

November Spawned

A Novel Writing Handout

“Of all the ways of acquiring books, writing them oneself is regarded as the most praiseworthy method” - Walter Benjamin

Your novel's title here!

Space for a drawing!

Your name here!

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My Novel

Title

Genre

Theme

Movie tagline

Protagonist's Name

Protagonist's Goals

Protagonist's Catchphrase or Motto

Antagonist's Name

Antagonist's Goal

Antagonist's Catchphrase or Motto

Pre-planning (% or description)

Influences

Music to Write By

Years Taken Part

Years Won

Note to self

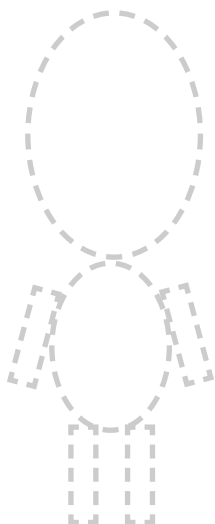
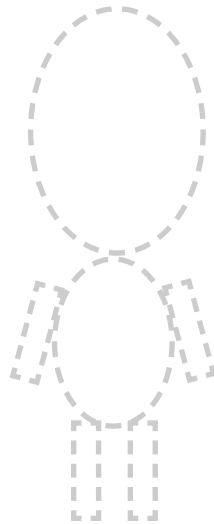
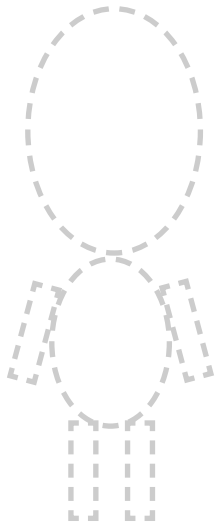
Encouragement from friend or loved one

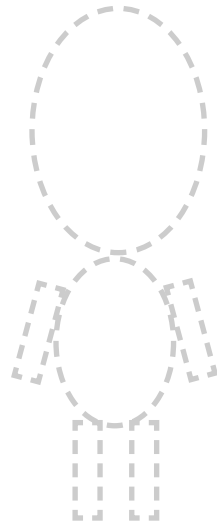
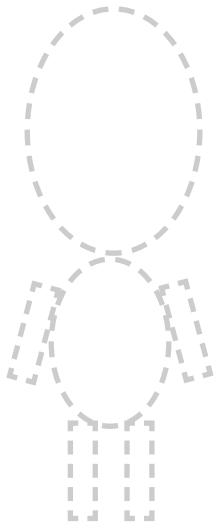
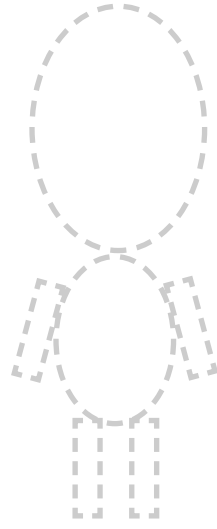
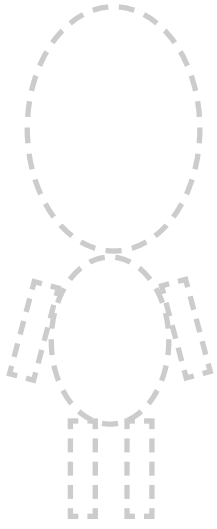
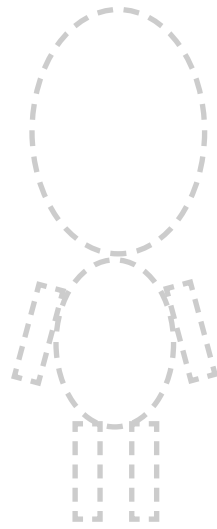
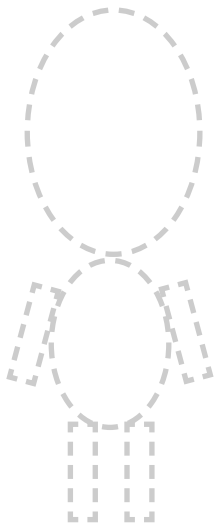
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Characters and Relationships

- hairstyle • hair colour • facial hair • glasses • eye colour • nose shape • cleft chin? • earrings • other jewellery • clothes style • age • temperament • likes • dislikes • job • family • build • weight • relationships • life events • birthplace

Draw in the faces, sketch in outfits, make notes in the boxes, and draw lines to show inter-relationships! You might draw them when planning the novel, or just use it when writing to quickly note who has a moustache and who has an eyepatch!





