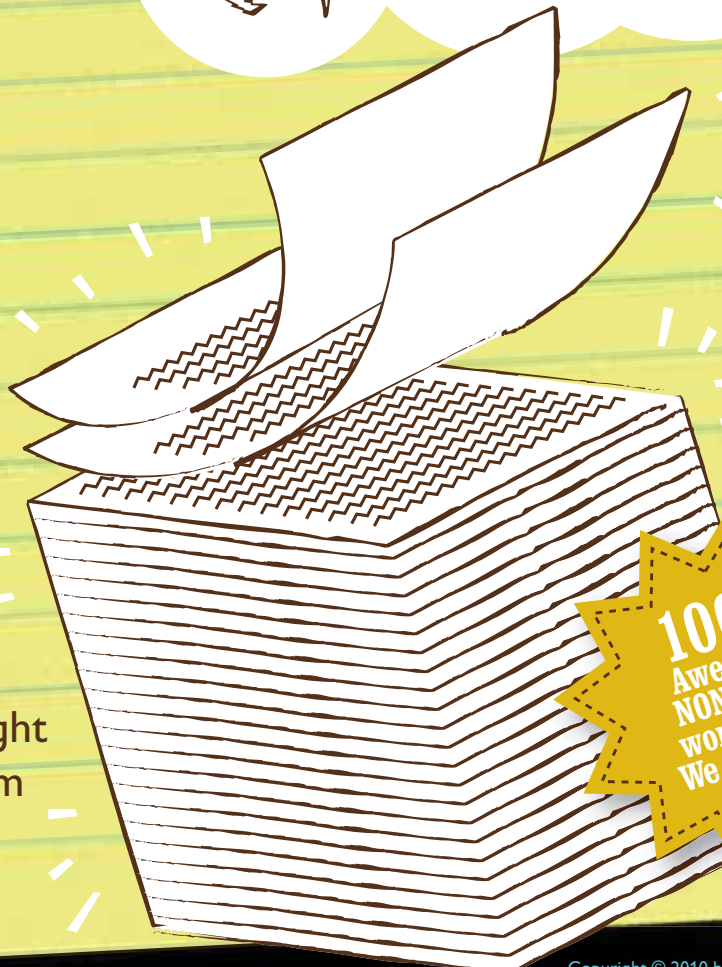
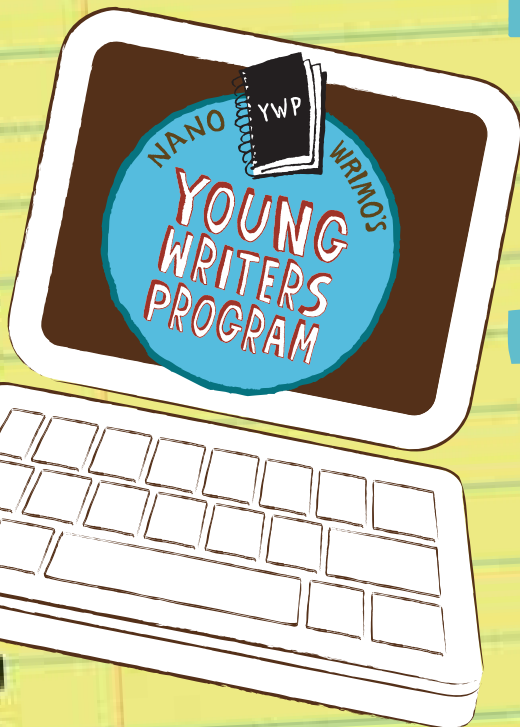


# NATIONAL NOVEL WRITING MONTH'S YOUNG NOVELIST WORKBOOK

High School

Third Edition



Created by the  
Office of Letters and Light  
Young Writers Program

100%  
Awesome,  
NON-LAME  
workbooks.  
We promise!

