

A Beginner's Guide to Using Inklewriter

By Hap Aziz – April 30, 2015

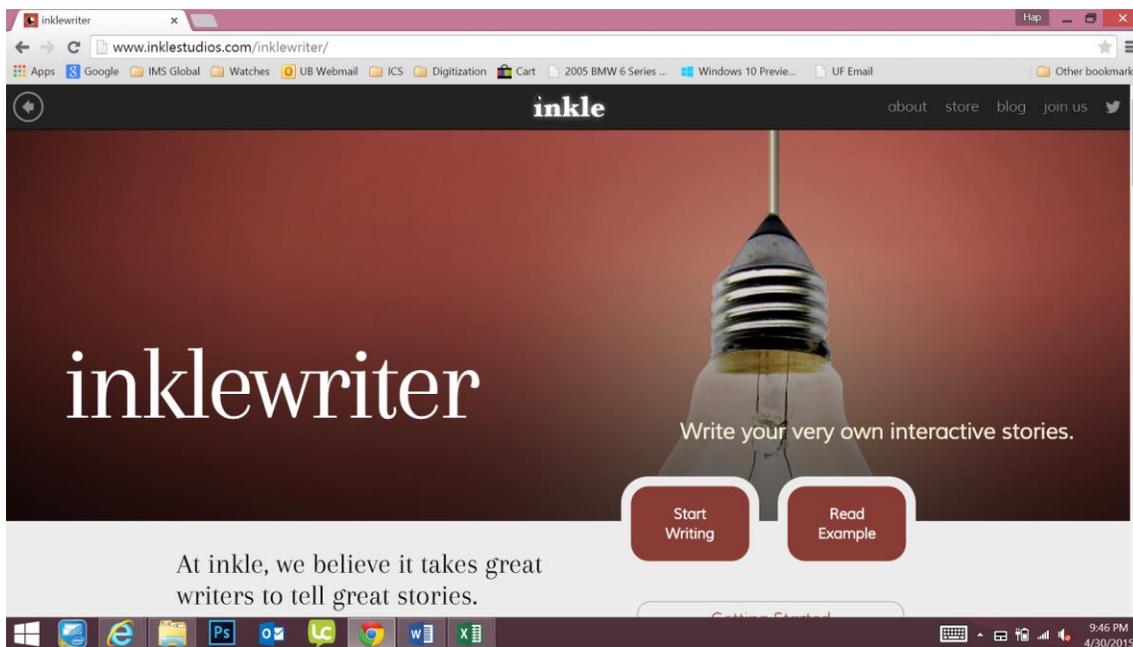
Introduction

Inklewriter is a web-based software that is used to create Interactive Fiction in the Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) format. Interactive Fiction (IF) is a type of computer game that lets the player read a story and make choices that can change the direction and outcome of the story.

Because IF games are mainly text-based, IF games were among the first kind ever written for computers. CYOA games are a type of IF that give the player specific choices at the end of each section. The player chooses what he or she would like to do, and the game moves forward based on the player's selections through the game.

There can be many different outcomes in an IF game, or the story can lead the player to a single ending. It is up to the game creator to decide what the player is able to do. To direct the player's path through the game, the game creator must develop a "map" of the story. That is an outline of the story narrative along with the decisions a player is allowed to make and the places in the story that those decisions may be made. You will learn about that later.

