



Getting started with Writer's Café 2

by Harriet Smart

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What is Writer's Café?

Writer's Café is a software toolkit for creative writers of all kinds. It helps you record and organize your thoughts, with a variety of features including Notebook, Journal, Scrapbook, Pinboard, and most importantly, StoryLines, a sophisticated story structuring tool.

Writer's Café is a little different from other fiction writing software packages you may have tried. This is because I've tried them too and found they didn't help with the specific writing problems that I was trying to solve in my work: and many of our customers have reported the same experience with other tools.

Successful writing comes when you get into a particular state of mind. It's like shifting into a different gear. Ideas for stories aren't so very hard to come by but transforming them into a successful, well-written narrative is another matter entirely. Writer's Café is designed to be a nurturing environment that lets your mind explore all the possibilities. It won't tell you what to do. It won't churn out pre-drawn plot schedules for you to follow, or hinder you by demanding answers to unanswerable questions. It will let you relax so that you can jump into the world of your imagination and play there.

Accompanying material

I've written a 60-page e-book to support the tools which you can find in the **Bookshelf** section (to read within Writers Café) and in the **Home** window (as a PDF file, to read or print out using Adobe Acrobat Reader or equivalent program). *Fiction: The Facts* is a distillation of 20 years of writing experience and should help you form a good understanding of the art and craft of story creation. Plus, my *Writing Recipes* are additional packets of writing advice that can be shown as tips when you start Writer's Café, and browsed at other times. Further inspiration is available from our collection of writer's quotations ('Cookies'), and the Technical Tips help you make the most of the software.

About this guide



This Getting Started guide is intended to give you a bird's-eye view of Writer's Café so you know what to expect and where to find it. First we'll look at the Writer's Café Home window and how to get online help. We'll briefly cover a variety of tools such as the Scrapbook and Journal, before discussing the story structuring tool StoryLines in a little more depth. Finally, there's a table of keyboard shortcuts that you may find useful to keep by your computer.


Using Writer's Café

The Home Window




The **Home** window is the first thing you see when running Writer's Café. It contains the **Organizer** on the left where you can access recently-viewed files quickly, explore the contents of your hard drive, and organize 'workspaces' (files to load when Writer's Café starts).



The **Desktop** on the right contains icons for a variety of Writer's Café tools and documents, including our writing guide *Fiction: The Facts*, StoryLines, and more. Double-click an icon to launch a tool, or hover over the icon to see a description. The tools displayed here are also available from the **Tools** menu, and on Windows you can access them by right-clicking on the Writer's Café tray icon and selecting from the **Tools** menu. The Desktop also contains links to some external tools, and you can add your own as well as customise the way the desktop looks. Some of the Writer's Café features will display on the desktop – these include the **Notebook**, **Journal**, **Cookies**, and **Name Generator**. Click on the desktop background to hide the tool when you've finished with it, or click  to the right of the tool. Others, such as the **Scrapbook**, will replace the Home window while you're using them, and you can get back by clicking  on the toolbar.

If you click on the  button you'll see a handy menu of documents, tools and commands as an alternative to using the icons. From this menu, you can also create text and picture notes that will show permanently on the Desktop until you choose to delete them. You can even create a slideshow note that displays the contents of a folder – you can create a set of pictures to inspire you, and show a new one every few minutes.

*I'm a new text note!
You can have as
many as you like on
the desktop, and
change the style
according to taste.*

Remember that you can always get back to the Home window by pressing  on the toolbar, or using the **Tools | Home** menu command, or by typing **Ctrl+1** or **Shift+Ctrl+Home**.