Timeline

The image shows a timeline template consisting of four horizontal tracks. Each track is a solid black line with a rounded end on the right. Below each track are five dashed rectangular boxes, one for each tick mark on the track. The tracks are arranged vertically, with the top track starting from the left edge and the bottom track ending at a diagonal line on the right side.

The image shows a large, stylized timeline graphic. It consists of four horizontal sections, each represented by a rounded rectangle with a dashed border and five vertical tick marks along its top edge. The sections are arranged in a zig-zag pattern: the first is at the top right, the second is below it and to the left, the third is below that and to the right, and the fourth is at the bottom left. An arrow points to the right from the bottom right corner of the fourth section.

Fill in a timeline, if you need to! Use it in advance to plan out the most time-sensitive five minutes of your character's life, or just use as you go along to keep track. It's a good idea to put the first contemporary event a way along the line, so that there's room later to add flashbacks, birthdays, etc, before it.

starcharts • systems • stars • planets • moons • a country • coastlines • borders
• mountains • rivers • cities • towns • roads • shrines • a town or city • streets •
pubs, inns • hotels • town hall • police station • transmitters • residential areas •
a building's floorplan • corridors • offices • power room • closets • cells • exits

Brainstorm

Think about what kind of beats
you want your novel to hit.
What do you want to express?
What must go in?

Random Character Generator

Gender

Roll D6 1, 2 or 3 4, 5, 6
 Female Male

Name

Roll (D6xD6)-D6 for first letter of forename (and make up the rest) _____
Roll (D6xD6)-D6 for first letter of surname (and make up the rest) _____
(Re-roll if necessary.)

Attributes

Roll D6 for strength	1 Weakling	2 Poorly	3 Able	4 Trained	5 Hero	6 Herculean
Roll D6 for intelligence	1 Illiterate	2 Dim	3 Average	4 Sharp	5 Academic	6 Genius
Roll D6 for looks	1 Unlovely	2 Plain	3 Nice	4 Attractive	5 Adorable	6 Model
Roll D6 for curiosity	1 Ostrich	2 Incurious	3 Curious	4 Intriguable	5 P.I.	6 Nancy Drew
Roll D6 for patience	1 Toddler	2 Diner	3 Impatient	4 Patient	5 Teacher	6 Saint
Roll D6 for aggression	1 Coward	2 Pacifist	3 Affable	4 Irritable	5 Angry	6 Psychotic
Roll D6 for speciality	1 Guns D6 ▼	2 Books D6 ▼	3 Vehicles D6 ▼	4 Magic D6 ▼	5 Blades D6 ▼	6 Animals D6 ▼
	1 Pistols 2 Rifles	1 History 2 Economics	1 Unicycle 2 Bicycle	1 Illusion 2 Alchemy	1 Dagger 2 Shortsword	1 Dogs 2 Snakes

Stuck on creating a character? Let a six-sided die (D6) do it for you! Feel free to ignore any results you don't like! Adapt the results to your world - e.g. in a fantasy, a magician might have real power, whereas in the real world, he would be something like an entertainer, a charlatan or a madman!

