

Tips for Succeeding at NaNoWriMo

- 1.) **Keep your character's goal in mind** at all times. Put it on a sticky note by the computer if you have to. Craft scenes that show the character working toward that goal. “The Plan” your character is following to get what they want.
- 2.) **Keep what's standing in the way of that goal in mind** at all times and make sure it's not too easy to resolve (it needs to last the majority of the book). Craft scenes that show your character's plan interrupted by these obstacles.
- 3.) **Keep in mind your character's internal “emotional” need.** This will affect the character's behavior, reactions, and choices as they move from scene to scene, and also give you ideas for how to challenge things and make the character uncomfortable and forced to deal with it. This flaw in itself creates emotional obstacles for your character to deal with. Craft scenes that force your character to face those issues in order to resolve them.
- 4.) **Don't feel you need to write linearly.** Write whatever scene pops into your head on that day. Try not over think it. Just write.
- 5.) **Start with dialog.** If nothing else about the scene is coming to you. Just get some characters talking and see where it leads.
- 6.) Not sure exactly how you want a scene to play out? Just **write down your ideas stream-of-conscious style** so you can move on. Everything can be edited after NaNo ends, so don't worry about the details if you don't have them, just get down the gist of what you are trying to say in that scene or what you want to happen and allow yourself to move on.
- 7.) **It's okay to TELL in NaNoWriMo instead of SHOW.** All can be edited later. Just get the scene down on paper/computer however you can. You can pretty it up after the challenge is over. This is not the time for perfect prose. :-)
- 8.) Not sure what should happen next? **Go back to journaling** (right there in your NaNo story document!) and ask your character how they feel about something that happened earlier in the story and write their response stream-of-conscious style and that might prompt a choice for them to make that leads to the next scene. Or have your main character write a letter to a friend describing a problem in the story and what they're doing about it. Even if the journal entry or letter will be edited out of the story later, they still count in NaNo. Use them to keep you going.
- 9.) **Leave notes for yourself** in the text if you need a piece of information or to do extra research. Keep writing, don't stop to check the Internet for anything.

Likewise, set yourself up for success the next day by **ending your daily session with some notes to yourself about what you want to write the following day.** Then review these notes the next time you sit down to write to help get you started.

10.) **DON'T DELETE ANYTHING.** Even if you have a complete change of mind about a scene you've already written. **Don't delete it.** Those words still count toward your NaNo goal, so leave them in the document for now with a note for yourself about the scene to be removed, write the new scene how you want it, and move on.

10a.) On that same note, **don't edit as you go along.** I know this is hard to do, but if you're editing, you could also be removing words from the document and taking away from your NaNoWriMo total. If you want to rewrite something go ahead, but leave the old version there as well.

*****Don't delete anything until Dec 1.*****

Determining Your Daily Word Count

If you're using **Scrivener** to write your NaNo project, this is easy. Scrivener comes with a daily word count tracker under the Project Menu (Project Targets) and you can even set an upper limit of 1667 so that you see the progress bar turn from red to yellow to a happy green color to let you know you're close.

If you're using **MS Word**, you can track words in two ways.

One is to keep working in the same document and at the end of each daily writing session, record the total word count of the document (it's listed at the bottom of the document window, or you can use the Word Count command) in a spreadsheet program. Then with a little math you can determine how many words you did that day.

Or you can work in multiple documents, a new one for each day of NaNoWriMo, and record the word count from each document. Add them together for your NaNoWriMo total.

I usually keep track of my NaNo word count in an Excel spreadsheet. Just a simple file with the date, my daily count, and a running total. Not only does this help you keep your stats on the NaNoWriMo website correct, but it's a great motivator to watch your progress grow over the course of the month.

On the **NaNoWriMo site**, there will be a word count box on the dashboard once the challenge is underway. Each day you enter your total for that day and the website does the rest. The **Help Desk** link at the top of the screen offers details on how to record your daily word counts if you aren't familiar with the process.

Last piece of advice

Always remember that what you write for NaNoWriMo is a **rough draft**. It's not meant to be perfect. To succeed in such a long challenge, you need to **turn off your perfectionism meter, shove your internal editor in a closet** and just write things that pop into your mind.

Don't worry about finding the perfect word. Focus on getting the story down in whatever words come to you first. You can always revise and change them into something more sparkling later.

Give yourself permission to write badly so you can get through it. You can't fix a blank page, so your primary goal in NaNoWriMo is to fill that page with something you can work with later.

And also always remember...

YOU CAN DO THIS!!!!!! ☺