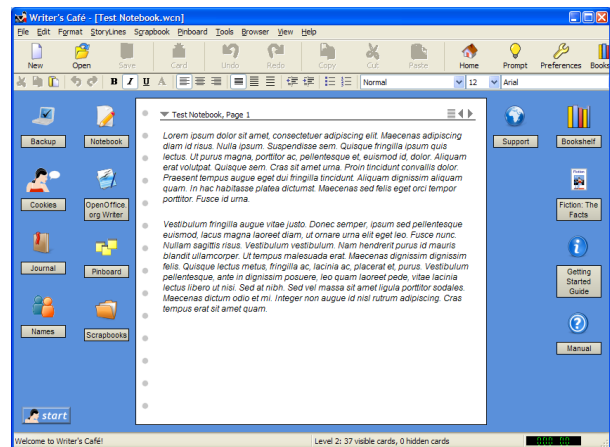
At the bottom of the Writer's Café window, there's a status bar which displays the timer display, useful for timed writing. The status bar also displays brief help when you're hovering over toolbar buttons and menu items.

There are several ways to get further help. Click on  (or **Help | Describe Window**, or  in a dialog box caption) and then on a window to show a short description of the window, sometimes with a link to more detailed online help. You can press the **F1** function key to see the same information for the window or control under the mouse. You can show the online help contents with **Help | Contents**, or you can browse the online help and other Writer's Café documents from the **Bookshelf** tool. Most dialog boxes also have a **Help** button that shows detailed information about the dialog.

The Notebook

Write a little every day if you can! If you have been trying to write, but aren't sure what direction to take just yet, the Writer's Café Notebook is the place to explore those first thoughts. We've designed it as a friendly, simple, non-distracting space. If you find yourself on a word roll (and we hope you do), the page will scroll down as you write. The notebook automatically saves your pages and you don't have


to give it a filename unless you want to use several notebooks, for example for different projects, subjects or stories. Access the notebook by double-clicking on the **Notebook** icon, or choosing the **Tools | Notebook** menu command, or typing **Ctrl+5**.



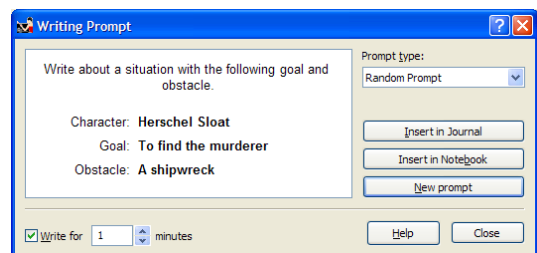
The Journal

For many writers, keeping a record of their life and thoughts is a fundamental part of their method. It's certainly a great habit to get into and the Writer's Café Journal is always there to get you writing every day. You can paste in a writing prompt if you are stuck for a subject (see below), but it's your decision. Remember, you don't have to write something brilliant every time. Just writing is enough. Access the journal by double-clicking on the **Journal** icon, or choosing the **Tools | Journal** menu command, or typing **Ctrl+4**.

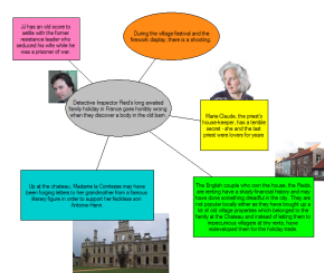
Writing Prompts, for instant inspiration

If you are stuck for something to write, try pasting one of our writing prompts into the notebook or journal and take it from there. To show the writing prompt dialog, use the **Help | Writing Prompt** menu item, or type **Ctrl+Alt+J**, or click the  button on the toolbar. There are several kinds of prompts ranging from a simple topic to write about, to a story consisting of characters, a location, a goal, and an obstacle. Writer's Café generates a suggestion for each of these elements and then lets you loose on it.

If you are really stuck, try setting the timer for only ten minutes. You may find it easier to focus if you only have to write for a few minutes than if you have an unspecified amount of time. It is also ideal for when the rest of your life is pressing in on you and you are trying to make time for your writing. Using the timer, half an hour a day can easily be marked out as your special writing time – and become part of your daily routine. You'll be surprised how your material mounts up and you'll feel you are really achieving something.








To use the timer for other purposes, click on the digital clock face on the bottom right of the Writer's Café window, or use the **View | Timer** menu command.