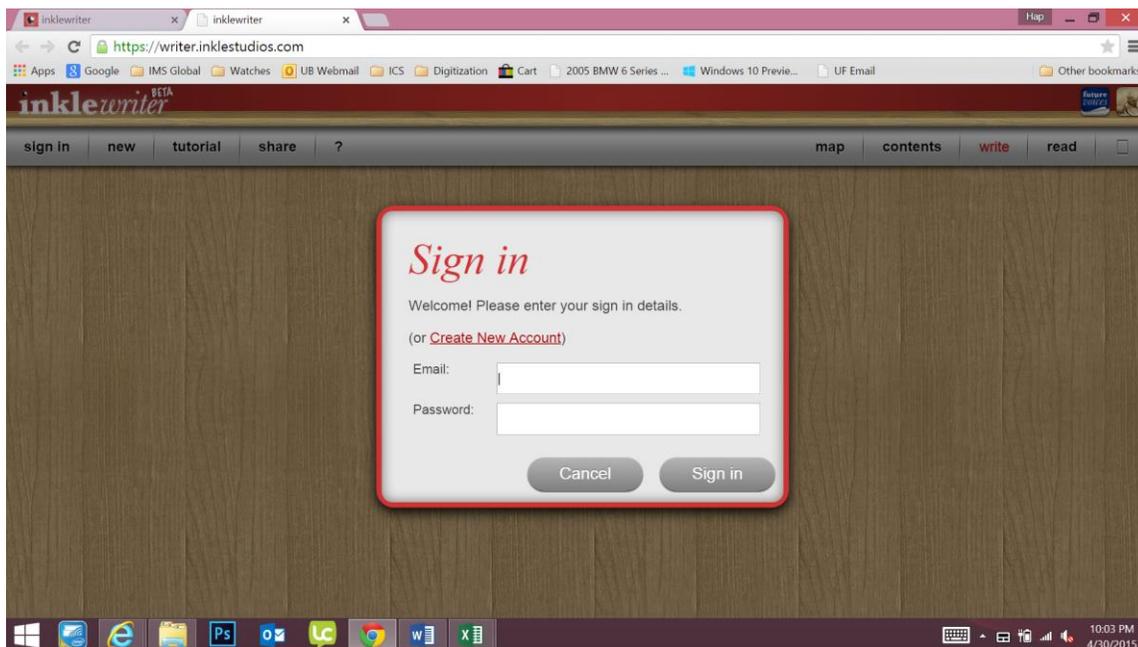
To get to Inklewriter, all you need is a computer with access to the Internet with a regular web browser. You will go to the URL <http://www.inklestudios.com/inklewriter/> and your screen should look something like this:



Click on the Start Writing button. When you do that, another tab will open up in your browser, and you will see this on your screen:

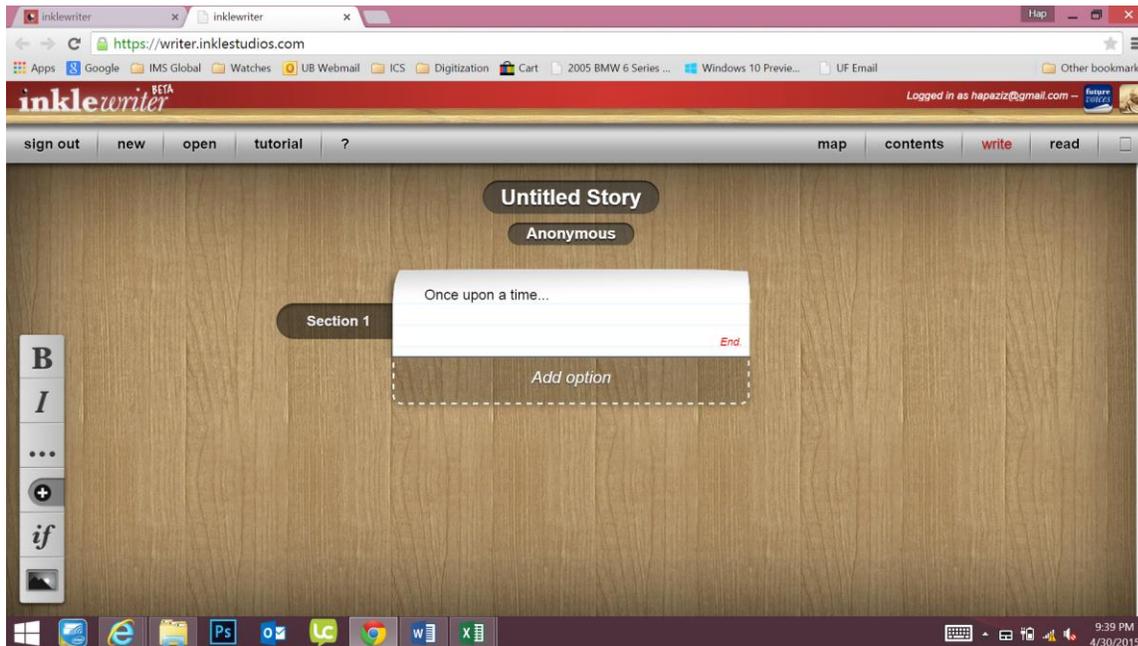


Your account has already been created, so you will immediately click the “sign in” button. This is what you will see next:



Use the account information that Mrs. Baker provided, and fill in the Email and Password fields.

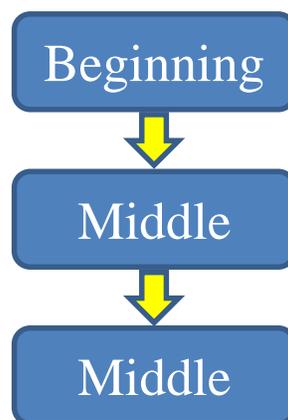
Once you sign into your Inklewriter account, you will see the screen below.



