

# Shut Up & Write!

## NaNoWriMo Prep Pack

### Hello Writer!

Are you ready for NaNoWriMo? If you're a veteran at the 50,000 word novel in 30 days - awesome! But if you're like many of us, you feel a bit daunted (and excited!) by the challenge.

Thankfully, there's time to prepare! Over the next three weeks, we've outlined a program to help you get ready. Because in all honesty, NaNoWriMo can be HARD. Many writers don't complete their 50,000 words by November 30th.

But that doesn't mean those writers failed. *The challenge of NaNoWriMo is to finish a 50,000 word novel - not write a GREAT novel.* It's about a mad dash of words to prove to yourself you can commit to writing every day and ultimately finish something big. It's going to be messy.

*And messy is okay.*

If you are a pantsler - someone who just starts writing with little or no pre-planning - you might not need this guide. It can be exhilarating to dive in without a plan and see how the story unfolds.

But if you are using NaNoWriMo to do more than get your writing routine down pat...

if you want to prove to yourself you CAN write a novel...

if you want to use this time to write that great novel burning inside you...

then **keep reading.**

With a little bit of time and focus in these next three weeks, you can set yourself up to write something you'll want to keep working on after November has passed *whether or not you finish.*

Let's get started...

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## Step 1 - Logistics

- **Set a realistic schedule for yourself**
  - Ask yourself - can you write every day? If not, can you dedicate most of your weekend hours? It can be challenging to write for long stretches of time if you've never done it before, so plan to give yourself breaks every couple of hours.
  - Shut Up & Write! has events for you! [Check out our calendar of events in your area here.](#) We've made a special arrangement for the SF Bay Area writers to have events EVERY DAY, so you can stay on track.
  - Figure out how fast you write. How long will it take you to write 1,666 words a day? A typical goal is 1,000 words an hour, but your speed may be different. You may need more time, but a minimum should be ~2 hours a day or ~14 hours a week.
  - Plan for a few minutes before and after each writing session.
- **NaNoWriMo requires a level of commitment.** The founder of NaNoWriMo suggests trying to clear your schedule as much as possible and minimizing the number of tasks you have to do on a day-to-day basis. Also, take time to consider any unexpected challenges you might encounter in keeping your schedule.
  - Are there any big things happening at work that might require you to put in more time?
  - Is your family excited and encouraging you? Tell them what you are trying to do. Ask for their support (and forgiveness for being absent) while you're writing. Will you need extra child care?
  - Do you have any events or traveling already planned that you need to take into account?
- **Find Support / Other Writers / Community.** Find people who are also doing NaNoWriMo; get connected. [We are having a special Kickoff party on October 26th.](#) Come meet other writers and find out when they are writing.

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- **Figure out where you'll be writing most.** Will it be at home? If so, create the space for yourself, try to eliminate any distractions, make sure you have a clear area. Will it be at cafes? If so, do you have a favorite one? Try to pick ones that are close and convenient to you. Check when they are open, do they have food and drinks you enjoy?
- **Setup your tools, decide what you will be writing in.** Will you write in Google docs or Word or Pages? Are you working in Scrivener? Do you want to be able to write on your phone while you're away from your computer? If you're planning to write by hand, plan to have time to transcribe your words.
  - Note: this is not the time to try out any new writing software, such as Scrivener; it can be overwhelming and you may feel frustrated by not knowing how to do what you want it to do. Make a note for yourself to learn how to use new programs and tools after November is over, and use what is familiar.

## **GOAL - by October 25th, do the following:**

- Write down your schedule for writing in November; add it to your calendar, on your phone, somewhere you will receive reminders. Make adjustments for any travel or big events already planned.
- Tell your friends and family you're doing NaNoWriMo; ask for their support
- Find at least 2 other people doing NaNoWriMo; ask other writers during Shut Up & Write!, you will not be the only one! :)
- Set up your environment for writing at home or decide where you plan to write most often
- Decide on how you want to write, what tools you will use. Get them installed or setup on your computer and/or mobile devices. Test it out and see if it works for you.

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## Step 2 - Do you have your idea? Do you know what you want to write about?

If you do, great!

If not, try these exercises:

- **Story ideas can come from anything.** Pay attention over the next few weeks; see what you notice happening in the world around you. Take notes of details; you may find the perfect character at work, or during your daily commute.
- **What are you interested in? What do you know about?** It is often easiest to start with what we are already an expert in.
- **Consider the kinds of stories you like to read.** Do you want to write something fantastical, set in a new world? Do you like stories that are set in the far future with new technologies that haven't been created yet? Do you find yourself drawn to dramas or mysteries? Do you want to write something historical, set in the past, or something contemporary, in today's modern age? Perhaps you're leaning towards something non-fiction or writing that memoir?
  - Don't write something you think would sell - just because there are a lot of vampire books doesn't mean that you should write one; unless of course you actually care about vampires and have something new and interesting to say about vampires.
- **Create an Idea Book.** Capture your thoughts in a single place so you can refer back to it throughout your writing career. You can do this in a notebook or in an app like Evernote.
- **Do a Mindmap, asking yourself "what if".** Write down what you wonder about. See what scenarios unfold.

