

01 / START WITH THE PREMISE

Give your world a reason to exist.

The strongest science-fiction settings begin with a change that alters everyday life, and rules the story respects.

PROJECT / WORLD

A Concept and boundaries

BOOK + NOTES

Define what your reader is entering before you add thousands of details.

- ☐ Summarize the big speculative change in one sentence.
- ☐ Choose an era, a place, and a scale: city, planet, ship, or system.
- ☐ Identify the question your world forces its people to confront.
- ☐ Show one everyday consequence of the speculative change.
- ☐ Define what people stand to lose, even in an extraordinary setting.
- ☐ Write two sentences describing life as an ordinary resident sees it.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Create a Book and a Note called "World premise"; keep your answers together.

B Science and unbreakable rules

RESEARCH + NOTES

A convincing universe is consistent, even when its science is invented.

- ☐ Write down three rules that always hold true in this universe.
- ☐ Separate established science from deliberate speculation.
- ☐ Decide what is impossible, rare, dangerous, or expensive.
- ☐ Explain the trade-off behind the story's defining technology.
- ☐ Record sources and unanswered questions instead of quietly guessing.
- ☐ Test relevant assumptions about distance, gravity, energy, or time.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Save sources in Research and write your non-negotiable rules in Notes.

MY ONE-SENTENCE PREMISE

02 / MAKE THE PHYSICAL WORLD REAL

Put a body in the landscape.

Your characters must be able to move through the world, survive in it, and be affected by its physical limitations.

PROJECT / WORLD

A Geography, climate, and ecology

LOCATIONS + RESEARCH

Make places specific enough to generate choices, dangers, and memories.

- ☐ Build a hierarchy from world to region, settlement, and key site.
- ☐ Choose terrain, climate, and one meaningful environmental hazard.
- ☐ Decide whether seasons or day length affect daily routines.
- ☐ Define plants, animals, microbes, or why they are absent.
- ☐ Mark borders, barriers, chokepoints, and inaccessible areas.
- ☐ Work out how people navigate and travel between places.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Create nested Locations and attach relevant background in Research.

B Settlements and failing systems

LOCATIONS + RESEARCH + NOTES

Think beyond skylines: cities are systems that can break.

- ☐ Identify where people obtain food, water, power, and shelter.
- ☐ Decide what fails first during a blackout or years without upkeep.
- ☐ Account for waste, sanitation, communications, and medical access.
- ☐ Choose what gets repaired, repurposed, defended, or abandoned.
- ☐ Give every important location a purpose and a limitation.
- ☐ Record two concrete details that could change a scene.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Add key settlements as Locations; document their systems in Notes.

ONE PLACE I NEED TO DEVELOP NEXT

03 / BUILD THE PEOPLE AND THEIR POWER

Decide who benefits. Who pays?

A world feels inhabited when institutions, customs, and inequalities affect people differently.

PROJECT / WORLD

A Organizations, authority, and conflict

ORGANIZATIONS + SECRETS

Power is more interesting when it has a mechanism, not just a villain.

- ☐ Identify who governs and who actually controls key resources.
- ☐ Give every major organization a goal and recognizable methods.
- ☐ Explain what grants each group loyalty, status, or legitimacy.
- ☐ Define consequences for dissent, disobedience, or exclusion.
- ☐ Establish one alliance and one rivalry with practical consequences.
- ☐ Decide how authority changes during a major emergency.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Create Organizations and track hidden motives in Secrets where needed.

B Culture and ordinary life

NOTES + CHARACTERS

The world lives in habits, not only in historical encyclopedias.

- ☐ Describe common work, education, rest, and family life.
- ☐ Decide how people speak, greet, negotiate, and show respect.
- ☐ Invent rituals, celebrations, mourning practices, or taboos.
- ☐ Explain money, barter, debt, status, and class divisions.
- ☐ Write what people believe about the past and the future.
- ☐ Find one gap between society's ideals and its behavior.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Store customs in Notes; reflect their effects in Character profiles.

A POWER IMBALANCE I WANT TO EXPLORE

04 / TEST THE SYSTEMS

Make every shortcut cost something.

