

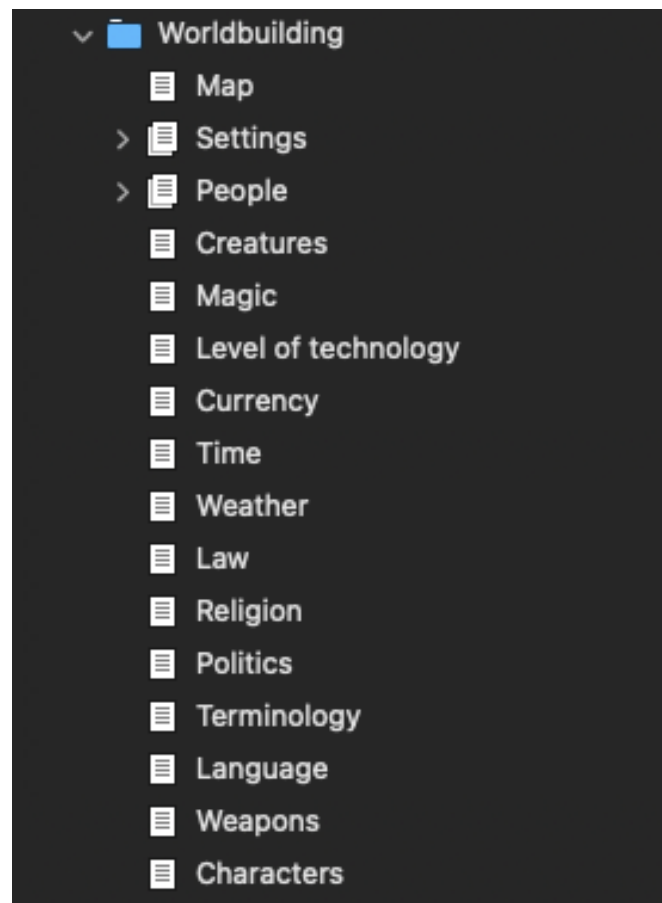
Nicole Holland's Fantasy Worldbuilding Checklist

1. Map
2. Settings
3. People
4. Creatures
5. *Magic
6. Level of technology
7. Weaponry
8. Currency
9. Time
10. Weather
11. Law
12. *Religion
13. Politics
14. Language
15. Terminology
16. Characters

*I recommend spending the most time on these

*****The book I will be referencing in this guide is my book *Shadowbound: Book 1 in The Dark Moon Series. A sweet witch and the king's vicious executioner become magically bound and must travel across the continent to find the druid who can reverse the spell binding their lives together.***

I use Scrivener to plan and write, and this is what my layout looks like. You don't need Scrivener, I just find it helpful to organize because I can separate things into folders and papers. (Folders are blue and papers are the white rectangles.)



1. Map

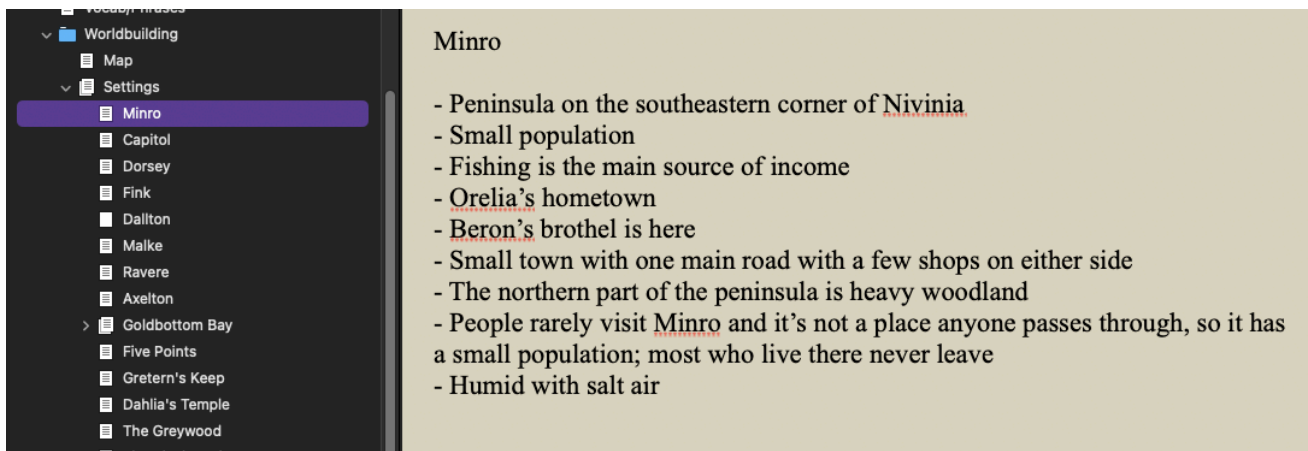
- I like to start with creating a map first so I know the scale of the world. I want to know where my cities, towns, borders, realms, etc. are. This can be a hand-drawn sketch or you can make one for free at [Inkarnate.com](https://www.inkarnate.com).
- Consider these landscapes: mountains, rivers, valleys, cliffs, craters, caves, lakes, oceans, forests, dunes, tundras, etc. Yes, this is fantasy, but having a baseline for how landscapes are laid out in our natural world helps. i.e. rivers flow south, forests are often found at the base of mountains, etc.
- **Hot tip:** Watch Planet Earth or Blue Planet as a reference when building landscapes.