# Table of Contents

Introduction Letter .....	1
<b>Novel Writing How-Tos</b>	
Inner Editor Containment Button .....	3
What Makes a Novel a Novel? .....	4
Good Novel, Bad Novel .....	7
Creating Well-developed Characters .....	10
Character Questionnaire .....	12
Creating Conflict .....	15
Outlining Your Plot .....	19
Setting .....	30
Writing Really Good Dialogue .....	38
<b>Getting Ready For NaNoWriMo</b>	
NaNoWriMo Survival Tips .....	43
National Novel Writing Month Contract .....	44
NaNoWriMo Calendar .....	45
<b>Ready, Set, Write . . . And Keep Writing!</b>	
NaNoWriMo's Personal Chart of Noveling Progress .....	48
Beginnings .....	49
Sub-plotting: <i>The More Plots, the Merrier</i> .....	53
Details, Details, Details .....	55
Lists, Lists, and Lists of Lists .....	69
<b>I Wrote a Novel! Now What?</b>	
The Workshop .....	72
Reader Review Worksheet .....	75
Unleash Your Inner Editor .....	77
Cleaning It Up .....	82
Choosing an Exceptional Excerpt .....	85
Writing a Superior Submission Letter .....	87



Hello Author,

Here it is, almost November, and you've decided to tackle one of the most rewarding challenges ever: writing a novel in 30 days. Before you begin, we want to commend you just for showing up!

You might be feeling a little nervous, maybe slightly overwhelmed. After all, isn't novel-writing reserved for the elite? For the tried-and-true writers of the world? For those that have been in the trenches of fiction, their pens grasped mightily in their hands, and a Shakespeare quote at the tip of their tongues?

The answer, our friends, is no. The truth is that you don't have to be a famous author to write a novel. You just have to have a few ideas, some paper, and a pen. It's as easy as that.

Writing a novel is kind of like building a bike from scratch: when the pieces are spread out on the ground, the job seems impossible. But if you work piece by piece, before you know it, you're ready to hit the streets. By breaking a big job into smaller parts, you'll find that anything is possible.

If you don't have any ideas about what to write next month, don't worry. We've put together this workbook to spark your imagination before NaNoWriMo. We'll walk you through creating well-developed characters and settings. We'll show you how to create conflict, outline your plot, and write dialogue that will strike the deepest envy in writers the world over. Then we will be right by your side throughout NaNoWriMo with exercises that will help boost your word count, create plot twists, and get to know your characters better than you might want to.

Before you embark on your noveling adventure, we want you to know that whatever your word count at the end of November, you are extraordinary just for giving this a shot.

Good luck from all of us here at NaNoWriMo. May your words be many, your imagination be awakened, and your adventure be out of this world!

The NaNoWriMo Staff

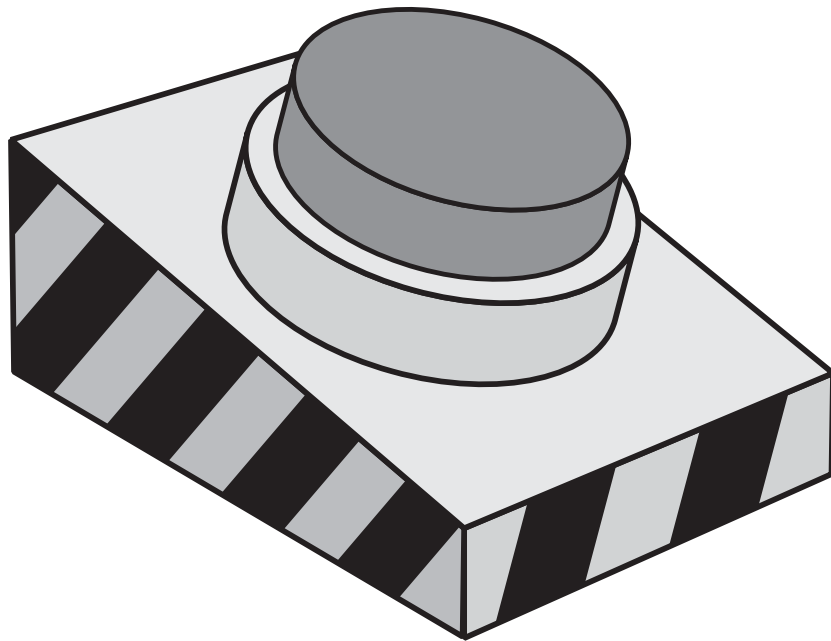
# **Novel Writing How-Tos**

# 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, 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 an Inner Editor Containment Cell, where we'll put him to use proofreading the NaNoWriMo 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.

# What Makes a Novel a Novel?

Now that you've received the scary news that you're going to write a novel, you're probably wondering exactly what that *means*. Well, think of novels you have read for school. How are they all alike? What rules do they all seem to follow?

Work with classmates to write a definition based on the novels you know about.