	3 Semi-auto 4 Machine 5 Artillery 6 Bazooka	3 Occult 4 Literary 5 Science 6 Technical	3 Motorcycle 4 Car 5 Plane 6 Chopper	3 Potions 4 Conjuring 5 Prestidig. 6 Religious	3 Longsword 4 Axe 5 Samurai 6 Spear	3 Horses 4 Monkeys 5 Insects 6 Elephants
Roll D6 for number of distinguishing features	1 One	2 Two	3 Three	4 Four	5 Five	6 None
Roll D6 for each distinguishing feature	1 Scar D6 ▼	2 Congenital D6 ▼	3 Tattoo D6 ▼	4 Glasses D6 ▼	5 Mutations D6 ▼	6 Piercings D6 ▼
	1 Face 2 Hand 3 Leg 4 Neck 5 Chest 6 Belly	1 Limp 2 Hare lip 3 Lazy eye 4 Short leg 5 Baldness 6 Foolishness	1 Butterfly 2 Lover 3 Mother 4 Dragon 5 Mermaid 6 Frodo	1 Metal 2 Plastic 3 Contacts 4 Monocle 5 Sunglasses 6 Goggles	1 Extra toe 2 Extra nipple 3-6 Webbed ▼ 1-3 toes 4-6 fingers	1 Ear 2 Nose 3 Navel 4 Chest 5 Eyebrow 6 Other
Roll D6 for motivation	1 Lust D6 ▼	2 Greed D6 ▼	3 Vengeance D6 ▼	4 Duty D6 ▼	5 Love D6 ▼	6 Pride D6 ▼
	1 A man 2 A woman 3 All men 4 All women 5 Power 6 Animals	1 Money 2 Food 3 Chocolate 4 Toys 5 Books 6 Knowledge	1 Mother 2 Father 3 Sister 4 Brother 5 Lover 6 Friend	1 Environment 2 Police 3 Friends 4 Family 5 Mentor 6 Job	1 Pet 2 Country 3 Enemy 4 Friend 5 Partner 6 Music	1 Looks 2 Brains 3 Strength 4 Position 5 House 6 Prowess
Roll D6 for hobbies	1 Sport D6 ▼	2 Reading D6 ▼	3 Shooting D6 ▼	4 Watching D6 ▼	5 Making D6 ▼	6 Travelling D6 ▼
	1 Football 2 Cycling 3 Hockey 4 Athletics 5 Kabbadi	1 Books 2 Comics 3 Journals 4 Email 5 Magazines	1 Guns 2 Arrows 3 Films 4 Up 5 Skeets	1 Films 2 Plays 3 Television 4 Opera 5 Out	1 Furniture 2 Model planes 3 Babies 4 Observations 5 Do	1 Locally 2 Abroad 3 Astrally 4 Up 5 Down

Unstucker

Are you stuck with your writing? Let the unstucker unstuck you! All you need is a six-sided die. Roll it now, and keep rolling till you have your solution!

1 Digress!

Roll again to find out how!

- 1 Summarise what's happened so far
- 2 List the questions that are still bothering one of your characters
- 3 Describe a character's [1 shoes 2 hat 3 hair 4 watch 5 coat 6 bag] and explain how it relates to his or her character and motivations
- 4 Describe a childhood memory of one of the characters (use one of your own if necessary)
- 5 One character tells a story about a [1 giant 2 robbery 3 flower 4 alien 5 shark 6 elephant]
- 6 Meanwhile, on the other side of the universe...

2 Use this word!

It doesn't matter if it's in the next sentence, or the one after that, or whenever - just get your story to the point where you can use it.

- 1 Roll again [1 Discombobulate 2 Desembogue 3 Disembarrass 4 Disinfest 5 Dispassionate 6 Disconsolate]
- 2 Tergiversate
- 3 Abomination
- 4 Magisterial

- 5 Brobdingnagian
- 6 Roll again [1 Insatiable 2 Intractable 3 Inedible 4 Invincible 5 Indivisible 6 Indelible]

3 Take the easy way out!

You might feel cheap today, but holding a finished novel in your hands on December 1st will wash away the stain!

- 1 Write a letter from one character to another
- 2 Introduce a new character (the Random Character Generator on p. 10 can help here) and have someone explain to him or her what's happened so far
- 3 A character has a dream about [1 flying 2 fighting 3 loving 4 eating 5 drowning 6 falling]
- 4 Ask a friend or your partner what happens next in your story - be very careful not to tell them anything about what has happened so far
- 5 Write down everything that happened to you today as if it happened to one of your characters
- 6 Sorry, I've got nothing... your problems are too intractable... I suppose you could try eating a lot of cheese before you go to bed tonight - or don't go to the bathroom before sleeping - then write down any nightmares that result

4 Something happens!

- 1 A [1 car 2 motorcycle 3 camel 4 helicopter 5 UFO 6 cat on a skateboard] crashes nearby
- 2 There's an earthquake of [1-2 negligible 3-4 dangerous 5-6 cataclysmic] magnitude!

