

Your blurb is a story, too. And like a story, you can often break it down into three acts. Here's a brief outline of the purpose each act serves—and how to go beyond describing a story to really connecting with a reader who is looking to invest in their next book.

I've suggested "The Emotional Question" for each act, because the emotional impact is what separates a dry and lifeless blurb from the blurbs that shine. This structure is guideline, not an outline—use it as a starting point.

ACT I: "Why should I be interested in this book?"

Identify what stands out in your story. Your genre can be your guide for how to start. Historical fiction readers are keen on setting, science fiction readers are often drawn to big concepts, mystery readers love... well, mystery. You get the idea.

Personally, I like to start with characters. If you focus on your main character and their main conflict, it's hard to go wrong.

The Emotional Question: "What's so special here?"

Whether you focus on characters, setting, plot, or what have you, the story has to feel *alive*. It has to feel special, even if you're hitting familiar beats. Don't just tell the reader your story is about time travel, give us a sense that this time travel story does something fresh, vital, and memorable.

ACT II: What's the conflict, and what are the complications?

The journey of the story takes center stage. The obstacles and twists in your character's path are what make the story fun. Let the reader know what the most important ones are. Give a sense of the kind of tension that's rising as the tale progresses. If you have a villain, this is a good time to talk about them.

The Emotional Question: "Does this journey seem worth it?"

Don't get lost in the weeds with too many details or subplots. If your would-be reader starts feeling confused or bored in Act II, you'll lose them.

ACT III: What happens next?

Think of the last act as a cliffhanger. A reader keeps reading because they're excited to know if the problems in the story can ever be solved, and how. If the reader is finished reading the blurb and wants to know what happens next, you've done your job—your reader will want to read your story to find out.

The Emotional Question: "Is the outcome really in doubt?"

If the rest of your blurb has done its work, then the reader will care about the central conflict in your story—and feel the tension of uncertainty about whether the outcome is really in doubt.

This is when many writers like to end with a question: "Can Maria stop the monster in time to save the world?" "Will Vince find true love?" "Does Clementine have what it takes to win the Vulgar Games?"

Unfortunately, the "final question" structure is a little cliché—and it can end up undermining the excitement you're trying to create. Try some versions that don't end with asking a question. You might find a more elegant way to end with a note of tension.