If you've never done mindmapping, check out the articles below.

<http://www.livewritethrive.com/2013/09/30/creative-mind-mapping-for-novelists/>

<http://www.iainbroome.com/blog/mind-maps-stories>

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## Goal - Decide on what you want to write about by October 17th.

- Write down your goal for the challenge and put it where you can see it; define what “winning” really is. We’ve listed some examples below.
  - ▶ Finish 50K words, regardless of how good (or bad) my draft is
  - ▶ Forget the words, I want to make progress on my novel
  - ▶ My writing routine and discipline; I just want to write daily
- What is the Genre?
- 1 sentence describing your Story
  - ▶ Try using this template:
  - ▶ A Main Character
  - ▶ Who wants something
  - ▶ Doing and experiencing interesting things/events
  - ▶ In a compelling setting
  - ▶ With a twist

Example: “Independent young woman loses her car in a parking garage and can’t leave because she’s stuck in a time loop.”

Pro-tips:

- ▶ Try to keep the sentence short, 20 words or less
- ▶ Don’t use character names, do use descriptions
- ▶ Check out one-sentence summaries for New York Times bestsellers

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## Step 3 - Think About Your Story

- **What excites you about your story?** Perhaps it is a character you've envisioned first - his way of dressing, a mannerism he can't help, an obsession she has. Perhaps it is a place - an old hotel, a castle, a planet. Perhaps it is the question you want to answer - what would happen if we lived forever or if animals could talk? Perhaps it is the goal and intention you have - to teach gardening or the history of your family.
- **Start by writing down what you know**, everything you're thinking about, any visuals or details; put it all in one place so you can refer back to it later.
- **Next write down what you don't know** - what questions come up as you're writing, what will you need to answer before your novel is finished.

## **Goal - Get Amped by October 25th.**

- Write down all you know about your story.
- Write down all the questions you have about your story.

## Step 4 - Laying the Foundation of Your Story

Stay inspired with your story. Take time in this final week and do the following exercises.

- **Think about your characters:** who is your protagonist? What is their goal? What are their weaknesses?
  - Create character bios for your protagonist and antagonist; use the template here if you've never done it before
  - Read this about character arcs and why they matter.
  - <https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/character-arcs-1/>
- **Think about what happens during your story.**

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- Create an outline to help you with your writing. While the outline will be your guide as you write, you'll find that it won't answer every question you have; nor will it define exactly what happens. The outline will simply ensure your main character follows the path to reach (or fail to reach) their goal.
- Read this book to help you if you've never done it before; it's a quick read and incredibly helpful. [https://www.amazon.com/Take-Off-Your-Pants-Outline-ebook/dp/B00UKCoGHA/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1474572596&sr=8-1&keywords=take+off+your+pants+outline+your+books+for+faster+better+writing](https://www.amazon.com/Take-Off-Your-Pants-Outline-ebook/dp/B00UKCoGHA/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1474572596&sr=8-1&keywords=take+off+your+pants+outline+your+books+for+faster+better+writing)
- For experienced writers, we also recommend this one. [https://www.amazon.com/Anatomy-Story-Becoming-Master-Storyteller/dp/0865479933/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1476245436&sr=8-1&keywords=anatomy+of+a+story](https://www.amazon.com/Anatomy-Story-Becoming-Master-Storyteller/dp/0865479933/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1476245436&sr=8-1&keywords=anatomy+of+a+story)

## Goal - by October 31st, do as much as you can:

- Character bios for Protagonist and Antagonist
- Story Outline

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## Step 5 - You're Ready!

There are so many great things about NaNoWriMo.

It can show you what you're capable of as a writer. Writing 50,000 words in a month is a challenge, but it can be done. Focus on your goal, keep to your schedule and get those words down!

And last but not least, we're going to be right there with you. Find us on Facebook or Twitter throughout November and let us know how it's going!

[www.twitter.com/@shutupwrite](http://www.twitter.com/@shutupwrite)

[www.facebook.com/shutupnwrite](http://www.facebook.com/shutupnwrite)

[www.shutupwrite.com](http://www.shutupwrite.com)

## KEY DATES

- October 11-31: Getting Ready
- October 26 - NaNoWriMo Kickoff Party (be sure to RSVP!)
- October 31: Look for your Survival Pack
- Nov 1: Let's get writing!
- Nov 30: Last day!
- Dec 7: NaNoWriMo Celebration Party (whether you finished or not, come celebrate all the work you've done with food, drinks and fellow writers!)