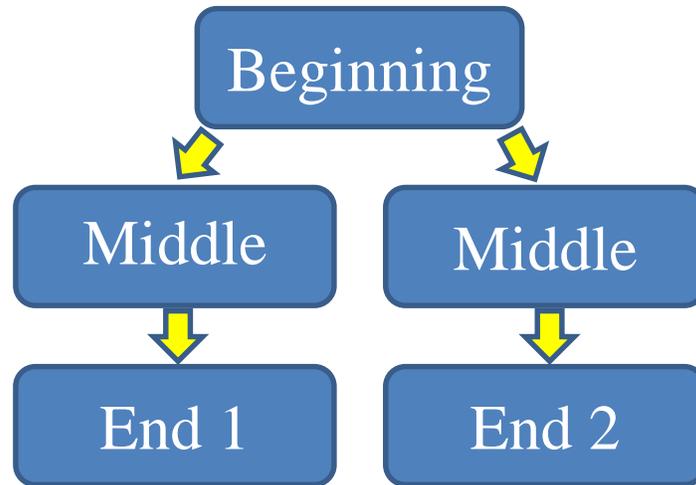
This is your “blank sheet of paper” for creating your IF game. You will learn how to create a basic game using Inklewriter, but first we will talk about planning your game. It is very important to have an outline of how you want your game to “flow” and the choices you want the player to be able to make.

How to Design a CYOA Interactive Fiction Game

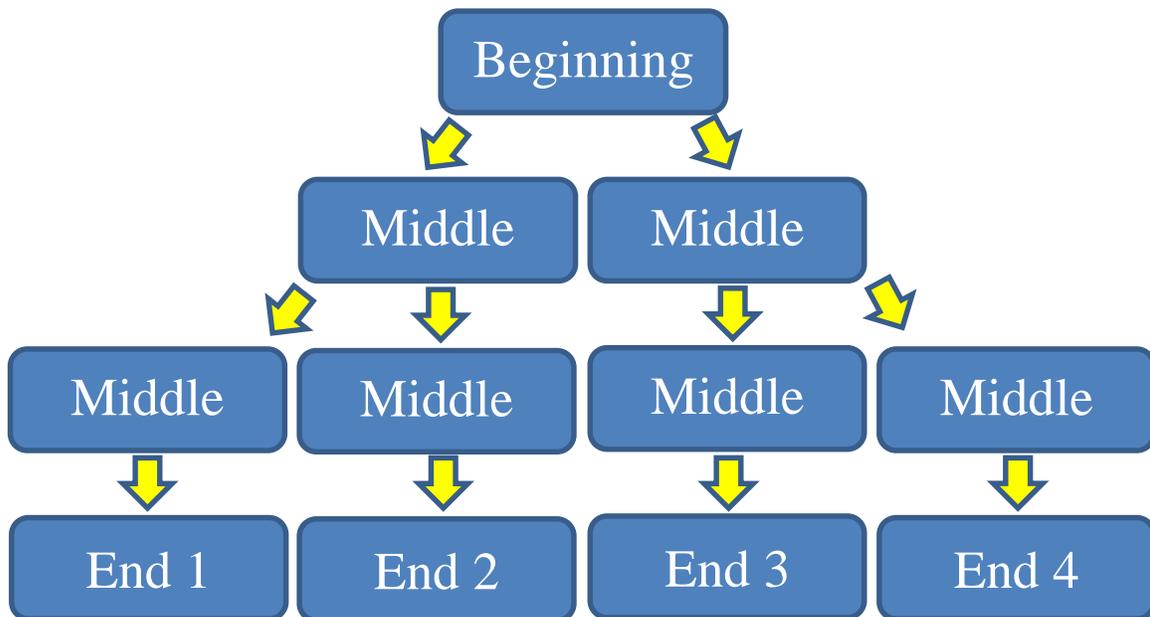
The key concept behind creating a CYOA Interactive Fiction game is that you must give players the opportunities to make choices during the game. These choices should in some way change the actual flow of the game. In a regular story (such as in a book you might read), the story flows in one direction from start to finish, like this:



There are no choices to be made, because the storyteller or writer has already decided what will happen and in what order everything takes place. In an Interactive Fiction game, however, in certain places in the story the player gets to choose the direction.