**A novel is**



---

---

---

---

**Now choose one of the novels you have read, preferably one that you really liked a lot or just know inside and out. Write the name of that book, and its author, here:**

My Model Novel:

---

by \_\_\_\_\_

For the rest of your novel-writing adventure, think of that book as a model you can use when you get stuck. You don't have to imitate it—and you never want to copy it, of course—but you can always look at it for ideas. Just think of that novel's author as your own personal novel-writing coach.

**Now take out your model novel and fill in the blanks below.**

1. Who are the important characters in your model novel?

---

2. In two sentences, what is the book mostly about?

---

---

---

---

3. What is the main conflict in this novel?

---

---

---

---

---

4. Whose perspective is the novel written from?

---

5. What point of view does the author use (first person, third person, etc.)?

---

6. How does the novel begin?

---

7. Where is the story set, generally?

---

8. Name one thing you love about the author's style of writing (such as "It's hilarious." or "The words flow like poetry.").

---

9. What is your favorite thing about this novel (such as "The quirky characters." or "The suspenseful plot.")?

---

Now that you've broken down the main components of your book and figured out what you loved about it, you're ready to present it to classmates with a book talk. Don't worry; a book talk is not a book report. You don't have to recount everything that happens in the book in excruciating detail. Instead, a book talk is like a movie trailer; it gives just enough information to leave the audience wanting more.

Take a look at this book talk, for example, about the real novel *Into the Great Wide Open* by Kevin Canty.

Kenny Kolodny, the main character of Kevin Canty's novel *Into the Great Wide Open*, has some serious problems. His mom is in a mental hospital. His dad drinks too much and then has a stroke. Kenny doesn't have much hope for the future, that is, until he meets Junie Williamson. Junie lives in a fancy house with her very successful parents, and her life seems perfect—but Kenny knows it isn't, because Junie has a problem that even her parents can't ignore. For a while Kenny and Junie's adventures provide an escape they both need; sooner or later though, both of them have to face reality. Will they be able to do it together?

After reading this book talk, you know the basics of *Into the Great Wide Open*: its title, its author, its main character, and some important things happening in his life. But you probably have a bunch of questions, too. What is Junie's problem? Why do Kenny and Junie have to "face reality"? Perhaps you are curious enough to check out this book for yourself!

As you can see, a book talk simply gives the audience a "taste" of what the book is about, who its main characters are, and what the important conflict is.

**Below, prepare your own book talk about the novel you chose as your model. Keep in mind that you will be reading this aloud in order to get classmates interested in your book!**

---

---

---

---

---

---

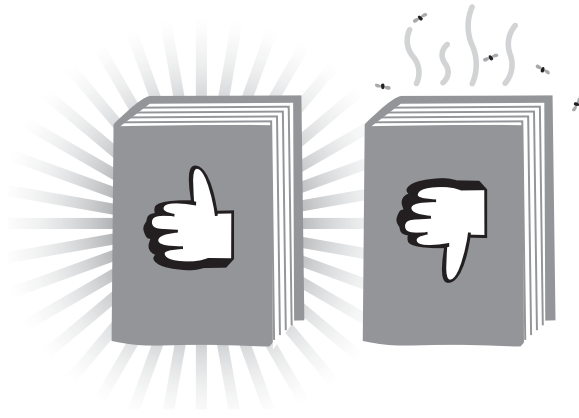
---

---

---

---





## Good Novel, Bad Novel

Out of all the novels you've read in your life so far, there were those that were ridiculously fun to read and those that were as enjoyable as studying for your math final. Before you start thinking about the novel you'll be writing this November, it's helpful to write down what, *to you*, makes a book "good" (interesting, exciting, fun to read, etc.) and what makes a book "bad" (boring, painful to read, etc.).

### Good Novel

Let's start by making a list of books you love. Think about all the novels you've read that you couldn't put down no matter how sleep deprived you were or how much homework you were supposed to be doing. **In the spaces below write down the title and author of three novels you love:**

1. Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

2. Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

3. Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, write a list of things that made these novels so amazing.** You can be as general or as detailed as you like; include anything from “believable and well-developed characters” to “rock music” to “intergalactic space travel.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Once you have finished this list, keep it with you at all times during November. Why is this list so important? Because, as you might imagine, the things you like reading are going to be things you are best at writing. As you write your story, refer to this list of ingredients, and consider adding them to your novel whenever you're stuck for ideas or story directions.