- 3 A [1 beautiful 2 angry 3 petulant 4 adventurous 5 timid 6 alarmed] girl walks in
- 4 A man with a gun walks in
- 5 There's a thunderstorm, a bad one, with lots of lightning and thunder - your character probably thinks about the oddity of having two words for the same event, depending on whether we see it or hear it
- 6 Nothing happens. It's quiet... too quiet!

5 Old standbys!

- 1 Type up all of your chapter headings - if you don't have any, make some up - you can always delete them after the words have been counted - it'll keep you moving forward, and like the title of a school assignment, they will challenge you to come up with ideas, and those ideas will naturally cluster around them
- 2 Write the rest of your novel in one night... this can be a very useful technique - write one sentence, in the proper tense, and with the proper punctuation, to represent each chapter scene or big event that you know about. It could be the punchline of a chapter, a description of a building, or a bit of dialogue. Once you reach the end, find a fruitful spot and start to fill in the gaps.
- 3 Don't waste time being stuck - just write a different part of the book. In a week's time the perfect solution to that bit you're stuck on might have come to mind. In fact, events in the rest of the book will actually end up telling you exactly what you need to put in that chapter.
- 4 You will rely on the power of prayer! Close your eyes and pray to [1 Thor 2 Athena 3 Chris Baty 4 Monkey Magic 5 Timothy McSweeney 6 Sir Pratchett]

- 5 A character browses a bookcase of [1-2 actual books 3-4 imaginary books 5-6 both actual and imaginary books]
- 6 Draw a scattergram (you could use the Notes pages herein) - scribble down everything you want to appear in this chapter (or even the whole book) - events, moods, sounds, smells - and then draw some arrows to thread a line through them all

6 Time to get serious!

- 1 Go to bed and get some sleep - tomorrow try writing when you aren't so tired
- 2 Have a bath and think about things
- 3 Make a cup of tea
- 4 Tuck your keyboard behind your monitor - let your frustration at not being able to type build up for a few minutes, then put it back in place
- 5 Email your MLs for help, advice or just to let off steam. That's what they are there for...
- 6 You will channel the spirit of another writer, whether he be living or dead! You will channel the quick-writing spirit of [1 Michael Moorcock, who could write a short novel in three days (the third day of course was for rewrites) 2 Honore de Balzac 3 Reverend Lionel Fanthorpe, who dictated a novel each fortnight into a tape recorder, sitting under a blanket 4 Anthony Trollope 5 Sir Walter Scott 6 Charles Dickens - "so prolific was his output and so frenzied his life, it seems miraculous he lived as long as he did" (Cambridge Guide to Literature in English)].

If, having tried the unstucker, you are still stuck, look at the last word you wrote. Write down the word that you would expect to come next. Repeat this process until you have reached 50,000 words!

NaNoWriMo Mechanics

Know the rules

The challenge is to write a novel of at least 50,000 words, from start to finish, during November, on your own.

(Okay, so the “to finish” bit comes in for a bit of debate, but the challenge is to write a novel, and until you write the end you haven’t written a novel.)

There are always quite a few people taking part who aren’t quite following the rules. Maybe they are continuing a novel they’ve already begun (but only including the new writing in their word count, of course), or writing something that isn’t strictly speaking a novel, or doing something that isn’t writing a novel by any stretch of the imagination (for example the possibly satirically-minded individual who said they would be practising the oboe for NaNoWriMo 2008). If that’s you, don’t worry about it too much, though you shouldn’t claim a winner’s certificate at the end and you should do your best to contribute to the event’s running costs.

However, please do remember that the rules are there to focus the event, and to help as many people as possible to finish their novels, and that it’s really up to Chris Baty and his team to decide on the rules of the challenge that they have set, so do try at least to respect the rules, even as you’re ignoring them! The organisers now offer the Nano Rebels forum to house non-novelling Nanoists.

Read the FAQs on the NaNoWriMo website

Everything you could want to know about NaNoWriMo can be found there.

Affiliate to your local region and set it as your home

It means you’ll get messages from your ML (though you can opt out from them), your local forum will be highlighted on the website, and your word count will be included in the regional total.

Remember that you have to verify to get your winner’s certificate

Every year there are a few people who update their word counts above 50,000, but don’t get counted as winners. Remember that to truly win, the length of your novel has to be verified by the NaNoWriMo computers. The method of verification may vary slightly from year to year, but on the whole it means uploading a plain text file of your document to the specified web page. The verification process only becomes available towards the end of the month, so if you finish in the first week (not impossible for someone who has the week off work), remember to come back at the end and finish the job.