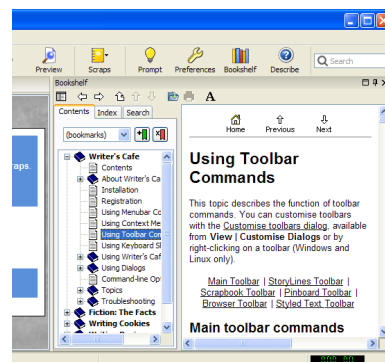


Cookies

This is a collection of my favourite quotations about writing, randomly presented for your sustenance and amusement! To see a new cookie, press the spacebar.

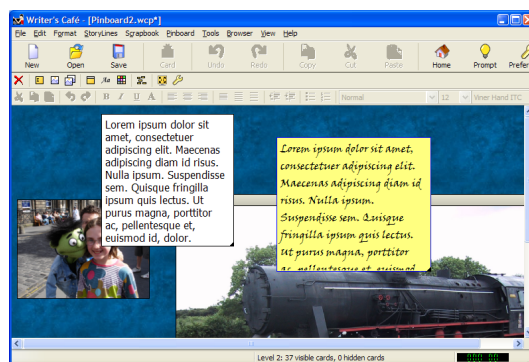
The Bookshelf

The Writer's Café manuals, the *Fiction: The Facts* book and more are all available from within Writer's Café without using an external help viewer. Click on  or **Help | Contents** and select a book to view. You can browse through the topics using the **Contents** tab on the left, or you can use the **Index** or **Search** tabs to find the topic you're looking for. To expand the topic to take up the whole window for easier reading, click on the  button, and then on the  button to restore it to the original size. You can click on  to detach the Bookshelf from the main window, and  closes the Bookshelf.



Fiction: The Facts is also available as a PDF file for viewing or printing; you can access it from a Desktop icon.

The Pinboard



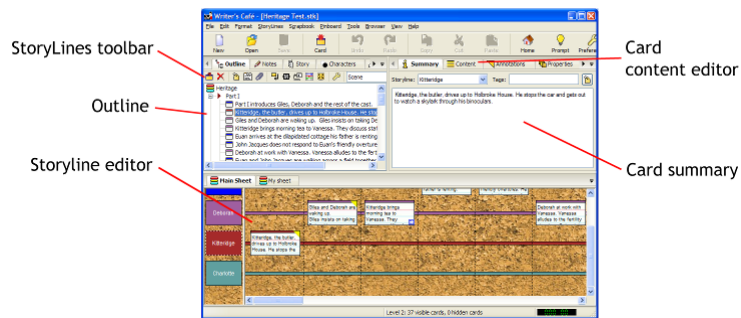
Sometimes you'll find you want to quickly jot down short notes without having to worry about where they should go. This is where the Pinboard comes in. When Writer's Café first runs, it creates a default pinboard called Pinboard.wcp, and you can start adding text and image notes, edit them, drag them around, and change their size, formatting and colours. Think of the Pinboard as a virtual 'fridge' where you can stick your random ideas and pictures that appeal to you. Or you can create a new Pinboard file with **File | New Project**, for a specific writing project. To access the Pinboard, use the **Tools | Pinboard** menu command, or double-click on the Pinboard icon on the Desktop, or type **Ctrl+6**.

Names

The Names tool provides a fun and quick way to generate candidate names for your characters. You can generate male and female names, either forenames or surnames or both, and store possible names for future reference. You can also browse the name lists directly. You'll never need to look through a telephone directory for inspiration again! To access this tool, double-click on the Names icon on the Desktop.



Using StoryLines



StoryLines is all about helping you to develop and transform your ideas into a detailed blueprint that you can use to write a script or a novel.


Writers have always used scraps of paper, blank index cards or postcards to record separate incidents in their stories and then

sort them into the best possible order and identify the gaps in the story. StoryLines takes this concept to the next level, allowing you to write and record and organize your virtual cards *really* quickly.