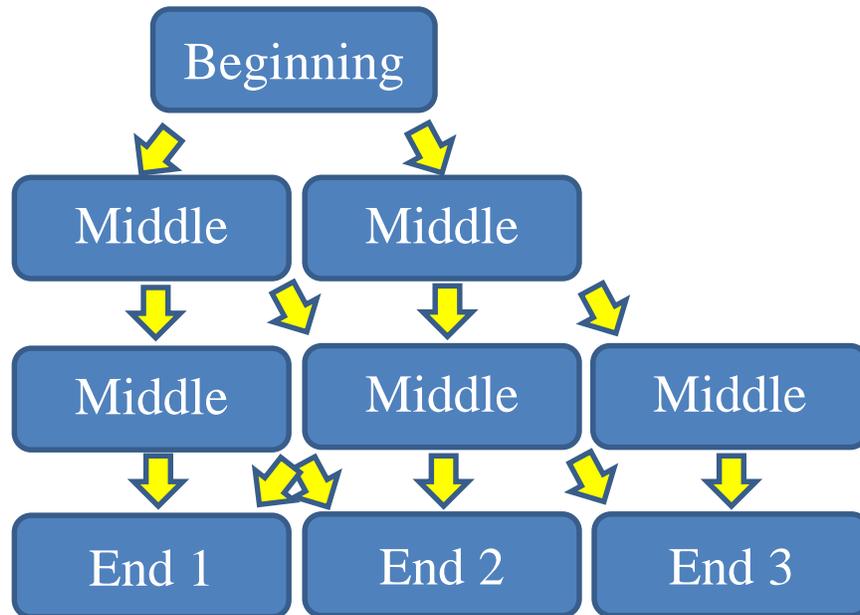


The above diagram is an example of a story that branches after the beginning into two different paths. The player is able to select one of two options, and the result be a different ending. It is possible to have many options in the middle portion of your IF game, and this may result in more possible endings. Below is an example.



We see that after the beginning branches into two paths, those two paths branch into two more paths before getting to the four possible endings. You can imagine how big this map could become if you added several more levels that branch in between!

Your navigation map can be as simple or as complex as you like. And it is even possible to have the branches of the game come back together instead of always separating. On a map, that might look something like this:



You can see in the above diagram that there are multiple paths that will take the player to the different endings. Although this is the most challenging game to create, it is often the most satisfying to play because of all the choices a player may make.

Planning the Story

When planning your story for the game, you will need to do the following things:

- Gather your materials, just as you would for a report. You will find good sources, and you will have a bibliography at the end of the game.
- Since your game will be in the form of a story, you will want to identify key historical figures with whom your game player might have “conversations,” such as the Prime Minister of Israel or a fighter pilot.
- You may want to think about a key historical event that might be described in your game, such as the Six-Day War.
- You will want to decide the location in which the events of your game takes place. That location may be inside a building like a library, a government building, a city, a battlefield, or even a combination of places.
- You will want to identify objects that might have significance to the story you want to tell. For example, there may be a book that contains information you want your game player to know, or there may be a treaty that was signed between two countries.
- You should create a navigation map on paper first, outlining the story and the action choices where the story branches. Index cards might be a good tool for you to use.

As you write your game, the places where the story branches into different paths are where the player chooses different actions to take. For example:

You are in a field of rolling hills on a sunny day. Not too far in front of you, you see a jet fighter that has crash landed. The canopy of the jet is open, and the pilot was able to get out of the plane safely. He is sitting on the ground next to the jet.

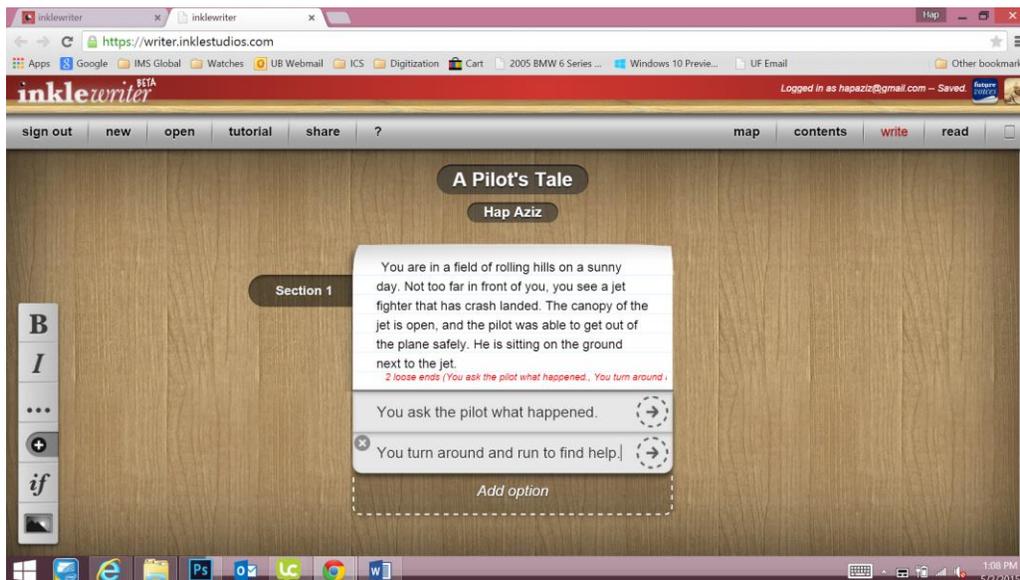
You ask the pilot what happened.