(Below) Example of a free map I made on Inkarnate for my book *For Coven and Crown*.



2. Settings

I like to make a separate paper for each setting. In these papers I put inspiration photos, mood boards, and important information like weather, location on map, and inhabitants.

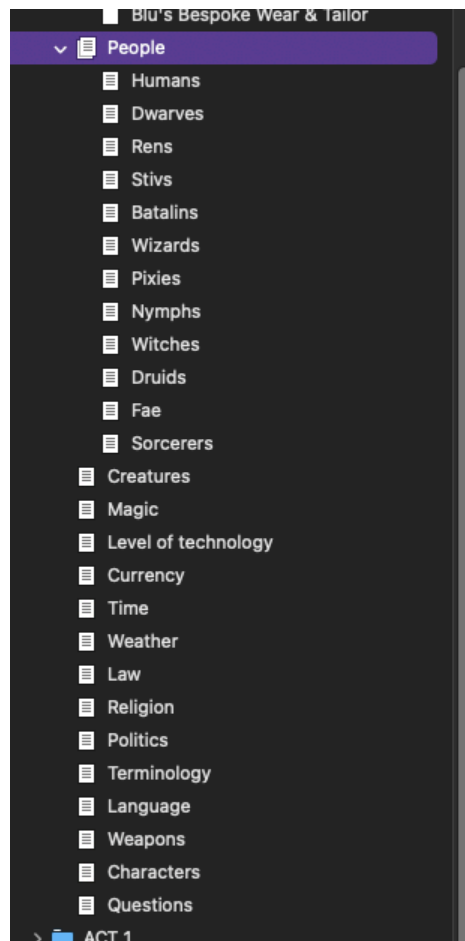


Minro

- Peninsula on the southeastern corner of Nivinia
- Small population
- Fishing is the main source of income
- Orelia's hometown
- Beron's brothel is here
- Small town with one main road with a few shops on either side
- The northern part of the peninsula is heavy woodland
- People rarely visit Minro and it's not a place anyone passes through, so it has a small population; most who live there never leave
- Humid with salt air

3. People

By people I mean your races, ethnicities, groups, and class system. For me, this book was inspired by DnD so I have a lot of Dnd-esque characters



Races - from most populous to least populous

Humans

Dwarves

Rens

Stivs

Batalins

Wizards

Pixies

Nymphs

Witches

Fae

Druids

Sorcerers

Clerics?

Population of Nivinia by race (most populous to most rare)

- **Humans**: round ears, magicless; natural skin tones
- **Dwarves**: short and stocky; good with the earth and food; mostly farmers or cooks; magicless; natural skin tones
- **Rens (same amount as Stivs)**: pointed ears; natural skin tones; some are shape-shifters; basic elemental magic; hate Stivs; medium healing
- **Stivs (same amount as Rens)**: (Like elves): pointed ears, purple-grey (mauve) skin, advanced elemental magic; medium healing ability; hate Rens
- **Batalins**: vary in height, naturally extremely muscular; incredibly strong; pastel skin tones in shades of green, purple, and blue; their eyes match their skin; horns
- **Wizards**: can be any race; learned in charms and spells (incantations); can levitate items but nothing too heavy

4. Creatures

I don't have images for this section, but this is a great place for them! Whether you draw them or use Pinterest photos, visualizing the creatures and their capabilities is very helpful.

