

Getting started with NaNoWriMo



We will meet on Tuesday afternoons, from 1pm to 3:30pm:

Tue, Oct 28, 1pm–3:30pm: Creating Awesome Characters
Tue, Nov 4, 1pm–3:30pm: Beginnings plus How to Keep Writing During November!
Tue, Nov 11, 1pm–3:30pm: Details, Details, Details
Tue, Nov 18, 1pm–3:30pm: Sub-Plotting *at Southdale Library*
Tue, Nov 25, 1pm–3:30pm: Character Interviews on NaNo-TV
Tue, Dec 2, 1pm–3:30pm: Thank Goodness It's Over Party

- You start writing on Saturday, November 1 and finish by midnight, Sunday, November 30.
- The focus is on story creation. There is to be no correction of grammar, punctuation, or spelling. For one month, you get to lock away your inner editor, let your imagination take over, and just create!
- Participants should register at ywp.nanowrimo.org as a "Young Writer" in order to track word count and "win" on Sun, Nov 30.
- Participants should join also the group's virtual classroom at ywp.nanowrimo.org/node/1631264.
- Participants may wish to download a PDF workbook from ywp.nanowrimo.org/workbooks
- Check out more information about the NaNoWriMo Young Writers Program at ywp.nanowrimo.org

How do I win NaNoWriMo?

You win NaNoWriMo by writing to your word-count goal by midnight on Sun, Nov 30 and by validating your word count online before that deadline. Just paste the full text of your novel in the *Word Count Validator*. While you can reach your word count goal without registering, you can't officially "win" without validating your word count goal online. When your word counts meets your goal, you win! Order a Winner T-shirt and celebrate. Every year, there are many, many winners. There are no "Best Novel" or "Quickest-Written Novel" awards given out. All writers who validate their word count online and reach their goal by midnight on Sun, Nov 30 receive an official "Winner" web badge and certificate, the opportunity to order NaNoWriMo Winner merchandise, and bragging rights for the rest of their lives.



DIY Skill: Writer diy.org/skills/writer

DIY Challenge 1: Describe a Character
diy.org/skills/writer/challenges/1477/describe-a-character

DIY Challenge 3: Write a Short Story
diy.org/skills/writer/challenges/1481/write-a-short-story

DIY Challenge 3: Enter a Writing Contest: NaNoWriMo YWP
diy.org/skills/writer/challenges/1495/enter-a-writing-contest

Wait! What? Short story!? I thought it was National Novel Writing Month?

Indeed it is, but let's not quibble over terms! *Oh, you want to quibble?* Well, then, while novels can vary tremendously in length, a work of fiction under 7,500 words is generally classed as a short story. If you write up to 17,500 words, you can call it a novelette. If you get up to 40,000 words, it's a novella. If you get beyond that, it's a novel. I did not name these things. You will be entering NaNoWriMo and you will be tackling the DIY Writer Skill Challenge Write a Short Story and you will be doing both of these things with the same story. (Yes, this is legal.)

For the purposes of NaNoWriMo, a novel is "a lengthy work of fiction." You decide whether what you're writing falls under the heading of "novel." If you believe you're writing a novel, we believe you're writing a novel, too. You can even co-author a novel with a friend (or friends). While NaNoWriMo defines the minimum length for adults to be 50,000 words, kids set their own goals. You can use the Word-Count Goal Calculator to generate a personal goal or check out the grade-based guidelines at [Setting a Word-Count Goal](#), where the recommended word count goal range for 7th graders is from 2000 to 5000 words. Keep in mind that a word-count goal is a lower threshold, not an upper limit.

Ground Rules for discussion

1. Respect each other and the types of writing done
2. Don't criticize each other destructively
3. Don't interrupt each other
4. Be positive and encouraging at all times
5. Make the group a safe environment to explore the craft of writing

Creating Awesome Characters

Characters You Have Loved, Characters You Have Hated

Part of what makes a book fun to read are good characters. We don't have to like all of them, we don't have to hate all of them, but we have to be interested in them to bother reading. Discover what kinds of characters make up a basic story, and how to make them interesting.

- Recall a character that really stood out in a book you have read.
 - Give a brief sketch of that character.
1. Which characters do you love to love?
 2. Which characters do you love to hate?
 3. Why do these characters stick out in your mind?
 4. How are these characters alike?
 5. How are these characters different?
 6. Have any of these characters faced similar conflicts?
 7. Did these characters think, act, and do things that you could relate to or were they very different from you?

Who Makes the Story?

See ***Creating Interesting Characters***

1. Name a protagonist from a book you have read.
2. Name an antagonist from a book you have read.
3. Name a supporting character from a book you have read.

Who Makes a Story Interesting

These characters will be different from your individual novels, but they may serve as inspiration. So if your protagonist has a radioactive mole on his left cheek and so does the group protagonist, that's okay as long as they are not the exact same character.

Role Rule: *You get final approval of all aspects of your character.*

Discuss ideas for a protagonist, antagonist, and two supporting characters until we have decided upon characters that make sense as a unit.