You turn around and run to find help.

The paragraph of text “sets the stage” for this part of the game story. This particular story might be about describing the Six-Day War from the perspective of an Israeli fighter pilot. After encountering the pilot, the player has two choices to make:

- You ask the pilot what happened.
- You turn around and run to find help.

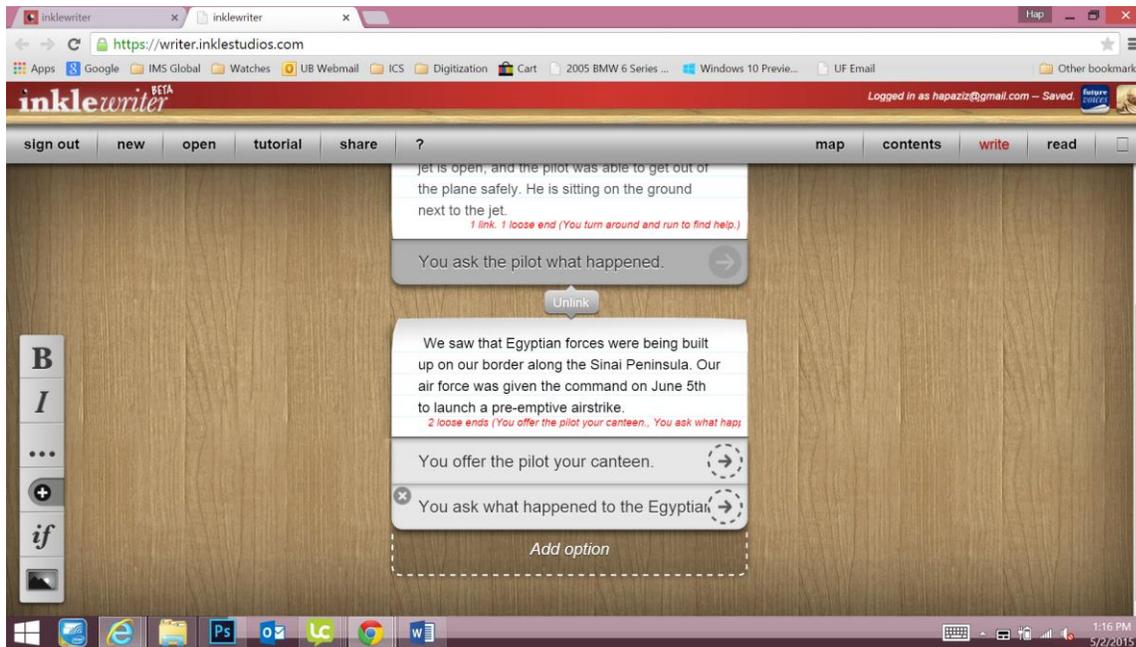
For each choice, you must decide what happens next. Let’s look at how to do this in Inklewriter.



On the “blank” Inklewriter page you would type a title for your game (“A Pilot’s Tale” in this example), your name, and the paragraph of introductory text. Then you would click on the “Add option” button to type in your action choices:

- You ask the pilot what happened.
- You turn around and run to find help.

To enter text that should be connected to the particular action, you click on the arrow button on the right side of that action. That will bring up another text box for you to enter the next section of your game story.



