in Love



No Way 2

Restate the argument against love

Inkling of Desire

Begin attacking your character's false belief about what he or she stated in either No Way Beat 1 or No Way Beat 2.

Deepening Desire

They are starting to show each other glimpses of who they really are.

Maybe This Could Work

What if they gave in to that temptation?
Characters begin to question their old thoughts.

Midpoint of Love

This is the beat where you show them everything they want and it's in reach.
False high.

Phase 3: Retreating from Love



Inkling of Doubt

Go back to your No Way Beats and give them an inkling of doubt custom made for their hole-hearted selves.

Deepening Doubt

The intimacy is continuing or may even appear to be growing, but the seed of doubt you planted in the last beat just poked up through the ground.

Retreat Beat

The Retreat Beat is one where you leave subtext behind and let them actually say, either in internal or external dialogue, what they fear and that they are going to protect their hearts.

Shields Up

Whatever they foretold in their No Way Beats comes true.

No Way Beat: I don't believe in love/will never love again/don't deserve love because _____.

Shields Up Beat: I knew better than to believe in love/love again/think I deserve love because when I let my guard down _____.

Break Up

Always have your black moment be tied to the moment when your heroes choose to hold onto their:

fears/flaws/wounds/misconceptions

instead of opening their hearts completely.

Phase 4: Fighting for Love



Dark Night

It's the beat where your heroes think they should feel better than they do about the stupid thing they just did. Suddenly, they are staring out windows while montages of Phase 2 play across their mind ...

Wake Up

This beat is where they say: This time I choose love over fear. I have been an idiot. I need to fix this.

Grand Gesture

He or she must be willing to put it all on the line now or risk losing the one thing they need to become whole-hearted. It's life or death now.

What Whole Hearted Looks Like

They kissed and made up in the last beat, but show your reader what whole-hearted looks like for these two. You've put them through the wringer. This is your chance to make it up to them

Epilogue

It's up to you, a master at your craft, to manage a scene with little conflict that is still intriguing.

Now you try!

Set Up Phase Introduce H1	
Introduce H2	
Meet Cute	
No Way 1	
Adhesion	

Falling in Love Phase No Way 2	
Inkling of Desire	
Deepening Desire	
Maybe This Could Work	
Midpoint of LOVE	

Retreating from Love Phase Inkling of Doubt	
Deepening of Doubt	
Retreat	
Shields Up	
Break Up	

Fighting for Love Phase Dark Night	
Wake Up	
Grand Gesture	
What Wholehearted Looks Like	
Epilogue (if desired)	

Romancing the Beat

Romancing the Beat

STORY STRUCTURE
FOR ROMANCE NOVELS



What makes a romance novel a romance? How do you write a kissing book?

Writing a well-structured romance isn't the same as writing any other genre—something the popular novel and screenwriting guides don't address. The romance arc is made up of its own story beats, and the external plot and theme need to be braided to the romance arc—not the other way around.

Told in conversational (and often irreverent) prose, *Romancing the Beat* can be read like you are sitting down to coffee with romance editor and author Gwen Hayes while she explains story structure. The way she does with her clients. Some of whom are regular inhabitants of the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller lists. *Romancing the Beat* is a recipe, not a rigid system. The beats don't care if you plot or outline before you write, or if you pants your way through the drafts and do a “beat check” when you're revising. Pantsers and plotters are both welcome. So sit down, grab a cuppa, and let's talk about kissing books.

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