Keep in mind what conflict their characters will face, answer the questions for each character using the character questionnaire.

Wrap Up

1. Does a reader have to *like* the protagonist or just *understand* him/her in order to like a book?
2. Should characters be perfectly good or bad?
3. If you liked a character from another book, should you make yours just like that character?"

My character

1. Fill out a character questionnaire for you own novel's protagonist, antagonist, or one supporting character.
2. Share five interesting things about your character with the group.

Creating Interesting Characters

Some people think that an exciting plot is all it takes to make a story good, but in order to have an exciting plot, you need interesting, complex characters.

Boring Characters vs. Interesting Characters

Boring Character: Luna lives in Philadelphia.

Interesting Character: 15-year-old Luna just moved from her childhood home in California to Philadelphia. She is having a really hard time making friends at school. Her strange name and the beat-up, psychedelic-colored van her dad drives her to school in every morning have not made it easy on her.

To make matters even worse, the girls are jealous of the attention she gets from guys because of her wild green eyes, dark tan, and cool California accent.

They are also jealous of her shoes.

She has every shoe known to man. Colorful sandals, hip skate shoes, cute high heels, wedges, boots, tennis shoes, running shoes—she wears a new pair each day. Little do they know, she makes them all herself.

Not only are characters with hidden depths and secrets more fun to read about, they're also more fun to write about! Though you'll end up writing about a bunch of different people in your novel next month, all of them will fall into one of three categories: The protagonist, the supporting characters, and the antagonist.

The Protagonist

The **protagonist** is the character with the starring role in your book. In most novels, the protagonist is on a journey to get what he or she wants more than anything else in the world, whether it's fame, or revenge, or something as simple as joining the high school football team.

The Supporting Characters

Supporting characters are characters who *help the protagonist* achieve his or her goal. Many novels have several supporting characters, including your protagonist's family members, friends, neighbors, helpful wise old gurus, you name it. These characters also have dreams of their own, and their adventures will add even more excitement to your novel.

The Antagonist

The **antagonist** is the character in a novel that is standing in the way of the protagonist achieving his or her goal. That does not mean that all antagonists are evil, scheming monsters. Some antagonists stand in the way simply through jealousy, or misunderstanding, or by having a set of goals that differs from the protagonist's. If Fernando is your protagonist and he wants to take Jill to the dance, but Greg asked her first, this doesn't mean Greg is a "bad guy." He's just another guy who likes the same girl. Then again, there are those antagonists that are just plain evil. It's up to you to decide who's going to stand in your protagonist's way, and how he or she is going to do it.

It's a great idea for you, the author, to try and get to know your characters before you begin writing. We asked a team of scientists, mathematicians, and creative writing gurus from around the world: "What's the easiest way for a writer to get to know their characters?" Hands down, they all agreed the single best way is to fill out a Character Questionnaire for all your characters.

Go ahead and fill out the following questionnaire for your protagonist, antagonist, and for as many supporting characters as you'd like.

Character Questionnaire — Protagonist

Complete this section for all your characters!

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Height:
4. Eye color:
5. Physical appearance:
6. Unique physical attributes:
7. Hobbies/interests:
8. Where does he or she live? What is it like there?
9. Special skills/abilities:
10. Family (describe):
11. Description of his or her house:
12. Description of his or her bedroom:
13. Favorite bands/songs/type of music:
14. Favorite movies:
15. Favorite TV shows:
16. Favorite books:
17. Favorite foods:
18. Favorite sports/sports teams:
19. Political views:
20. Any interesting philosophies on life?
21. Religion:
22. Physical health:
23. Pet peeves:

Character Questionnaire — Protagonist

Bonus Questions (for all characters)!

1. Favorite clothing style/outfit:
2. Special gestures/movements (*for example, curling his/her lip when speaking, always keeping his/her eyes on the ground, etc.*):
3. Things about his/her appearance he/she would most like to change:
4. Speaking style (*fast, talkative, monotone, etc.*):
5. Fondest memory:
6. Insecurities:
7. Quirks:
8. Temperament (*easygoing, easily angered, etc.*):
9. Negative traits:
10. Things that upset him or her:
11. Things that embarrass him or her:
12. This character really cares about:
13. Things that make him or her happy:
14. Deepest, darkest secret:
15. Reason he or she kept this secret for so long:
16. Other people's opinions of this character (*What do people like about this character? What do they dislike about this character?*):
17. Dream vacation:
18. Any pets?
19. Best thing that has ever happened to this character:
20. Worst thing that has ever happened to this character:
21. Superstitions:
22. Three words to describe this character:
23. If a song played every time this character walked into the room, what song would it be?

Character Questionnaire — Antagonist

Complete this section for all your characters!

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Height:
4. Eye color:
5. Physical appearance:
6. Unique physical attributes:
7. Hobbies/interests:
8. Where does he or she live? What is it like there?
9. Special skills/abilities:
10. Family (describe):
11. Description of his or her house:
12. Description of his or her bedroom:
13. Favorite bands/songs/type of music:
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Character Questionnaire — Antagonist

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Character Questionnaire

Antagonist Questions!

