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The Write Life

<http://thewritelife.com/prepare-nanowrimo-4-week-success-plan/>

Helping writers create, connect and earn

* How to Prepare for NaNoWriMo: Your 4-Week Success Plan

September 23, 2016 By [Janice Hardy](http://thewritelife.com/author/janice-hardy/) [71 Comments](http://thewritelife.com/prepare-nanowrimo-4-week-success-plan/#comments)



If you’re participating in National Novel Writing Month ([NaNoWriMo](http://thewritelife.com/5-tips-for-preparing-to-write-your-novel/)) this November , you’re likely gearing up to plan your novel in October. Writing 50,000 words in 30 days takes work, and starting the month prepared makes it easier to hit your goal — or even surpass it.

Since all stories are about an interesting character solving an interesting problem in an interesting way, your first step is to figure out your main character(s), the story problem, and the main goal.

**In a few sentences, describe what this novel will be about.** This summary will be your guide for October, and help keep you on track all through November.

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Week 1 (November 1 to 7): Focus on the novel’s setup

Beginnings introduce the characters, story problem, and [story world or setting](http://thewritelife.com/worldbuilding/) to readers, and they set the stage for the rest of the novel.

**A strong start will provide you with solid scene goals, giving you something to write about every day.**

Things to determine:

How the protagonist is introduced

What traits do you want readers to know right away? How might you show those traits in action? What likable qualities does your protagonist have? How can you show those qualities in your opening scene or first chapter?

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The problem the opening scene deals with

An opening with an interesting problem to solve gives the story drive and the characters reasons to act. What problem might your protagonist face when the novel opens?

Remember, the goal of an opening is to a.) hook readers and b.) lead the plot to the core conflict of the novel.

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The inciting event

If this event did not happen, there would be no novel. It either drives your opening, or is the bridge between your opening scene and the beginning of the middle (act two).

Week 2 (November 8-14): Focus on how problems get solved in the middle

This middle is where the bulk of the novel unfolds as your characters work to resolve their problems and fail *a lot*. The number of attempts and failures will vary by the type of story, as thrillers have different expectations than romances.

Things to consider:

How the setup transitions to the middle

Everything in your beginning will lead to the middle, where the protagonist will make that all-important choice to accept responsibility for resolving the plot, and move into act two. T**he opening scene leads to the inciting event, which leads to this decision.**

The major problem or event revealed in the middle

Adding a big shake up, problem, or reveal at the novel’s center can prevent the all-too-common boggy middle. The mid-point event creates the goal and problem the second half of the middle will have to resolve, and set up what will happen in the ending.

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How the middle transitions to the ending

The protagonist has failed, feels utterly lost and hopeless, and things are at their worst. What the protagonist does here will launch the ending and lead to the climax of the novel.

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Week 3 (November 15 to 21): Focus on how the novel ends

The ending is how the novel’s core conflict problem is resolved. It starts with the protagonist at her lowest point and drives her to the ultimate showdown with the antagonist.

Things to determine:

How the protagonist plans to defeat the antagonist

Although the plan may (and often does) fail, this is the goal that launches the ending and propels the protagonist to the climax. What are some of the steps that will take the protagonist from hopeless to victorious (or hopeless to defeated, if that’s how it ends)?

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How the novel ends

You might not know the details at this stage, but it helps to have at least a general idea of how the core conflict of the novel is resolved.

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How the protagonist is changed by the experience

In most novels, the protagonist grows and becomes a better person by the end of the novel. What changes for your protagonist? How is she better off? How is she *worse* off? What did she learn?

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Week 4 (November 22 to 28): Focus on major turning points of the story

Flesh out whatever you need to write your novel.

If your story is character-driven, you might plan the character arc and focus more on the internal journey of your protagonist and discover the plot as you write.

If you’re a plot-driven writer, you might prefer to map out the major plot points and figure out who your characters are by how they solve those plot problems.

Whatever your process, look at the key turning points and elements you need to keep your story moving forward. I suggest aiming for three major points per act (beginning, middle and ending), but develop as many as you like to keep your plot on target.

Final Days (November 29 to 30):

Try to find an end point.