

3 Winning Tips for the NaNoWriMo Participant

If you're just now reading this, it's probably because you're stuck in your current NaNoWriMo project, or you're looking for a break from the writing frenzy. Many of the editors here have participated in the NaNoWriMo madness before, and applaud you for taking on such a huge challenge!

For those of you still wondering what NaNoWriMo is, it's a 50,000 word count challenge for National Novel Writing Month <http://nanowrimo.org/>—November! Writers try to reach this goal before the end of November for fame, glory, writing-related prizes, and most importantly: a new novel.

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Since this is a pretty difficult challenge to achieve, we wanted to give you some advice for succeeding, and give offer you a boost of confidence if you're feeling discouraged.

1. Keep Your Eye on the True Prize

The official NaNoWriMo page has a slew of pretty nice prizes <http://nanowrimo.org/sponsor-offers-for-the-writerwinning-writers>. Two of my past favorites were as a discount on Scrivener (I use it for my book series and it is a life-saver), and one physical copy of my book. If these types of prizes keep you motivated, that's fantastic!

For many of participants like myself, the list of discounts might not be as appealing if you've already won them before. To be truly motivated to win, remind yourself of the real reason you're participating. Trust me, participating just because everyone else is doesn't make the ≈1,500 daily word count goal enjoyable.

The top two "prizes" you can glean from this challenge are is a basic draft of your novel, and a consistent writing schedule. Sometimes all it takes to start up a daily writing habit is a push out of your comfort zone—and writing every day for a month can help establish this habit. If you really want one or both of these things, remind yourself often so you'll stick with the goal.

The good thing about shooting for these two goals is if you don't hit 50,000 words, you still have a great start to a fresh novel and the daily writing habit.

2. Turn Off the Inner Editor

While you're writing your draft for NaNoWriMo, your novel it doesn't have to be perfect! The official word counter just checks the words, not the order of the scenes, artistic talent, or even if it's a completed novel. While you likely want to satisfy your inner perfectionist, NaNoWriMo is not the time to edit as you write.

Often, I have to just often write and let as many words hit the page as possible, and then I avoid reading the whole thing until December. I do this personally because if I'm self-editing, I'm dwelling o in the same sentence and potentially deleting the majority of what I've just written. It ends up adding unnecessary hurdles in my path when I could be speeding through a scene just to get it on the page.

If you still want to self-edit, I would recommend the following:

- Bold, highlight, or otherwise distinguish parts of the scene you would delete for wordiness. Keep the words for the word count, then delete them in December.

- Only edit the scene by adding more to certain aspects of ~~the scene~~it. For example, add in extra (necessary) dialog or descriptions.
- Spell check or proofread whatever your writing program points out. Leave the rest alone.

3. Don't Sabotage Yourself

Self-editing is just one of a thousand ways you can prevent yourself from reaching your daily and monthly word count goals. When you're not up for writing or you're stuck, doesn't your house suddenly become cleaner and more organized?

All jokes aside, here are a few examples of things you shouldn't do during NaNoWriMo November.

Don't force yourself to write chapters in order. If you're stuck on a certain chapter, just skip over it and work on a different scene that you're more excited about. That tricky chapter might be easier to write later in the month.

Don't write in a distracting location. You know what distracts you from writing—whether it's noise, social media, hunger, or other assignments. Based on your experience, create a writing space that is void of all these things. You can turn the internet off while you write, so social media or tangent researching ~~doesn't~~don't distract you. You could also set a specific time in the day for writing, ~~meanings~~o all other distractions can be dealt with before or after you sit down to write.

Don't give up after a bad day or two. It's inevitable: I always manage to be sick during the first week of November! That means I'm ~~usually~~ perpetually behind the rest of the month. However, through determination and lots of ~~mini-small~~ rewards, I always manage to barely win each time. Catching up is always doable. Even if you have to catch up a little bit every day, others before you have overcome these types of setbacks, and you can totally do it, too!

Don't do it in secret. It's easy to walk away from NaNoWriMo if you have zero accountability. If you want to have daily writing reminders, just tell people on Facebook or Twitter about NaNoWriMo and your current stats—you'll have friends and family asking you all month, "So how's that NaNo-whatever writing goal going?" Being accountable with them will give you that tough love you need to survive.

Just a Few Weeks Left Until Victory!

Good luck to everyone participating in NaNoWriMo this year! Writing a novel is often very challenging, but it's worth it once you are finished and happy with your work. I know you'll get there sooner rather than later! If you have any additional tips to share, please do in the comment section.