**How to Write a Fable in 5 Steps**

**Step 1: Determine the Moral of the Story**

Decide on a maxim that will be the focus of your story and come at the end of the resolution. The key is that a moral is a lifelong lesson or an overarching rule to live by. It is not a specific lesson that only applies in certain situations. For example, some common examples of morals are:

* Treat others as you would like to be treated.
* Slow and steady wins the race.
* Appearances can be deceiving.

By contrast, “Always brush your teeth before you go to bed” is not a moral—it is too specific.

**Step 2: Pick Your Characters**

Choose two animals or inanimate objects to serve as your [main characters](https://www.masterclass.com/articles/writing-tips-for-character-development). Some fables have just one character, and some have more than two, but two is most common. In Aesop’s fables, which are the most well-known fables in the English language, the characters are usually forest creatures. Think lions, mice, bears, foxes, spiders, and owls.

For your own fable, you can choose to stay in the traditional vein of forest creatures, or you can branch out and try something new. Perhaps you’d like to create a fable that takes place at the bottom of the ocean, or on Mars. The choice is yours. You also pick non-animal characters, like the wind, the sun, the sea, or even an object like a pot. Your characters do not need names; they will be called what they are: the fox, the wolf, the sun, and so on.

**Step 3: Pick Your Characters’ Traits**

Whatever characters you choose, they will each need a defining trait that will play a big part in the story. Many animals are traditionally associated with human qualities. For example, a wise owl; a crafty fox; an industrious bee; a tricky spider; or a strong ox.

Choose traits that you will be able to place in opposition to each other or contrast in some way with the plot of your fable. For example, in Aesop’s *The Tortoise and the Hare*, the tortoise is slow but steady, while the hare is fast but cocky.

Most fables have two characters, which makes it easy to contrast the negative consequences of one’s behavior with the positive consequences of another’s. It’s also possible that the character with bad behavior wins the day; in this case, your moral will have something to do with trust, trickery, or bad faith.

**Step 4: Shape the Conflict**

Based on the characters and character traits you have identified, what kinds of [conflicts](https://www.masterclass.com/articles/sharpen-your-writing-skills-internal-vs-external-conflict) could they get into? Choose one simple conflict that will demonstrate their personality traits. For example, in *The Tortoise and the Hare*, a footrace is the perfect setting in which to contrast one character who is slow but determined and focused, with another character who is a fast runner but is braggadocious and easily distracted from his goal.

Consider using a graphic organizer to lay out your fable. This can be a very simple chart, with columns going from left to right labeled “characters,” “[personification](https://www.masterclass.com/articles/writing-101-what-is-personification-learn-about-personification-in-writing-with-examples),” “conflict,” and “outcome/moral.”

**Step 5: Write**

You are now ready to write. Remember that fables are very short stories, and simply written, with no extraneous details.

Finally, consider writing your fable in [verse](https://www.masterclass.com/articles/music-101-what-is-a-verse-plus-tips-for-writing-innovative-verses). [Rhyme](https://www.masterclass.com/articles/poetry-101-what-is-a-rhyme-scheme-learn-about-rhymed-poems-with-examples) and [meter](https://www.masterclass.com/articles/poetry-101-what-is-meter-learn-the-difference-between-qualitative-and-quantitative-meter-in-poetry-with-examples) will make your fable memorable and fun. If you have more practice with [narrative writing](https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-a-narrative-poem-3-different-types-of-narrative-poems-with-poetry-examples) than you do with [poetry](https://www.masterclass.com/articles/poetry-101-what-is-poetic-form-learn-about-15-different-types-of-poems), it will also offer a challenge, and an opportunity to exercise different writing skills.