## Bad Novel

**In the spaces below, write as many things as you can think of that make a novel less fun to read.** Think about all those books you’ve read (or started to read) that put you to sleep by the end of page one. You know—the books you’d rather eat mayonnaise straight from the jar than read again.

**Now, write a list of things that made these novels so awful.** Again, you can be as general or as detailed as you like; include anything from “cheesy endings” to “awkward dialogue.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Just like the list of things you love in a book, keep this list with you at all times during November.** It might seem strange that you would have to remind yourself of the things you dislike in novels, but these items are experts in the art of ending up in your story without you even realizing it.

# Creating Well-Developed Characters

Most people think that an intriguing plot is what makes a story good, but the truth is that exciting plots are made up of original and well-developed characters.

## Flat Characters vs. Original Characters

**Flat character:** Steve was a good kid. He got good grades and was never late to class.

**Original, well-developed character:** Steve Goodhold was a good kid. He got good grades and was never late to class. Little did everyone know that he spent his nights working as an internet hacker for a modern Mafioso who he met through his older cousin, Peter.

Steve didn't need much sleep, which was a good thing. He slept maybe two hours a night, and spent the rest of his time stealing identities, wiring funds, and making more money than both his parents combined. He told himself he was saving for college, but the thrill of his secret life of crime was steadily eroding his interest in an Ivy League education.

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, revenge, reuniting with a long-lost brother, or something much more elusive, like overcoming poverty or cancer.

### The Supporting Characters

**Supporting characters** are characters in a novel that have an important role in your protagonist's life. Some may be around for the protagonist's entire journey, some for only part. Supporting characters can be friends, close relatives, love interests, you name it. These characters also have dreams of their own, and their adventures will add even more excitement to your novel.



### The Physical Antagonist

A **physical antagonist** is a living, breathing character in a novel that is standing in the way of the protagonist achieving his or her goal. This does not mean that all physical antagonists are evil monsters. Some antagonists stand in the way simply through jealousy, or misunderstanding, or by having a set of goals that differs from that of 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.

OR

### The Abstract Antagonist

Though a lot of antagonists are living, breathing beings, some are not. Some protagonists face off against illness, or grief, or the powers of a corrupt government. We like to call these kinds of antagonists **abstract antagonists** because they don't take actual physical form. If your novel's antagonist is not a living person/animal/entity, you have an abstract antagonist. It may be easier think of it this way: if your protagonist cannot physically kick your antagonist in the knee, he or she is probably *abstract*.

Physical Antagonist	Abstract Antagonist
A racist or intolerant character	Racism/ intolerance in a community or in general
A character who is working to make sure your protagonist lives a poverty-stricken life	Poverty or the economy in a community or in general
A character who is forcing your character to struggle against nature (e.g. someone who has left your character stranded in Antarctica)	Nature as an entity (e.g. a natural disaster or an extreme climate)
A character whose religious beliefs oppress your protagonist	A religion or all religions
A government official such as a dictator who has it in for your protagonist	A corrupt government
Your protagonist's evil boss	A corporation/ company
A character whose sole mission is to make sure your protagonist becomes ill (e.g. though poisoning or exposure to a deadly disease)	Disease/illness in general

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 writers to get to know their characters?" Hands down, the experts all agreed the single best way is to **fill out a Character Questionnaire for all your characters.**

# Character Questionnaire

In your notebook, fill out these questionnaires about your characters. We have four different sets of them.



## Section One: All Your Characters

Complete Section One for every character in your book. If you have an abstract antagonist, try to answer as many questions as you can from this section for them then move on to Section Four.

## Section Two: Questions for Your Supporting Characters

Complete Section Two just for your supporting characters.

## Section Three: Questions for a Physical Antagonist

Complete Section Three if you have a physical antagonist.

**OR**

## Section Four: Questions for an Abstract Antagonist

Complete Section Four if you have an abstract antagonist.