Keeping track of a plot, making sure it has a unity and a proper structure is no easy feat – and these days, most stories have more than one plotline. StoryLines allows you to plan each plot on a separate line and arrange the events you have recorded on the cards to create the best effect. If you have the idea that you want your love story to be resolved before the espionage plot plays itself out, StoryLines makes it easy to see if that works, and to try out all the alternatives without loads of rewriting.

To access StoryLines, double-click on the StoryLines desktop icon, or select the **Tools | StoryLines** menu command, or type **Ctrl+2**.

Creating a StoryLines project

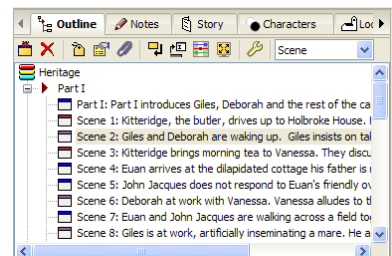
Click on  (or **File | New Project** or **Ctrl+N**) to start creating a new project. StoryLines asks you to give a name for your project, and to name up to three storylines. You only need to name one storyline, and the name can be quite arbitrary, so don't worry if you haven't got all the details straight in your mind. You can easily add or delete storylines at any time.



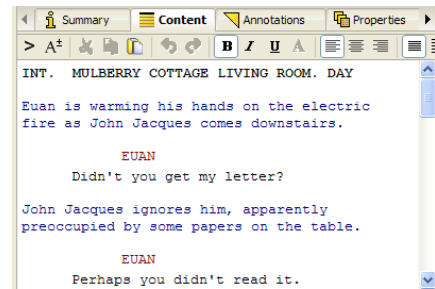
The main elements of StoryLines


StoryLines is divided into three main areas.

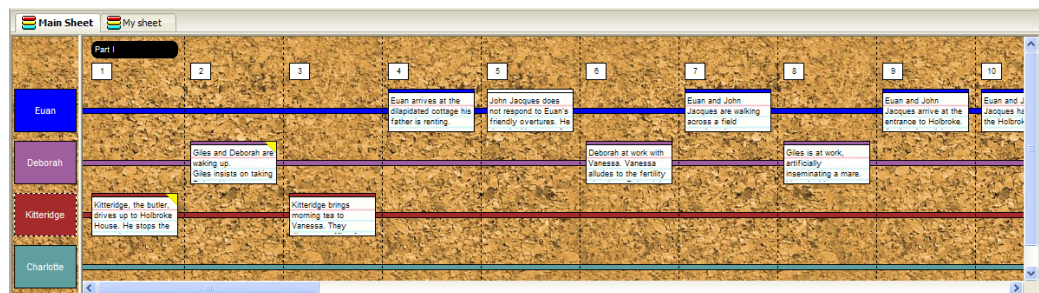
The **project outline** is on the left, where you can see a bird's-eye view of your story. Click on an item to start editing that card; drag cards to change their ordering and right-click to show a menu of further commands. The outline window also contains the StoryLines toolbar along the top, supplementing the main Writer's Café toolbar with StoryLines-specific commands. Alongside the project outline tab there are tabs for further tools, for adding project notes and recording story, character and location details.



The **card editor area** is on the right, and contains a number of tabs for entering a card's summary, content, and other details. You can also record project notes and view reports. This picture shows the content editor, with paragraphs formatted using the standard StoryLines screenplay styles. This is where you type the actual story, and StoryLines will stitch the content for all the cards into a linear report.




The **storyline window** is at the bottom of the window, and it's where you arrange your cards, dragging them to new positions and scrolling to see more cards. If you wish, you can use the  command to wrap the cards at the right-hand edge so you only ever have to scroll up or down.



Note that tabs can often be split to allow you to see several windows at once. Just drag the tab to the top, right, bottom or left section of that tab's window to split it, or drag the tab to a different row of tabs.