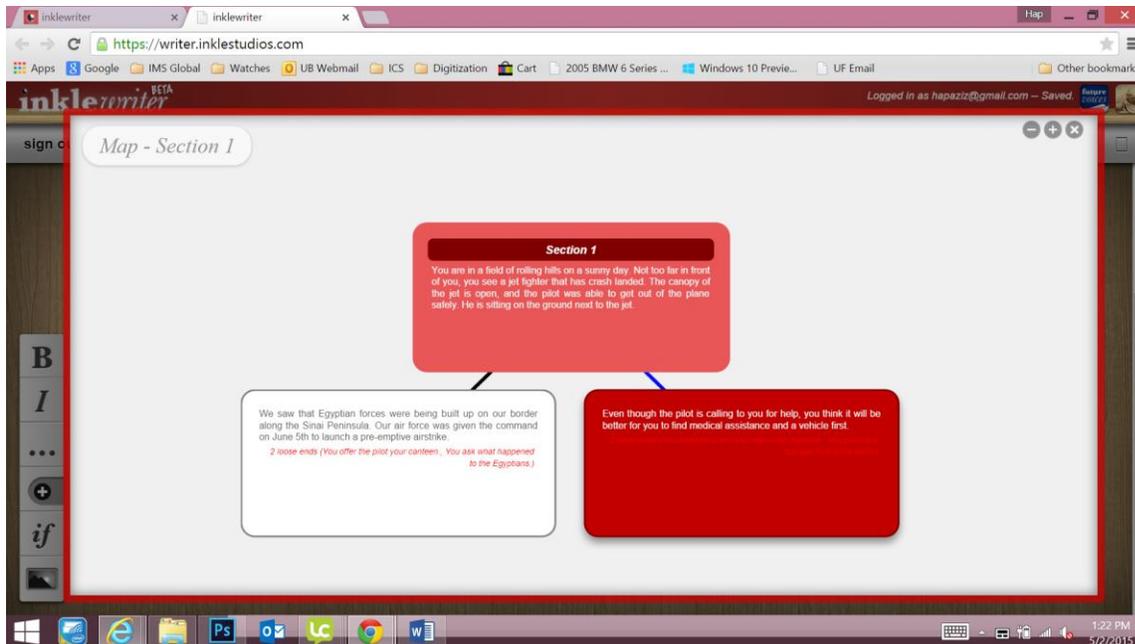
To continue the story after the choice of “You ask the pilot what happened,” you should think of the next part of the story and compose the text in a way that makes sense. For example, this could be the next section (as shown above):

The pilot looks up at you and says, “We saw that Egyptian forces were being built up on our border along the Sinai Peninsula. Our air force was given the command on June 5th to launch a pre-emptive airstrike.” He pauses for a moment, and you notice that his lips are chapped.

You offer the pilot your canteen.

You ask what happened to the Egyptians.

As you build out the different areas of your game, you may want to check the progress of your navigation by clicking on the “map” link at the top of screen. This will bring up a visual representation of the flow of your game such as the one below. The map that Inklewriter displays as you create your game should closely resemble the outline you first made when developing your game idea.



Communication, Navigation, and Manipulation

There are three basic choice types for players to select in Inklewriter:

- Communication – These are choices that involve conversations between the player and characters in the game. For example:

Ask the doctor about the medicine.

Tell the police officer you saw a robbery.

- Navigation – These are choices that result in the player moving from one physical location to another. For example:

Go through the door to the garden.

Climb up the stairs.

- Manipulation – These are choices that allow the player to use objects in some way, such as read them, examine them for information, and so on. For example:

Open the book and read the first page.