## Section One: Complete this section for all your characters!

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Height:
4. Eye color:
5. Physical appearance:
6. Strange or unique physical attributes:
7. Favorite clothing style/outfit:
8. Where does he or she live? What is it like there?
9. Defining gestures/movements (i.e., curling his or her lip when he or she speaks, always keeping his or her eyes on the ground, etc.):
10. Things about his or her appearance he or she would most like to change:
11. Speaking style (fast, talkative, monotone, etc.):

12. Pet peeves:
13. Fondest memory:
14. Hobbies/interests:
15. Special skills/abilities:
16. Insecurities:
17. Quirks/eccentricities:
18. Temperament (easygoing, easily angered, etc.):
19. Negative traits:
20. Things that upset him or her:
21. Things that embarrass him or her:
22. This character is highly opinionated about:
23. Any phobias?
24. Things that make him or her happy:
25. Family (describe):
26. Deepest, darkest secret:
27. Reason he or she kept this secret for so long:
28. Other people's opinions of this character (What do people like about this character? What do they dislike about this character?):
29. Favorite bands/songs/type of music:
30. Favorite movies:
31. Favorite TV shows:
32. Favorite books:
33. Favorite foods:
34. Favorite sports/sports teams:
35. Political views:
36. Religion/philosophy of life:

37. Physical health:
  38. Dream vacation:
  39. Description of his or her house:
  40. Description of his or her bedroom:
  41. Any pets?
  42. Best thing that has ever happened to this character:
  43. Worst thing that has ever happened to this character:
  44. Superstitions:
  45. Three words to describe this character:
  46. If a song played every time this character walked into the room, what song would it be?
- 

## Section Two: Supporting Character Questions

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

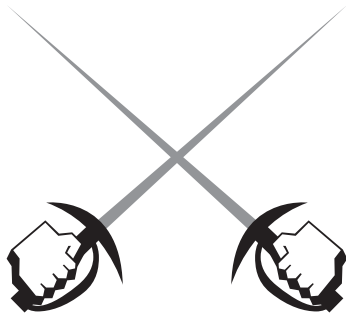
## Section Three: Antagonist Questions

1. Why is he or she facing off against the protagonist?
  2. Any likeable traits?
  3. Weaknesses:
- 

## Section Four: Abstract Antagonist

1. What is your abstract antagonist? Is it a disease like cancer, a social ill like poverty, or something larger than life, like grief?
2. How is this antagonist affecting the protagonist?
3. Do other characters notice? How does this antagonist affect the other people in your novel?





## Creating Conflict

Okay, so you know who your characters are. Excellent. Now it is time to figure out *what your characters are going to do*. **Most stories are ultimately about the same thing—the journey a protagonist goes on to get what he or she wants.** Whether his or her goal is to get the girl or cure cancer, the journey is never easy, and your character will encounter many setbacks along the way. Though they're painful for your protagonist, these obstacles are what will make your novel exciting to read.

Imagine a story about Jim who wants a sandwich more than anything in the world. How boring would the story be if all Jim had to do was walk from his bedroom to the kitchen, make a sandwich, and then eat it? That story is so uneventful it can be told in one sentence. But what if Jim is seriously afraid of the dark, the power is out in his house, and he has to walk down a dark hallway to get to the kitchen? And, once there, he has to fight his bratty younger sister, Emily, for the last slice of roast beef.

Though it may be simple, this story has both **external conflict** and **internal conflict**.

### External Conflict

**The external conflict is the one between a protagonist and antagonist.** In the above story, the protagonist *Jim* has a goal (*to eat a sandwich*), but a motivated antagonist *Emily* has her own agenda (*to also eat a sandwich*). The struggle between Jim and Emily over the last slice of roast beef is the external conflict in this story.

### Internal Conflict

**The internal conflicts are the fears and insecurities that a protagonist has to overcome in order to get what he or she wants.** In the story above, Jim has to overcome his fear of the dark in order to get the sandwich he wants so badly.



If you have completed your **character questionnaires**, you already know a good amount about the major players in your novel. Now it's time to answer some deeper questions about your characters' hopes and fears in order to create the **conflicts** that will make your novel interesting.

Take out and review your character questionnaires, then fill in the blanks below.

### Your Protagonist

More than anything in the world, my protagonist wants:

---

---

---

---

---

---

But he/she is afraid of:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

And his/her greatest weakness is (is it something like "falling in love too easily" or "shopping"?):

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Physical Antagonist

Complete this section if you have a physical antagonist.

More than anything in the world, my antagonist wants (this can be as simple as humiliating the protagonist or something a little more ambitious like world domination):

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

My antagonist's "beef" with the protagonist is:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

My antagonist is afraid of (long-haired bunnies?):

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

His/her greatest weakness is:

---

---

---

---

---

### **Abstract Antagonist**

**Complete this section if you have an abstract antagonist.**

The antagonist in my novel is not a living, breathing being. It is \_\_\_\_\_

---

If my protagonist does not battle against this antagonist, it will eventually (ruin his or her life or cause death?)