Creating cards

To add a new card, click on  (or type **Shift+Ctrl+C**, or **StoryLines | New Card**). You can now start typing text into the **Summary** tab of the card editor, and create further cards, dragging them to the appropriate storyline. To keep creating cards on a specific storyline, select the storyline by clicking on its label on the left of the window.

You'll see the cards being added to the outline, and you can click on an item in the outline to go to that card quickly. Click on the **Reports** tab to see a linear version of your project, updated as you work: we'll look at that in more detail shortly.

You can switch the **Master Storyline** view on using **StoryLines | View | Master Storyline**, so you can see the overall shape of your story.

Editing cards

You use the **Summary**, **Content**, **Annotations** and **Properties** tabs to enter details for each card.

The **Summary** tab records facts about the scene or incident you are dealing with at this point in the story. The summary text is used to identify the card in the project outline. This tab allows you to specify time and location details, mainly of use when writing screenplays.

The **Content** tab can have as much detail as you want – perhaps the entire scene. The editor allows application of named styles or *ad-hoc* formatting such

as centering and font changes, so you can control your story appearance as desired. If you're a screenwriter, there's extra help and some automated application of styles for cues, dialogue, transitions and more.



The **Annotations** tab lets you write notes about the scene or incident, and the card will show a yellow corner if there are any annotations. You can have as many separate annotations as you wish per card, and you can add both formatted text and images.

The **Properties** tab contains further windows for 'tagging' cards (putting them in user-defined categories), linking the card to other cards or sheets, and showing statistics – word and page count – for the card and project.

More on editing

Left-click on a card on a storyline to edit it (on the Mac, just click), and right-click on a card to popup a context menu with commands that apply to this card (on the Mac, use control-click).

Cards can be dragged individually using the left mouse button, or you can select several cards and drag them all. You can select cards by left clicking on the each card's coloured bar with control held down (hold down shift on Mac) or by dragging a selection box around a group of cards, or by choosing **Select All** on the context menu (also by **Ctrl+A**). You can deselect cards using the context menu, or by clicking anywhere on the window background.


Undo  and **Redo**  can be applied to most commands. This can be handy when you've dragged a card somewhere you didn't want to, for example, and want to quickly revert to the previous position.

A card can have the navigation focus as well as be selected. There is only ever one card with the focus, and it is highlighted by a flashing colour bar. When you create a new card with **Shift+Ctrl+C** or the **StoryLines | New Card** command, it is created after the focus card in an available column or in a newly created column.

You can navigate around the storyline window with the keyboard arrow keys, using **Alt+Left**, **Alt+Right**, **Alt+Up**, and **Alt+Down**. The current focus will be set to the first card in the specified direction. **Alt+Home** and **Alt+End** will take you to the start and the end of the storyline window respectively.

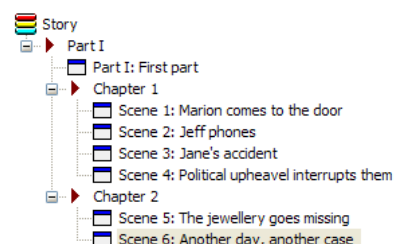
You can insert a column in front of the focused card with **Alt+Insert**, and delete selected cards or the focused card using **Alt+Delete**.


Columns can have labels: left-click on a column number to edit a label, and press Return to finish editing the label.

You can **Copy** , **Cut**  and **Paste**  cards, so long as the storyline window is focused and not a text field. Click on the storyline window background to ensure that the keyboard focus is on the window.