Help out with costs if you can

NaNoWriMo is a non-profit organisation. Everything is paid for by donations, grants and store sales. Any surplus is reinvested in making the following year’s event even better, and used to launch other writing events, such as ScriptFrenzy.

Many of those participating are students, so don’t feel guilty if you can’t afford anything, but if you can, please do. The t-shirts from the online shop arrive remarkably quickly, even here in the UK, and tend to last a good long time.

Novel-Writing Hints and Tips

The most important tip of all

Never ask yourself what *should* come next - ask yourself what *could* come next. I always think of Alain Robbe-Grillet describing the position of peas on a plate, though I don't know if he did that because he was stuck. There's always *something* you could be writing about - don't dismiss the silly thoughts that come into your head! Let your subconscious work its magic upon your novel!

Try to write regularly

It's hard to write a novel in a single day. Even Michael Moorcock takes two. One big heave won't get you there. Do a little every day. Having said that, one year I ignored this advice and wrote my whole novel on Fridays (taking the day off work) and Sundays (at write-ins). To some extent you have to follow your nose!

Attend your local meet-ups

They may well seem to be a waste of valuable writing time, but the sense of camaraderie and support that results will help you when you need it the most. Plus, there's bound to be someone there that you really don't want to succeed while you fail! Pick your enemy and grind their noses into the dirt all month with your incredible word count!

Ignore the nay-sayers!

Be ready to fight to the death anyone who

Here are some hints and tips - don't be concerned by any contradictions, and don't worry if something here is utterly opposed to the way you write or plan to write - everyone is different, and writing in different circumstances. These are just some things that we've found helpful.

says that novel-writing is not a noble pursuit and an end in itself! Not everyone gets paid to play football for Manchester United - does that mean they shouldn't play football at all?

Names don't matter

Names don't matter very much at this stage, so just use the first words that come into your head, and make a note to change it later. If you are really stuck, you could use a name from your spam folder. Or you could take a normal name and change the first letter - for example, Stephen could become Astephen - something that opens up whole vistas of naming possibilities.

Turn off the TV

If you really want to give yourself a brilliant chance of finishing, record all your tv during November. Catch up on it during December and January, when it's too cold to do anything else, or at least don't watch anything till you've done your 1,666 words.

Chatterboxes

Give your characters reasons to talk - dialogue can fill up pages easily. Give them different viewpoints, different takes on the world. Think of Friends, and how each episode is basically six people reacting one after the other in amusingly different ways to a few fairly insignificant events.

Block the internet

If you have a cable router, programme it to block access to the internet during your writing hours - and let someone else set the password.

Build up a good rhythm

If you have been writing a regular amount every day, and if you miss a day, don't necessarily increase your goal amount for each day remaining. You will have developed a rhythm of writing which may well be thrown off by trying to write even one or two hundred words a day more. It might be better to schedule an additional shift at the weekend. But on the other hand...

Weekends

Be wary about planning to write too much extra at weekends - they can sometimes turn out to be the hardest times to write. You might have NaNoWriMo meet-ups to attend, dates to go on, films to watch, and so on.

Keep your momentum high!

If you have made mistakes, make a note to fix them and carry on writing as if they had already been fixed. In fact, instead of writing notes, why not start an appendix where your narrator apologises for the inconsistencies in his or her story and promises to fix them in a second edition? That way, your goofs will only add to your

word count!

Similarly, don't do research during writing hours. That's what the rest of the day is for! Keep a notebook by the desk and make a note of anything you need to check up on (and that applies to things you need to check in your own book too, consistency issues, etc). Leave a space or write something conspicuously silly to fill the gap.

A meal a day

Having one clear goal for each writing session makes it easier to focus on the task at hand. Try dividing the action of your novel into portions that correspond to the number of times you will sit down to write.

Support

For encouragement, visit the NaNoWriMo forums - but only outside writing hours! And watch out for anyone who tells you that anything is verboten (e.g. so-called Mary-Sue characters) - anything goes in November! Ridicule is nothing to be scared of!