Silvertooth - A silver koi fish with small white tusks like a warthog

Sea dragons instead of a **krakken**

Giant jellyfish

Etherral eagles

Idolids - turquoise butterflies with iridescent rim around their wings that are sharp as glass. They bite and swarm like killer bees.

Perrin falcons - the Fae ride these (inspired by peregrine falcons); white and grey feathers to blend in with the snow

Blind wolves that live in the desert caves of the Whirlwinds; their eyes are kept safe from the sandstorms

5. Magic

Consider:

- How magic works in the world
- Can people/characters use it? If so, how?
- Uses and limitations of magic

When characters use magic, ask yourself these questions:

- I. How do they call on their magic?
- II. What can they do with it?
- III. How long does it last?
- IV. What are the magic's limitations?

***Hot tip:** Magic is cool, but if your character is all powerful and the magic never falters, you won't have any tension, suspense, or conflict. Every strength has a weakness, so give your character both and it will enrich your story.

6. Level of technology

Technology and weaponry often go hand in hand, so keep both in mind when worldbuilding. By level of technology, I mean what time period could you roughly equate your setting to? Is it more medieval era? Regency? Dark ages? Super high-tech sci-fi

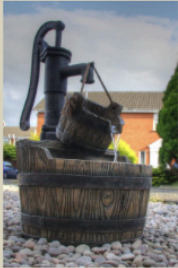
Consider: plumbing, electric, building materials, transportation, etc.

< > Level of technology ^ v

- Trulight: name for orb of light that only wizards can create



- Orbs can vary in size
- Orbs are made of cool-toned and warm-toned light
- Orbs hover wherever you place them
- Orbs last for X amount of time. 10 year + orbs are the most expensive
- Orbs can be made to react/connect to one another. Only wizards can set this up
- Water pumps/well pumps for hot or cold



-
- Copper bathtubs



-
- Plumbing?

7. Weaponry

For this book, I based some of my settings off real world settings like feudal Japan and medieval Europe. Research weapons used during the era that's most like

your world for inspiration. Include your made-up weapons.

Weaponry

Seidr blades have a faint white glow around the blade. They're lightweight but super durable. Can shrink and expand.

Longsword



Short sword



Pirate weapons

Sabre - sword



Cutlass - sword (shorter than a sabre)



Scimitar knife/scimitar dagger



Viking weapons - Fae use these in the Points

Battle axe



Doublesided battle axe

Haft is the name for the handle of an axe



Sax - dagger



8. Currency

For this world, I use coins I made up and gemstones.

Coins

- Silver
- Gold (worth 2x a silver piece)
- Gold piece (larger) worth 500

- Large white coins made from dragon bone only used as exchange for large amounts of gold; An obsidian dragon head with its mouth open and tongue coiling graced each side; Vade exchanges his gold for a few dragon bone coins; 100,000 gold = 4 dragon coins (25,000 each)

- Gemstones: obsidian, clear quartz, citrine, Mexican fire opal, azurite, moss agate ?, ruby, emerald

- Gemstones worth (low to high):

Clear quartz, citrine, ruby, emerald, obsidian, azurite

(Moss agate and fire opal are only found in the Greywood)



9. Time

This one may seem strange, but does time work the same in your world as it does in our natural world? Are there 24 hours in a day? How many seasons are there and how long do they last? Any terminology you've created for how to refer to time?

Time periods

B.**T**.M. - Before the Moon

A.**D**. - After **Dark**

- The Final Night battle **occured** 100 years before **Shadowbound** starts
- 40 days in a calendar month
- 12 months in a calendar year

How is time measured? Using day dials. Day dials measure sunrise and sunset, dark moons, the three months, and high noon positioned at true north. "Marks" kind of symbolize hours.

One 'mark' is just over an hour

Sunrise to noon is referenced as (X high)

What time is it? 3 high. Aka 3 marks until high noon.

10. Weather

Consider:

- How many seasons are there and how long do they last?
- Does it always snow in one place? Never rain in another?
- Special kind of weather like acidic rain, glass storms, etc.

Three seasons - spring, summer, and winter takes up half the year (12 months in a calendar year)

Wind vane

Weather vane

11. Law

Consider:

- Who is in charge of what?
- Are there any specific laws for the world?
- Who enforces them?

Kings or Queens

The king has an army, city guard (Watchers), and High Guard

The king has a council of X amount of people to help him make decisions
but he has the final say

Who rules over the villages, towns, and cities?