Adding structure

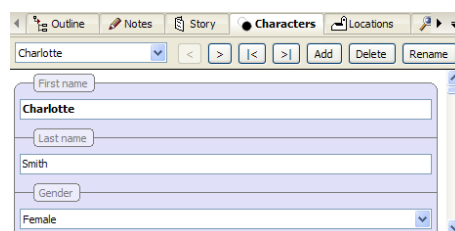
If you wish, you can organize your project into multiple levels. For example, a large novel might be structured as Parts, Chapters and Scenes. The Scene level is where the actual story is written and the other levels are there to help you organize and navigate the story. When creating a new project or sheet, you



can choose the structure, either by selecting an existing 'standard' structure definition, or by editing the levels yourself. You can decide on how levels will be labelled and numbered. The structure will be shown in the outline and you can add cards to any of the levels. You always edit an entire level at a time, even if it straddles multiple sections at higher levels. For example, when editing the Scene level, you will see all the scenes in the story, with thick vertical bars to show the Chapter boundaries. Note that this is optional – you can work with one level only if you wish, and you can also change the structure at a later date from Sheet Properties (press  on the StoryLines toolbar).

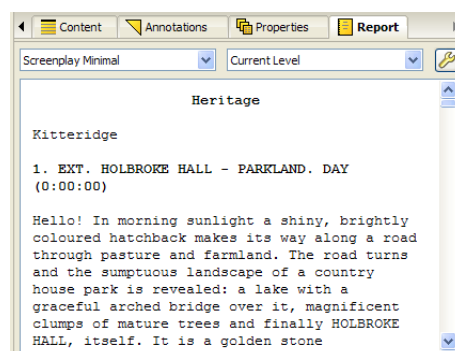
Editing story information



You can associate your name with the project (to be included in reports) and record other details of your story in the **Story** tab. The **Characters** and **Locations** tabs let you maintain profiles of the people and places in your story, and again these details can be included in your reports. You can find these tabs next to the **Outline** tab.

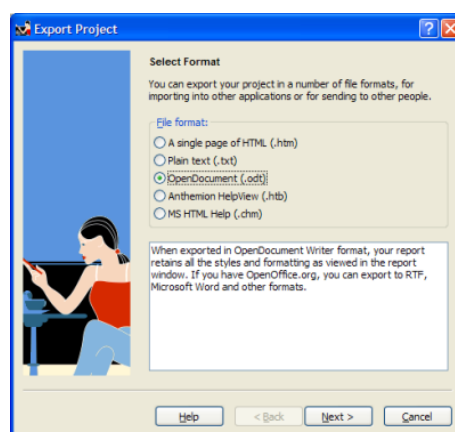


Viewing, printing and exporting reports


You can see how your story is coming along by clicking on the **Report** tab. Here, StoryLines combines the cards in your story to produce a linear version. In the drop-down list, you can select a template suited to your story, for example Novel or Screenplay. Then scroll through the report or click on a card in the outline or storyline window to scroll to particular scenes. You can also choose the scope of the report – Current Level, Current Sheet, or Whole Project.

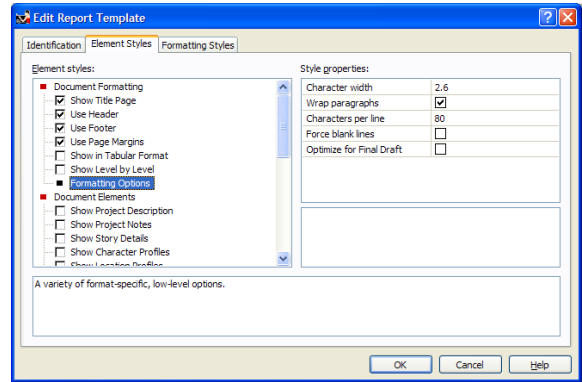


You can preview the current report before printing it by clicking on , and print it by clicking on . You can also export the report to a number of formats, invoking the export wizard (right) with **Ctrl+E** or **File | Export**. If you choose the OpenDocument format, you can export to OpenOffice.org Writer and Microsoft Word (using OpenOffice or an add-in), preserving formatting styles. You can also export to (and from) screenwriting software such as Final Draft.



