

20 Scene Romance Chart

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#1 (also **R1**) – Setup. Introduce protagonist (heroine) in her world. Establish her core need. Set the stage, begin building the world.

#11 R1 – Introduction of HERO. This is the match to the first essential scene. It may not be the second scene in your novel. You may have two or three scenes with your heroine first. Remember, we're looking at key scenes to lay in as structure—not every single scene.

#2 – Turning Point #1 (10%) Inciting Incident. This incident moves the heroine into position for the meet (a move to another location, an event, etc.).

#12 R2 – The Meet. This may come later, though many have the meet very close to the start of the story.

#3 – Pinch Point #1 (33%). Give a glimpse of the opposition's power, need, and goal as well as the stakes. This is the full setup of your subplot, against which your lovers face conflict, opposition, and obstacles. This may or may not include **R3 - Rebuffed**. Heroine has a negative response to the hero that shows they're incompatible (or make this the hero's reaction to the heroine). Or you can make the rebuffed moment a separate scene (which would fit into your chart either before or after this pinch point).

#13 R4 – Wise Friend Counsels. Again, this can be, and often is, scenes with both the hero and heroine. They can each have a mentor/ally/wise friend character that gives them advice regarding their love life and/or pushing them to consider the potential love interest.

#4 – Twist #1. Something new happens: a new ally, a friend becomes a foe. New info reveals a serious complication to reaching the goal. Protagonist must adjust to change with this setback. With a romance novel, this goal is to reach that HEA, so this leads into . . .

#14 R5 – Acknowledge Interest. A key scene that throws the lovers together so they start getting to really know each other. I often have the twists be disasters (hailstorms, tornados, floods, locust, blizzards, etc.) that have the hero save the heroine (my rule is the hero must save the heroine three times in my novel, the third time the biggie at the climax, so those three “save scenes” are in this ten-scene layer).

#5 – The Midpoint (50%). No turning back. Important event that propels the story forward and solidifies the protagonist's determination to reach her goal. Usually one of the lovers realizes and decides the other is for them, and they will now pursue without letup, despite current obstacles. And at the same time, the other lover may see something that makes him/her decide the relationship is not gonna happen.

#15 R6 – The First Quarrel. Things start coming to a head and creating high tension with the lovers.

#6 – Pinch Point #2 (62%). The opposition comes full force. Time to buckle down and fight through it. Again, this is further development of the subplot. The nemesis or opposition is going to make it nearly impossible for the couple to get together: nature, mean parents, jealous ex, angry former business partner.

#16 R7 – The Dance of Attraction. The two are again thrown together, and now they are perilously close to falling madly in love. But . . . there are still obstacles (subplot unresolved) and emotional resistance due to fear and doubt and past wounds.

#7 – Twist 2. An unexpected surprise giving (false?) hope. The goal now looks within reach. A mentor gives encouragement, a secret weapon, or an important clue. Events occur to make this romance look possible, giving hope. Which causes . . .

#17 R8 – The Black Moment. Then something happens to kill the possibility of a true romance. A misdirection, lie, reversal, misunderstanding. This is a great place to throw in that monkey wrench. A parent announces at a party that the heroine is going to marry choice B, and the hero finds out and thinks all is lost.

#8 – Turning Point #4 (75%). Major setback. All is lost and hopeless. Time for final push. Think about the scene in *Ever After*, when Prince Henry is wrongly told by his mother the queen (who was lied to by the evil stepmother) that Danielle left France to go marry some other guy. Danielle, for her part, learns that her gig is up and is locked in the pantry, unable to go to the ball. Dark, dark moment of lost hope. But the final push is when Da Vinci opens the door and gives her “wings to fly” into the arms of her lover.

#18 R9 – The Lovers Reunite. Somehow they find a way to get together despite the huge obstacles. It may be brief, but this is the scene where they admit/realize they both are fated to love each other and profess that love. This is a fun scene because they still can’t unite fully.

#19 R10 – Complications Push Them Apart. There is one last big obstacle in their way. Which sends them reeling into the high action and tension of . . .

#9 (also #20 – R11 – Together at Last) Turning Point #5 (76-99%). The climax in which the goal is either reached or not; the two MDQs are answered.

#10 – The aftermath (90-99%). The wrap-up at the end. Denouement, resolution, tie it all in a pretty knot.

#20 R12 – The HEA. A final, parting shot of the happy result of the wrap-up. This could be included in the last scene (above) as the two plot elements merge together, or they might be separate scenes within the final chapter(s).