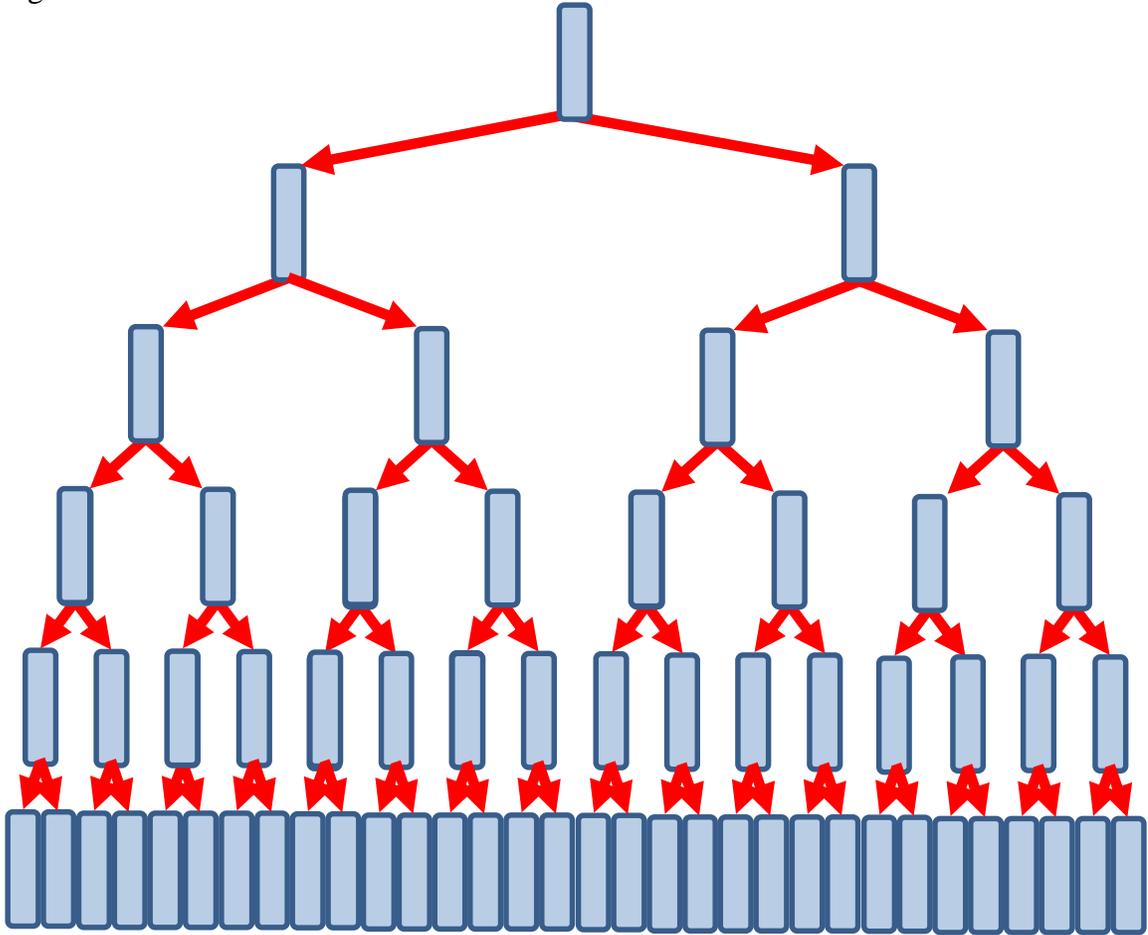
Fill the glass on the table with water.

As you create your game, you will be able to mix all three of these types of choices for the player. This will make the game much more interesting to play.

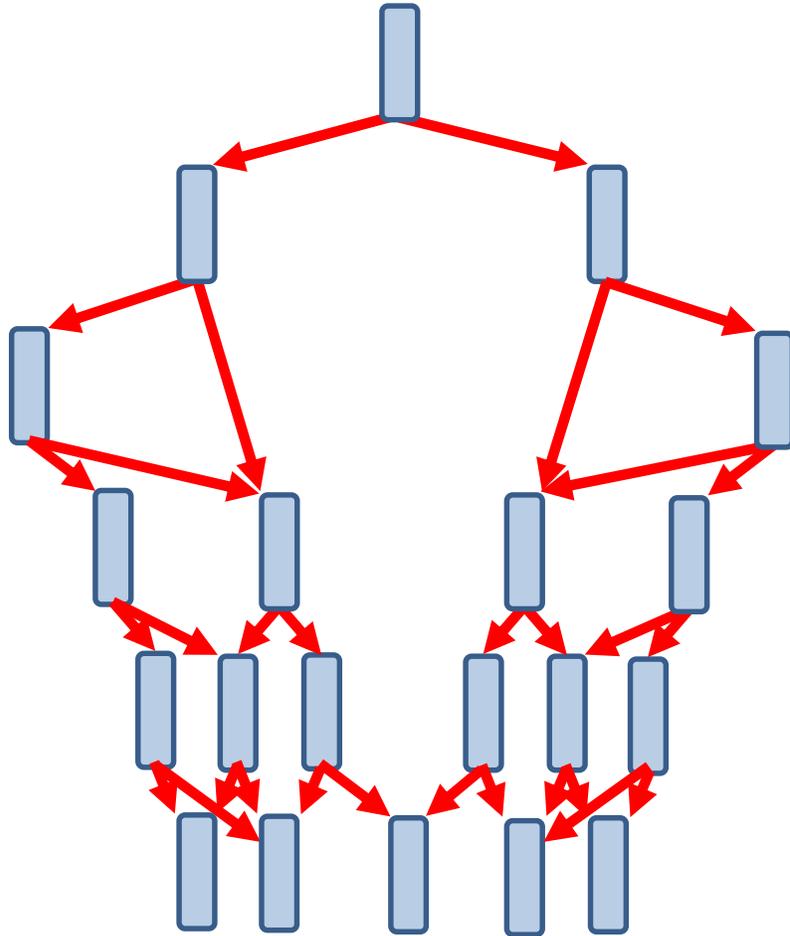
We have only touched upon some of the most basic functionality within Inklewriter so that your first experience using the system is straightforward. There are a number of resources for Inklewriter available, and within the Inklewriter authoring system there is a “tutorial” link in the top menu bar that provides a lot of helpful information.