Customising your report templates

The level of detail shown in a report can be changed in the Report Template Dialog (right), accessed via the StoryLines Preferences, or  on the **Report** tab. You can create your own report templates to show exactly the content you wish. For example, you could choose to only show content and not card summaries, or you could opt to show the storyline name in the card headings. You can also edit specific paragraph formatting styles to change the appearance of report text and give yourself access to more named styles when editing content.




StoryLines suits your style

There are two established schools of thought about starting a project. On the one hand there is the school of meticulous planning that considers it a sin to start chapter one or scene one until everything is worked out down to the last plot twist. The other school tells you to plunge right in and just do it, trusting to instinct and inspiration. The first method means you are well prepared, but can trap you by giving you too rigid a blueprint for your story. On the other hand, the second method means you can find yourself lost in a fictional desert without a map or a clue.
















Storylines can help you to avoid the pitfalls of both systems and lets you harvest their respective strengths. When you are planning your intricate plot and you feel you have to write a particular scene out in full, you can switch to the content section of a card, and go with the flow. If, on the other hand, you are exploring the substance of your story by writing actual scenes and suddenly the best ending ever occurs to you, it's easy to play with the cards and get on top of the structural demands of your story. Whichever way you like to play it, StoryLines is there to help you.

Where next?

This brief guide can only scratch the surface of Writer's Café, but we hope it has given you sufficient information for you to get stuck in and explore the tools, samples and online help. If in doubt, remember the  button, the **F1** key, and the **Help** button on each dialog box. You might like to use the **Check for Updates** command on the **Help** menu occasionally, to check for free upgrades.

Keyboard Shortcuts

These are the shortcuts you can use to accelerate your use of Writer's Café. Note that some shortcuts are dependent on context: that is, which window has the focus. For example, if you are typing text into a card, Undo and Redo affect the text field, while if the storyline window has the focus, Undo and Redo apply to edits such as card creation, deletion and moving.

	Ctrl + A	Selects all text in an edit control.
	Ctrl + B	In a styled text control, emboldens the selection or starts formatting in bold.
	Ctrl + C	Copies the selected text or image to the clipboard.
	Ctrl + E	Exports the current file, if supported by the active tool.
	Ctrl + F	Shows the Find dialog.
	Ctrl + G	Regenerates the current StoryLines report.
	Ctrl + H	Shows the online help.
	Ctrl + I	In a styled text control, italicises the selection or starts formatting in italics.
	Ctrl + K	Shows the StoryLines Pockets window.
	Ctrl + L	Shows the StoryLines Sheet Properties window.
	Ctrl + M	On Windows and Linux, shows the backup manager window. On Mac, minimizes the active window.
	Ctrl + N	Creates a new project.
	Ctrl + O	Opens a project.
	Ctrl + P	Shows the print dialog for printing the current document.
	Ctrl + Q	On Mac, quits Writer's Café.
	Ctrl + R	Shows the Find and Replace window for searching through the current document and replacing text.
	Ctrl + S	Saves the active project and all its contents.
	Ctrl + T	Shows the Settings dialog.
	Ctrl + U	In a styled text control, underlines the selection or starts underlining.
	Ctrl + V	Pastes text or an image from the clipboard to the text control or image scrap.
	Ctrl + W	Closes the current window, which may close Writer's Café.
	Ctrl + X	If a text control is selected, copies the selected text to the clipboard and deletes the text.
	Ctrl + Y	Redoes the previously undone edit.
	Ctrl + Z	Undoes the previous edit.
	Ctrl + Tab (Win) Ctrl + / (Linux) Alt + Tab (Mac)	Shows a menu for navigating quickly to a window.
	Ctrl + Page Up	Goes to the previous journal entry or notebook page.
	Ctrl + Page Down	Goes to the next journal entry or notebook page.
	Ctrl + 1	Shows the Home window. Alternative: Shift + Ctrl + Home .
	Ctrl + 2	Accesses StoryLines.
	Ctrl + 3	Accesses the Scrapbook.
	Ctrl + 4	Accesses the Journal.
	Ctrl + 5	Accesses the Notebook.
	Ctrl + 6	Accesses the Pinboard.
	Ctrl + 7	Accesses the Web tool (Windows only).
	Alt + Enter	Shows the properties dialog for the current project or scrap.
	Alt + Del	Deletes the focused card.
	Alt + Insert	Inserts a column at the current pointer position.
	Alt + F4	On Windows and Linux, quits Writer's Café.
	Alt + Left	Goes to the card to left of the current card in the same storyline.
	Alt + Right	Goes to the card to right of the current card in the same storyline.
	Alt + Up	Goes to the card above the current card in the same column.