- Village elder (voted by the people)
- Town baron (voted by the people)
- City lord (passed down by bloodline)

The king/queen is referred to as His Majesty/Her Majesty

Sorcery is illegal and punishable by death

Seidr-made weapons are outlawed and sold on the black market

12. Religion

Consider:

- How many gods/goddesses/deities are there?
- Do people pray to them? Make sacrifices?
- Do gods have power? If so, what kind?
- Are gods real?
- What are the differences between believers and non-believers as far as how they're treated, are they blessed, etc.
- What type of religion is in this world? Monotheism? Polytheism?

4 gods/goddesses live in the Heavens/the Light

'Light Above' is a name for the heavens; spoken as "Ah, li arriba" like 'oh for the love of god.

"Three Hells" is spoke as "Ah, tredablo"

- Goddess of desire (Dahlia)
- God of protection (Santh) short for chrysanthemum
- Goddess of fertility **and health** (Lili)
- God of truth (Daaf) short for daffodil (everyone prays to the other gods/goddesses bc of something they WANT; the god of truth reveals what they NEED)

Three Hells and each are ruled by a different devil

- Each Hell is different
- One is cold (the devil of suffering)
- One is hot (the devil of malevolence)
- One is like purgatory (The devil of penance)

13. Politics

Consider:

- Political parties/factions
- Relations between groups
- Taxes and currency
- Ruling and governing: democracy, aristocracy, dictatorship, etc.
- How do people come to be in power? Voting system?
- Ethos
- War

The king rules over Nivinia; except for the **Whirlwinds**. He mostly leaves the **Points alone only to collect taxes** (but once he learns the Whirlwinds have X, he wants to work with the people)

The king collects taxes from each city in his domain - except for Whirlwinds because he deems the place barren and unliveable, when actually people thrive in the desert caves

The Kingdom imports all gemstones from The Blacksands

Succession is determined by bloodline?

The castle has a court and people from important houses

14. Language

Consider:

- What is the primary language?
- Can everyone understand everyone?
- Sign language? Telepathy?
- Anything you create

Omnimagia language is based off of Spanish (the feminine)

Magic is cast used Spanish-based spells

“Ah, tredablo...” means ‘fucking hell’ aka “Three Hells”

“Ah, Li arriba” means like ‘oh for the love of god’ aka “Light above”

“Ah” means anything for frustration

15. Terminology

Often goes hand in hand with language, but this means specific words or phrases you create, and/or common sayings.

Terminology.

Seidr: Norse word for sorcery/magic

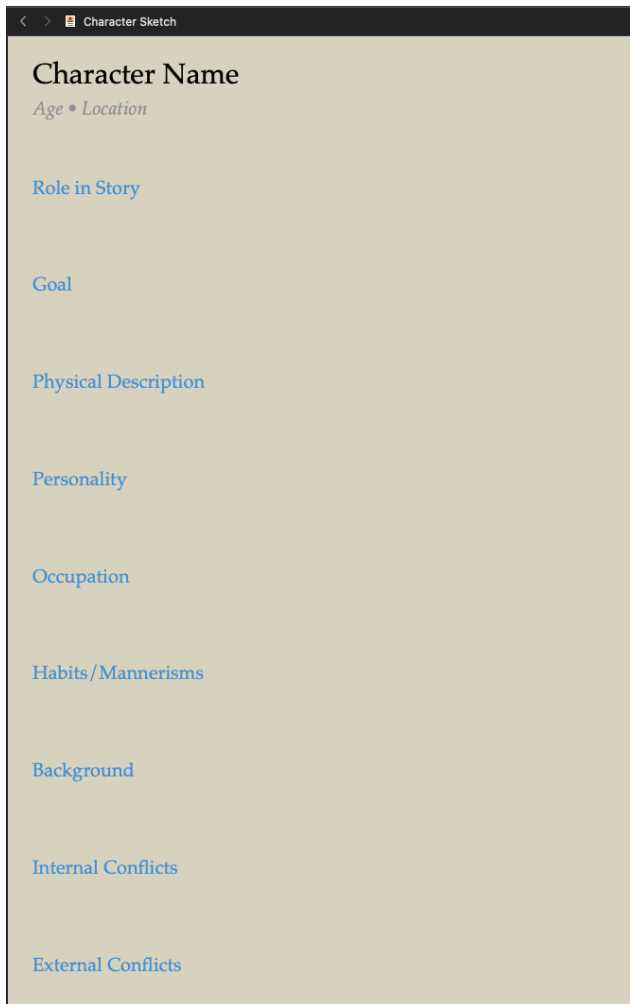
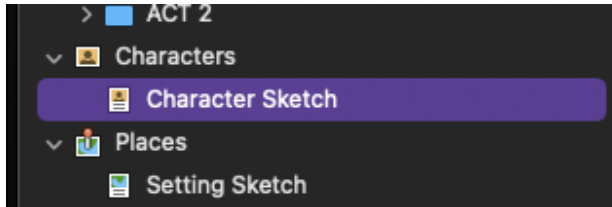
Seidr-made: an item, usually a weapon, infused illegally with magic by a sorcerer