Word can help

It's possible to customise Word so that the Word Count toolbar is parked on one of the main toolbars. Tools-Customize, Toolbars, tick Word Count, and then drag it where you want it. Then click Close.

Recount regularly, and celebrate like an idiot every time you write a hundred words!

What about next year?

When this year is done, think about next time - would it help to learn how to touch-type, or to learn the Dvorak keyboard layout? If your typing speed has held your writing up, now's the time to start planning to make it easier next time.

Useful Websites

www.nanowrimo.org

The home of National Novel Writing Month. Sign up to take part in novel-writing during November!

www.silveragebooks.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/mag/ns/november_spawned.htm

Here you'll find a pdf file of this handout, & a copy of the Excel spreadsheet that can be so useful for monitoring your progress.

<http://spacejock.com>

Home of yWriter, free novel-writing software that comes highly recommended by a lot of November novelists.

www.openoffice.org

Free desktop software package, including a word processor and spreadsheet software.

<http://docs.google.com>

Google Docs (formerly known as Writely) can be very handy for wrimos on the move, since you can log on from any computer and pick up where you left off. I get a bit stressed about the chance of something going wrong while it's saving, especially over wi-fi, but it's great for back-ups.

www.wikipedia.org

A great source of semi-accurate information on everything in the universe! Anything found here should be carefully checked later, but it's great for getting a quick handle on things.

<http://writing.teiru.net>

Tim Yao (aka NewMexicoKid), a wise and respected ML, has a page here of useful links to things like name generators, so I'm not going to redo his work - I'll just point you in the direction of it.

www.nanowrimo.org/eng/forum/188

The NaNo Technology section of the NaNoWriMo forums is where I first heard of the Dvorak keyboard, the Temptation Blocker, the Alphasmart, and so on. For me visiting this forum is like attending an annual seminar on what's new in writing technology.

<http://www.24hourcomicsday.com>

Write and draw a comic in 24 hours - but unlike NaNoWriMo, no planning allowed!

<http://crapart.spacebar.org/aad>

The Album-a-Day challenge, for anyone interested in testing their musical muscles.

www.lulu.com

Lulu lets you publish your book without it costing you any money!

www.ebay.co.uk / www.ebay.com

Ebay is a great place to find cheap Alphasmarts - though they tend to be more expensive during November for some reason...

www.duotrope.com / www.ralan.com

Once you've written your novel, here are two websites that'll help you find someone to publish it.

www.britishfantasysociety.org

For British writers and fans of fantasy and horror the BFS is a great way to meet like-minded people.