Alt + Down	Goes to the card below the current card in the same column.
Alt + Home	Goes to the first card on this level.
Alt + End	Goes to the last card on this level.
Shift + Alt + Left	Goes to the card to left of the current card in any storyline.
Shift + Alt + Right	Goes to the card to right of the current card in any storyline.
Ctrl + Alt + 1	Decreases the overall text size in a text editor.
Ctrl + Alt + 2	Increases the overall text size in a text editor.
Ctrl + Alt + A	If the Content pane is active, prompts for an annotation and links it from an icon (and selected text if any).
Ctrl + Alt + B	Shows a report for the current StoryLines project in your web browser.
Ctrl + Alt + C	Creates a collage scrap.
Ctrl + Alt + D	Exports an OpenDocument report from StoryLines.
Ctrl + Alt + E	Shows or hides the StoryLines card editor and report windows.
Ctrl + Alt + F	Creates a folder scrap.
Ctrl + Alt + G	Shows the global search dialog.
Ctrl + Alt + H	Goes to today's journal entry.
Ctrl + Alt + I	Creates an image scrap.
Ctrl + Alt + J	Shows the Writing Prompt dialog.
Ctrl + Alt + L	Shows or hides the StoryLines label window.
Ctrl + Alt + M	Shows or hides the StoryLines master storyline.
Ctrl + Alt + N	Shows or hides the StoryLines navigator window.
Ctrl + Alt + O	Shows or hides the StoryLines outline window.
Ctrl + Alt + P	Prints the active item only.
Ctrl + Alt + S	Creates a shortcut scrap.
Ctrl + Alt + T	Creates a text scrap.
Ctrl + Alt + U	Creates a web link scrap.
Ctrl + Alt + V	If there is image data on the clipboard, it will be pasted into a new image scrap. If there is a web address on the clipboard, a new web link scrap will be created. If there are multiple lines of text on the clipboard, a new text scrap is created.
Ctrl + Alt + W	Enables or disables StoryLines card wrap mode.
Ctrl + Alt + X	If the Content pane is focused and an annotation link is under the cursor, deletes the link and (optionally) the annotation.
Shift + Ctrl + Back	Goes back a page in the embedded web browser.
Shift + Ctrl + Home	Shows the Home window. Alternative: Ctrl + 1 .
Shift + Ctrl + C	Creates a new card on the currently selected storyline. Alternative: Alt + N .
Shift + Ctrl + F	Shows a font formatting dialog for the active styled text editor.
Shift + Ctrl + N	Creates a new StoryLines sheet.
Shift + Ctrl + O	Imports a file into the current or new project, if supported by the active tool.
Shift + Ctrl + P	Creates a new Pinboard picture note.
Shift + Ctrl + T	Creates a new Pinboard text note.
Shift + Ctrl + U	In the Web tool, prompts for a URL (web address) to open.
Ctrl + RClick	Creates a new StoryLines card.
F1	Shows help on the control under the mouse pointer.
F2	Shows the StoryLines card Summary pane.
F3	Shows the StoryLines card Content pane.
F4	Shows the StoryLines card Annotations pane.
F5	Reloads the current browser page.
F6	Shows the StoryLines Report pane.
F8	Shows the StoryLines Floating Card Editor.
F11	Shows the current tool full-screen. Press again to restore the window.
F12	Shows the Spelling Checker dialog.