If you have specific questions about creating your IF game, you may contact me directly at hapaziz@gmail.com.

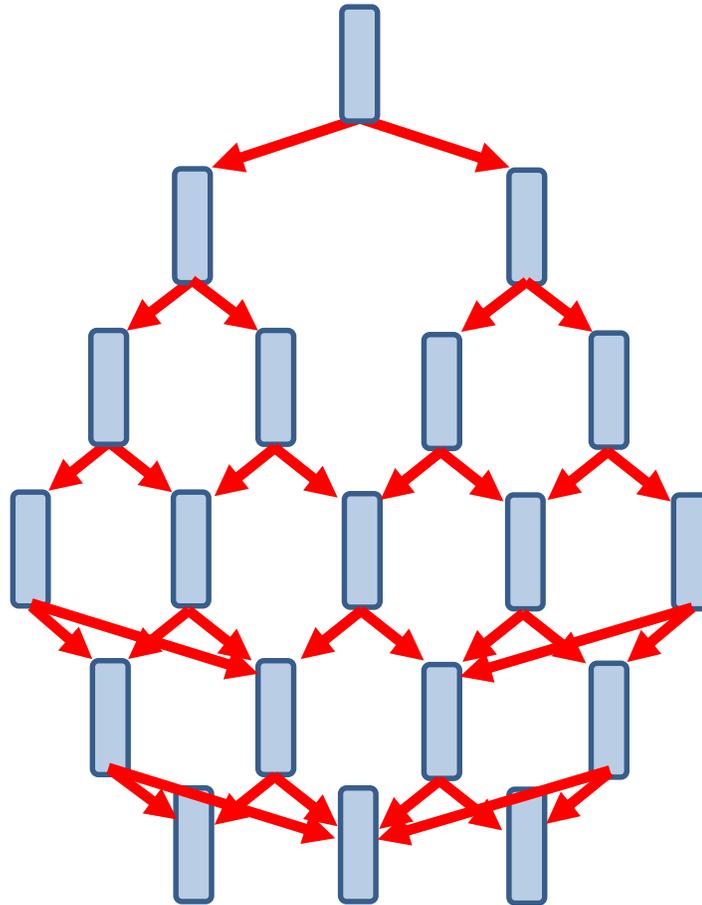
Model 1
6 levels
31 Segments
62 Choices
32 Endings



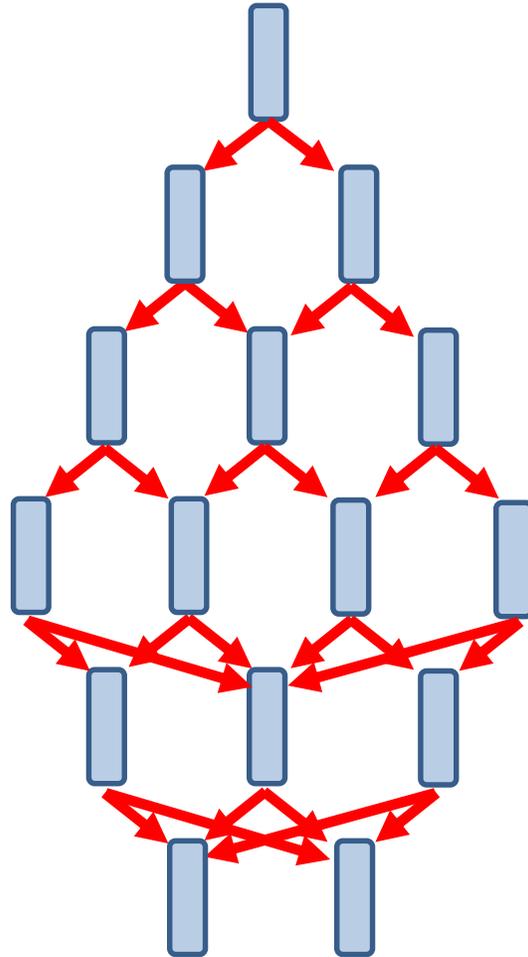
Model 2
6 levels
20 Segments
30 Choices
5 Endings



Model 3
6 levels
19 Segments
32 Choices
3 Endings



Model 4
6 levels
15 Segments
26 Choices
2 Endings



Model 4a
5 levels
13 Segments
20 Choices
3 Endings

