

GETTING STARTED

WHAT IS NANOWRIMO?

NaNoWriMo is a month of writing craziness aimed at inspiring new, experienced and want-to-be authors to get their ideas on a page. It began 18 years ago as a motivational exercise with just 21 participants and is now a worldwide phenomenon attracting over 400,000 writers of all ages and skill levels. It's spawned best-selling books such as *Cinder* (Marissa Meyer), *Water For Elephants* (Sara Gruen) and *The Night Circus* (Erin Morgenstern) and given countless writers the confidence to keep writing.

During November, participants attempt to write 50k words in 30 days, drawing support from a thriving online community, weekly pep-talks from well-known authors such as Hugh Howe and Veronica Roth, and local events.

SIGNING UP

Your first step is signing up to be a NaNoWriMo participant. Registering is done via the NaNoWriMo website.

1. Go to www.nanowrimo.org.
2. Click the blue “Sign Up!” button



3. Fill in your details. Don't forget to uncheck “Are you in the 'Pacific Time (US & Canada)' time zone?” and select “(GMT+10:00) Melbourne” from the dropdown menu.

Are you in the 'Pacific Time (US & Canada)' time zone?

Yes

No, I am in

(GMT+10:00) Melbourne

4. Check your email for a verification email and click the blue button. You'll be taken to a new webpage where you can sign in to your new NaNoWriMo account.
5. Sign in.
6. Set your region to “Australia::Elsewhere in Australia”.
7. Now it's time to add the details of your novel. Click “Announce your 2017 NaNoWriMo novel now” under step 2.

8. You don't have to fill in anything on this page if you don't want to, but it's all editable later on if you change your mind about something. Anything you do enter on this page will be visible to anyone participating in NaNoWriMo.
9. Once you've filled in as much as you want to about your novel, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the brown "Save" button.
10. And you're done!

Take some time to explore the rest of the website, fill in your profile and browse the forums (under "Conversation").

WRITE INS

Mansfield Library will be hosting four write ins during NaNoWriMo. A write in is a time to catch up with your fellow NaNoWriMos and support each other through the month. It's also a great time to ask questions and write in a quite space with other like-minded people.

This year's write ins will be on:

- Sat, 28 October from 2-4pm
- Sat, 11 November from 2-4pm
- Sat, 18 November from 2-4pm
- Sat, 25 November from 2-4pm.

Tea and coffee facilities will be provided. Please bring whatever you need to write and your novel. It's also handy to have spare pens and charging cables, for those using laptops or iPads.

You can also organise your own write ins. You don't need to go to any special effort to arrange a venue, just rock up at a cafe, park or library with a few writer friends and you're set.

OUTLINING YOUR NANOWRIMO PROJECT

Creating an outline of your NaNoWriMo project can help you from getting stuck halfway through, but where to start? Below is a shortened version of my outlining process. What works for me may not work for you so don't feel as if you have to stick to these steps.

STEP 1) BRAINSTORM

Jot down your ideas, no matter how crazy. Use mind maps, flow charts, spreadsheets or PlayDoh. This step is all about getting your thoughts on a page and drawing forth what it is about your idea/s that really excites you.

STEP 2) THE BASICS

Marshall those ideas before you start planning.

What are you writing?

- Genre: Romance, autobiography, fantasy, non-fiction, etc
- Length: Series, single novel, short story collection?
- Style: Novel, short story, etc
- POVs: What point of view (POV) will the story be told from?

What's the big story?

This is the main thrust of the action, often what's described on the back of the book.

What's the small story?

This is the story of the characters, how they change as the plot wears on. Usually only hinted at on the back cover, it's nevertheless this personal/intimate aspect of the story that hooks readers.

STEP 3) MAIN CHARACTER OUTLINES

Figure out who your main characters are, including your villain/s. What are their goals, motivations and role in the story. Use the *Character Outline* template.

This is step 4 in the Snowflake Method. Find out more here www.advancedfictionwriting.com/articles/snowflake-method/.

STEP 4) DEVELOP THE CORE PLOT

A number of planning processes recommend that you write a one sentence summary of your plot here, as a way to focus your ideas. If you can do that, fantastic, but I often have very little clue what the story's about at this point and the best way to do this is to dive right in to the nitty-gritty and do the summaries in the next step.

1. Use the 7-Point-Plot spreadsheet to develop your core plot.

A great way to start plotting. For links to more information visit www.belindacrawford.com/2013/01/11/revising-hero-pantsers-beat-sheet/.

2. If you find that useful and want to go into more detail, use Blake Snyder's Beat Sheet.

The beat sheet can be very confusing but is great for figuring out where you need to add more detail.

To get the most out of it I recommend reading *Save The Cat* by Blake Synder.