Trulight: a round orb of light only wizards can create. They are different sizes and different colors with a smoke rolling around them. They can be dimmed or brightened by touch; and if they're connected; when one is touched they all respond.

the Drain: the underground black market area in the sewers underneath Richester

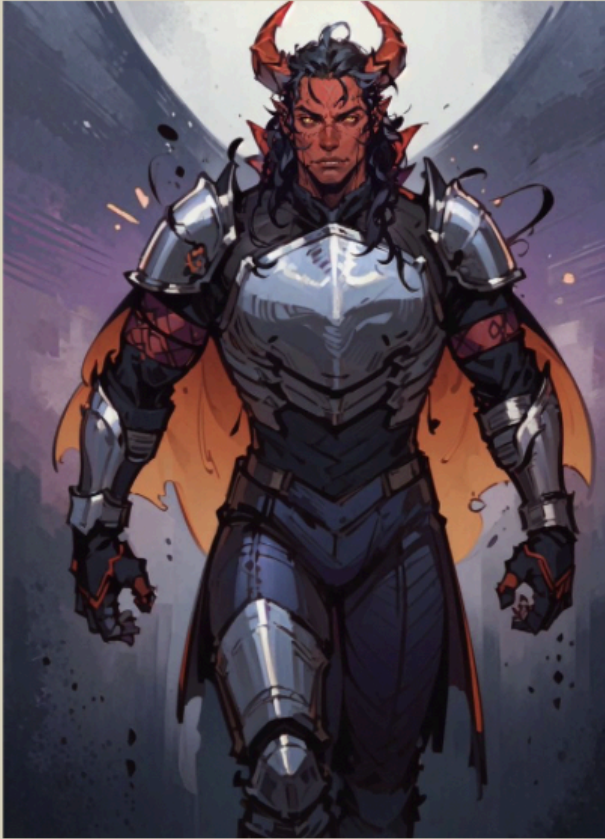
16. Characters

Scrivener has a character profile built-in as seen below. I like to include pictures and drawings of characters here.

A screenshot of the 'Character Sketch' form within the Scrivener application. The form has a light beige background and a dark header bar with the title 'Character Sketch'. The form contains several text input fields, each with a blue label: 'Character Name' (with a sub-label 'Age • Location'), 'Role in Story', 'Goal', 'Physical Description', 'Personality', 'Occupation', 'Habits/Mannerisms', 'Background', 'Internal Conflicts', and 'External Conflicts'.

*The character below is from an unpublished book of mine, not Shadowbound.

Jay



Age

28

Race

Batalin

Class

N/A

Weapon of choice

Maul

Clothing

Tank top

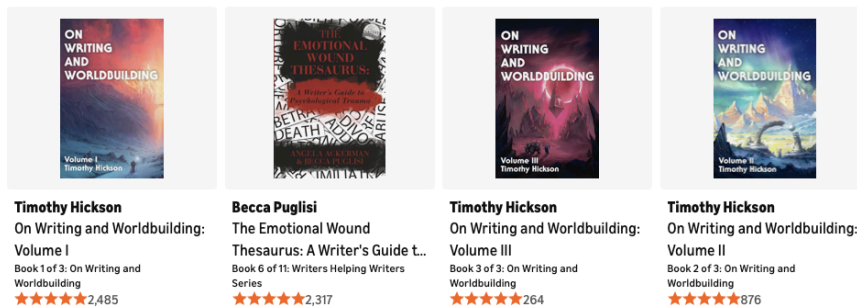
Breeches

Gloves with ridges for the knuckles

On Writing and Worldbuilding is a fantastic series to help with your worldbuilding and goes in depth on a variety of topics like ones I mentioned in this guide. Check out my storefront for more writing craft book recs.

*I do make a commission from Amazon if you purchase through this link

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Socials: @authornicoleholland on TikTok, IG, and YouTube