1. Why is he or she facing off against the protagonist?
2. Any likeable traits?
3. Sure-fire ways to defeat your antagonist:

Character Questionnaire—Supporting Character

Complete this section for all your characters!

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Height:
4. Eye color:
5. Physical appearance:
6. Unique physical attributes:
7. Hobbies/interests:
8. Where does he or she live? What is it like there?
9. Special skills/abilities:
10. Family (describe):
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Character Questionnaire—Supporting Character

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22. Three words to describe this character:
23. If a song played every time this character walked into the room, what song would it be?

Character Questionnaire

Supporting Character Questions!

1. Relationship to the protagonist:
2. Favorite thing about the protagonist:
3. Similarities to protagonist:
4. Differences from protagonist:

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Character Questionnaire

Antagonist Questions!

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Setting Aside Your Inner Editor

- *What is the meaning of creativity?*
- *Do you have trouble thinking of the right words?*
- *Do you end up erasing something because it didn't seem good enough?*
- *Do you just go with the first thing that comes to mind?*

The culprit of such uncertainty and self-doubt is your **inner editor**, something really need to know how to ignore.

- *What is an inner editor? What might an inner editor say to you?*

An inner editor could help or hinder you. In many cases, you need the inner editor.

- *When do you need to think things through and make sure you are writing the right thing?*
- *When does the inner editor not help?*

NaNoWriMo is special because for the month of November when you are actually writing, you should completely ignore that little voice in you.

- *Why is it important to ignore your inner editor during NaNoWriMo?*

Your inner editor wants them to write fewer and better words, but NaNoWriMo is telling you to go ahead and write more words, and to make them better later.

- *What behaviors count as editing?*
 1. thinking for more than 5 minutes about what to write
 2. erasing more than three words
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
- *How can you silence your inner editor?*
 1. take deep breaths
 2. use a counting rhyme to choose between word or plot options
 3. picking something from an inspirational grab bag and incorporate it into your story
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.

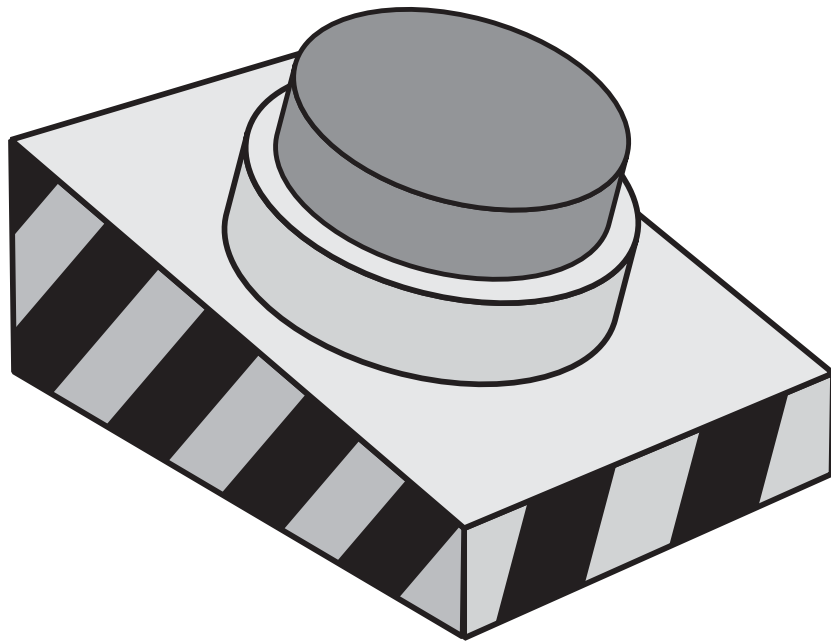
Go with the first thing you think of, and never think anything is too weird or bad. If it is, you can fix it later. How nice is that?!

Inner Editor Containment Button

Before you begin your month-long noveling adventure, you'll want to do away with your Inner Editor. What is your Inner Editor? He's the nagging, no-fun beast we bring along with us on all our creative endeavors. He sits on our shoulder and points out our typos and misspellings and every awkward sentence. When he's in a particularly nasty mood, he might try to tell us that we're embarrassingly awful writers, and shouldn't even be allowed to put pen to paper. He is helpful to have around when taking tests and revising things we've already written (and any other things where we're shooting for perfection). But he'll slow you down in the worst way if you let him write your novel with you next month.

No matter how ridiculous this might sound, close your eyes and imagine your Inner Editor. Think about what he or she might look like. Is your Inner Editor a man or a woman? Is he or she holding a dictionary? Chasing after you with a ruler? Once you get a good picture in your head of what he or she looks like, open your eyes and push the button below.

Warning: Pushing the button will vacuum your Inner Editor right out of your head for the next 30 days. He'll be transported from your brain into a NaNoWriMo Inner Editor Containment Cell, where we'll put him to use proofreading our Young Writers Program websites. We have lots for him to do! And we promise that after 30 days we'll give him back to you (so you'll have him around to help out with your novel rewrites).



Congratulations. Your Inner Editor has been successfully contained. It's time to move on.