Don't worry if you find yourself resisting step 3 as you go through this process or any of the following ones, outlining a novel is not a linear process and there is no right way to do it. Just revisit the previous step, or steps and keep going, knowing that you're creating a better story.

STEP 5) SHORT PLOT SUMMARIES

Personally, I'm not a fan of this step and tend to skip it in favour of the next one, but many people find it helpful (including me on occasion). Take no more than 1 hour for each part of this step, and don't forget to revisit the previous steps as needed.

1. Write a one-sentence summary of your story.
2. Write a one-paragraph summary of your story describing the story setup, major disasters and ending.

Step 5 represents the first two steps in the Snowflake Method. You can find out more here www.advancedfictionwriting.com/articles/snowflake-method/.

STEP 6) CHAPTER OUTLINES

You'll find this step much easier if you used the Beat Sheet in step 3 but don't worry if you didn't.

1. First, determine (roughly) how many chapters you have. Just divide your target word count by the average chapter length. Example: 50,000 words / 3000 words per chapter = 17 chapters.
2. If you've used the Beat Sheet, use the word count fields to determine in which chapter each milestone occurs. If you skipped the Beat Sheet, use your best guess. In general the Midpoint should occur halfway through while Turning Point 2 should be three or four chapters from the end, etc. Most milestones will span a number of chapters while some may only need half a chapter.
3. Write a 100-150 word synopsis for every chapter, revisiting previous steps as needed.

STEP 7) RESEARCH

This is my favourite step. It's time to take your research list and hit the internet. Take notes, make print outs, highlight and tag to your heart's content. The more you prepare now, the less you'll find yourself getting distracted during NaNoWriMo.

Creating a pin board or scrapbook of images relevant to the story is also helpful, particularly for characters, settings and important objects such as weapons. Having a visual reference will help you describe people and objects, while keeping them consistent.

Evernote (www.evernote.com) and Pinterest (www.pinterest.com) are free online tools you can use to collect reference material. They also have apps for your phone and/or tablet. **Evernote** is perfect for note-taking while **Pinterest** lets you create digital pin boards to find and organise images.

TIPS FOR NOVEMBER

TOP TIPS

- Have fun.
- Don't write in front of the TV.
- Don't think you have to write 50k words. NaNoWriMo is about giving it a go, exploring your creative process and developing some good habits. If you have a novel at the end of it, all the better.

A PLACE AND TIME TO WRITE

If you're having trouble sitting down to write here are some tips.

- Set aside some time each day to write, whether it's 15 minutes, 30 or 4 hours.
- Warn your family/friends/housemates that you're not going to be available from X-Y.
- 15 minutes before your allotted writing time:
 - Turn off your phone.
 - Put the pets outside.
 - Make a cup of tea/coffee or grab another sort of beverage.
 - Assemble your writing materials, be that pen and notebook, laptop or iPad. If one of the later, make sure to have a charging cable plugged in and ready to use.
 - Perform whatever other setup you require, such as putting on writing music, turning off the internet, etc.
- Retire to your writing spot and write. Do not get up to do the laundry, check the news, vacuum, Facebook, Tweet, stargaze or research cute puppy videos.

That last tip is much easier to accomplish if you're only writing for short stints, under 1 hour. If you're writing for longer, or you're finding it difficult to focus or start writing, try the following.

- Find yourself a timer. A kitchen timer works well, as does your phone or iPad.
- Get yourself set up and comfortable.
- Set the timer for 5, 10 or 15 minutes.
- Hit the go button.
- Write. Do nothing but write. Write "I don't know what to write" if you can think of nothing else, but do not let your pen/fingers stop moving. Eventually you'll break through whatever it is holding you back, and before you know it, the timer will be going off and you won't want to stop writing.

Repeat as often as necessary, increasing the time as you become comfortable. I don't recommend doing intervals longer than 1 hour and think 30 minutes is optimal. After each interval, particularly if you're writing for 30 minutes or more, give yourself a few minutes to stretch, grab a beverage, etc. Do not be tempted to turn off the TV, check Facebook and duck down to the shops for a chocolate fix.

OTHER TIPS

- Don't edit, not to tinker, not even to fix that annoying typo.
- Don't read what you wrote yesterday or the day before.
- You're writing a first draft. It's supposed to be a red-hot mess.
- Be flexible. If something isn't working for you, don't spend hours staring at a blank page, change it.
- Be prepared to throw away your outline.

- If you decide to change how something happens/looks scenes or chapters after you've written it, don't go back and adjust it. Make a note of what you need to fix and continue writing as if you've already changed it.
- Unless it's *absolutely, COMPLETELY* impossible for you to keep writing without researching something, add it to your research list and save it for December.
- Be kind to yourself. This is meant to be fun.