www.peltorro.com

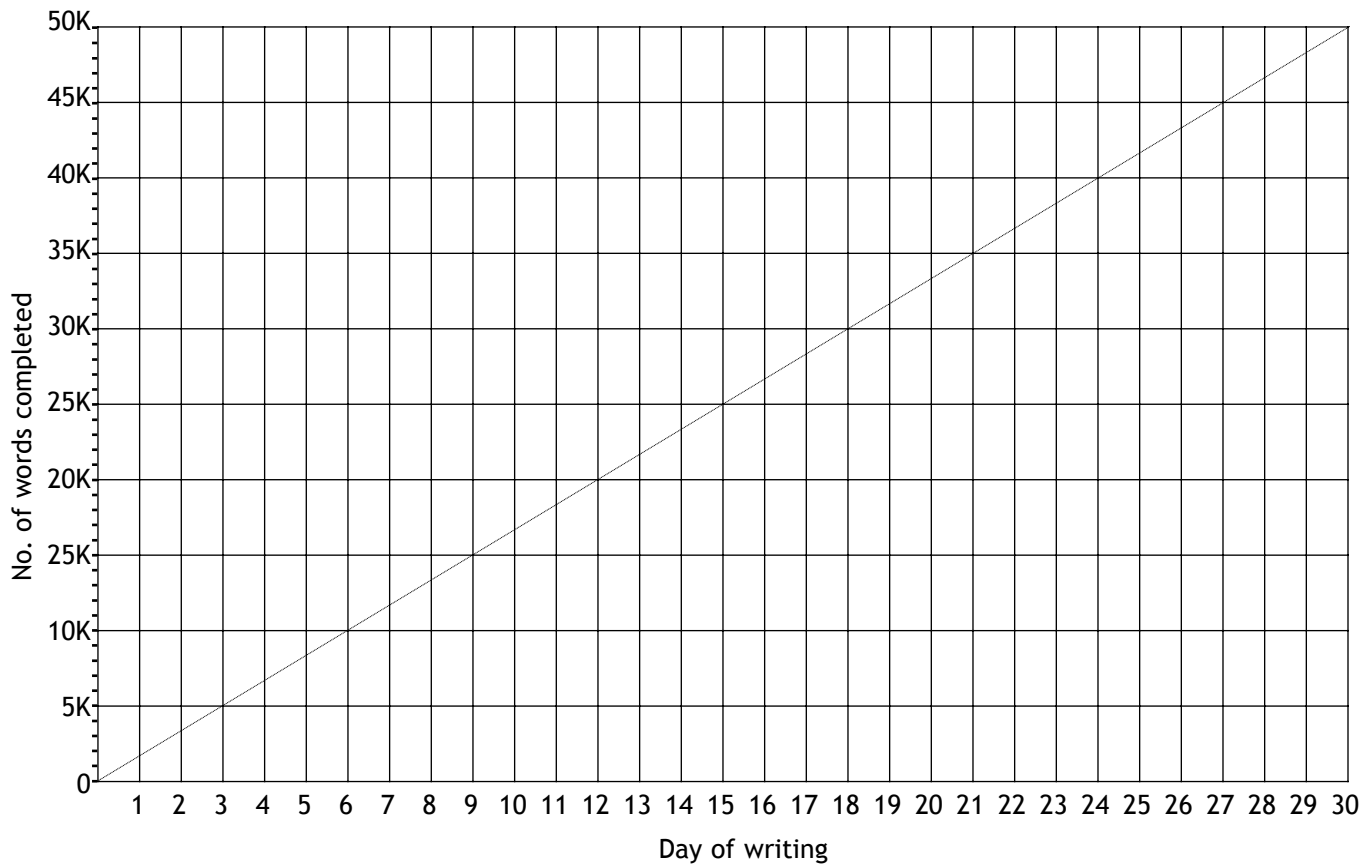
A website devoted to the unofficial patron saint of NaNoWriMo - Lionel Fanthorpe, who wrote dozens of novels, taking less than a fortnight for each of them!

Novelling Progress

It's nice to have some things to fill in at the end of a writing session - it's a great way to wind down and to remind yourself just how much you've already achieved

Day	Goal	Word Count
1	1,667	
2	3,334	
3	5,001	
4	6,668	
5	8,335	
6	10,002	
7	11,669	
8	13,336	
9	15,003	
10	16,670	
11	18,337	
12	20,004	
13	21,671	
14	23,338	
15	25,000	
16	26,667	
17	28,334	
18	30,001	
19	31,668	
20	33,335	
21	35,002	
22	36,669	
23	38,336	
24	40,003	
25	41,670	
26	43,337	
27	45,004	
28	46,671	
29	48,338	
30	50,000	

1,000	🏆	<input type="checkbox"/>	26,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
2,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	27,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
3,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	28,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
4,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	29,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
5,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	30,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
6,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	31,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
7,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	32,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
8,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	33,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
9,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	34,000	👤 <input type="checkbox"/>
10,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	35,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
11,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	36,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
12,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	37,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
13,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	38,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
14,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	39,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
15,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	40,000	🌊 <input type="checkbox"/>
16,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	41,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
17,000	👤	<input type="checkbox"/>	42,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
18,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	43,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
19,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	44,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
20,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	45,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
21,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	46,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
22,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	47,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
23,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	48,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
24,000		<input type="checkbox"/>	49,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
25,000	👤	<input type="checkbox"/>	50,000	🏆 <input type="checkbox"/>



Writing Achievements

Quadruple Figures!

1,000 words



Two Thirds Done!

33,333 words



Weekend Warrior!

3,000 words in a weekend



Ninja Focus!

1,667 words without getting up



One Third Done!

16,666 words



Almost There!

40,000 words



Social Scribe!

1,000 words at a write-in



The Great Concluder!

Bring your novel to a conclusion



All Downhill Now!

25,000 words - halfway point



NaNoWriMo Novelist!

50,000 words during November



November is
National
Novel
Writing
Month!

www.nanowrimo.org