Technology, medicine, supplies, and transportation shape what characters can do - and what they cannot.

PROJECT / WORLD

A Technology, limits, and side effects

RESEARCH + NOTES

Even advanced technology needs a price, failure mode, or boundary.

- ☐ Identify the technology ordinary people actually use every day.
- ☐ Set relevant limits for AI, medicine, weapons, or faster travel.
- ☐ Name its energy source and what happens when that source fails.
- ☐ Decide who can build, repair, own, and control major systems.
- ☐ Include accidents, breakdowns, waste, and unintended effects.
- ☐ Invent a believable low-tech workaround for one high-tech failure.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Create a "Technology rules" Note; keep supporting sources in Research.

B Resources, logistics, and survival

LOCATIONS + RESEARCH + NOTES

Follow the supplies, especially when the plot becomes inconvenient.

- ☐ Follow one meal from production to somebody's plate.
- ☐ Trace water, sanitation, medicine, and disposal of waste.
- ☐ Check journey times rather than using convenient travel.
- ☐ Decide how people store, share, guard, and replace supplies.
- ☐ Identify who performs maintenance and which tools they need.
- ☐ Choose a scarcity that could force a character into a hard choice.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Document routes and supply points in Locations; explain systems in Notes.

A SCARCITY THAT COULD CREATE A SCENE

05 / CONNECT HISTORY TO PEOPLE

Give everyone a different past.

Worldbuilding becomes compelling when a fact about the world matters personally to someone in the story.

PROJECT / WORLD

A Characters and point of view

CHARACTERS + ORGANIZATIONS

A setting is credible when people are shaped by it in different ways.

- ☐ Give your protagonist a need created or complicated by this world.
- ☐ Record each major character's goals, fears, flaws, and stakes.
- ☐ Decide how upbringing and status affect access to resources.
- ☐ Create relationships that produce loyalty, tension, or dependence.
- ☐ Define what each POV character knows - and misunderstands.
- ☐ Choose one daily habit that reveals the world without explaining it.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Build Character profiles and connect people to relevant groups and places.

B History, turning points, and secrets

EVENTS + SECRETS

The past should shape current choices, not just fill an appendix.

- ☐ Identify the event that changed your world most dramatically.
- ☐ Record three turning points with clear causes and consequences.
- ☐ Decide which version of history the public is taught.
- ☐ Track one deliberately hidden truth or unresolved mystery.
- ☐ Show how a past decision still restricts the present plot.
- ☐ Check ages, generations, travel times, and elapsed years.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Create timeline Events, then record concealed truths in Secrets.

ONE SECRET THAT WOULD CHANGE EVERYTHING

06 / BRING IT INTO THE MANUSCRIPT

Make the world earn its page time.

The final test is not how much lore you invented. It is whether the setting changes what happens in the novel.

PROJECT / WORLD

A Worldbuilding inside scenes

CHAPTERS + STORY BIBLE

Readers should experience consequences before receiving explanations.

- ☐ Make each major detail affect a decision, conflict, or consequence.
- ☐ Introduce the setting through action rather than lectures.
- ☐ Link mentioned story entities from the draft where supported.
- ☐ Put stray questions in Chapter Notes without interrupting the scene.
- ☐ Let the environment create obstacles, costs, or opportunities.
- ☐ Remove or delay lore the reader does not need yet.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Draft in Chapters; use Story Bible links and Chapter Notes as needed.

B Continuity and credibility audit

CHAPTERS + RESEARCH + NOTES

A final pass turns an interesting setting into a believable one.

- ☐ Check that established rules remain consistent across chapters.
- ☐ Verify dates, geography, travel, technology, and resources.
- ☐ Look for knowledge a character could not reasonably possess yet.
- ☐ Check recurring groups and locations for changing details.
- ☐ Resolve research questions or flag them for a later revision.
- ☐ Back up the workspace before major revisions or restructuring.

DO THIS IN THE NOVELIST

Review Chapters, Notes, and Comments; use the app's backup tools.

MY NEXT THREE WORLDBUILDING TASKS