---

---

---

---

---

---

My protagonist is battling against this antagonist by:

---

---

---

---

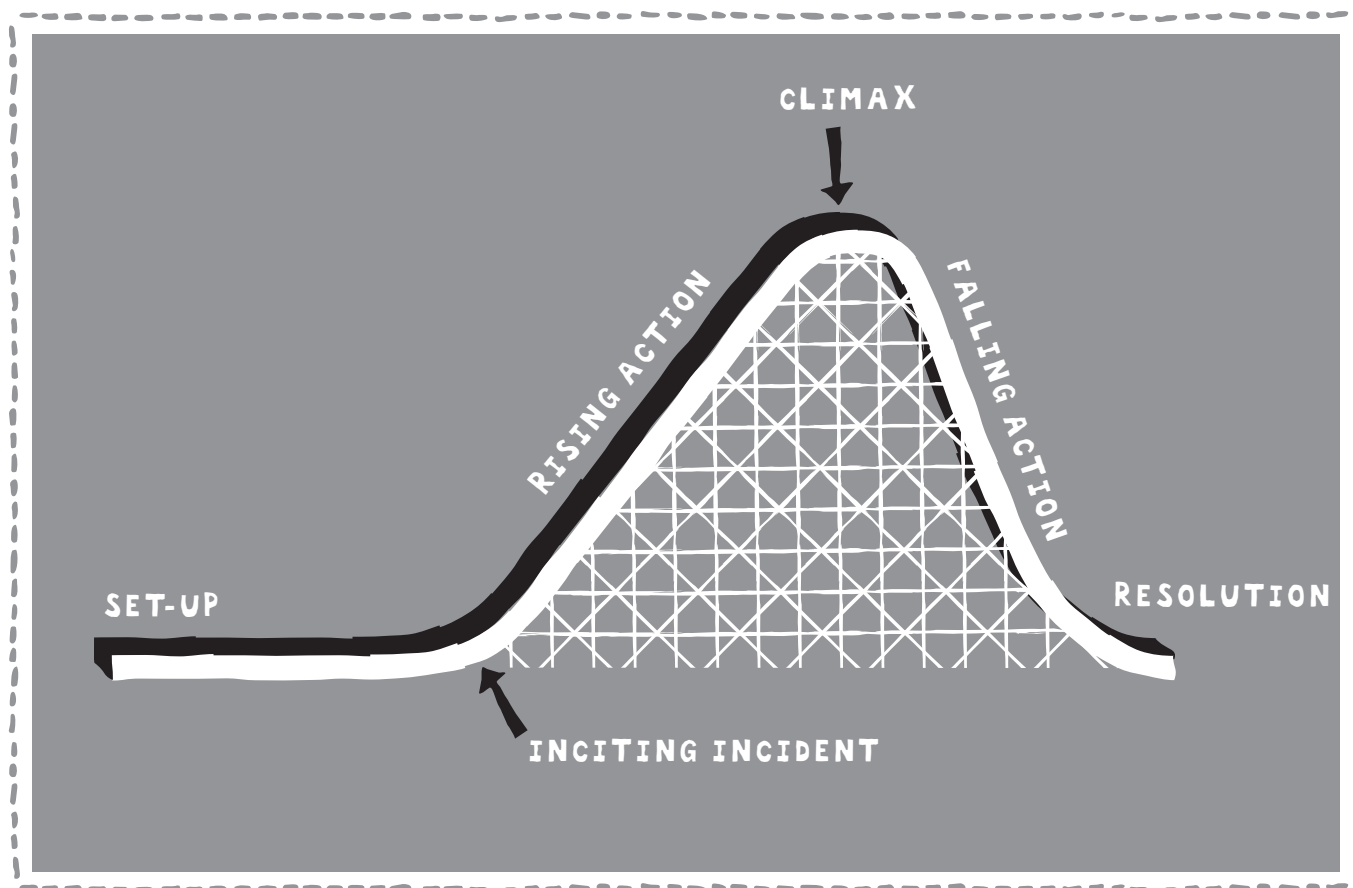
---

Congratulations! You now have the two basic ingredients for an excellent story: **external conflict** and **internal conflict**. Know that your internal and external conflicts will overlap throughout your novel. Once your characters find out about each others' fears and weaknesses, you better believe they will use them against each other mercilessly as they fight to make their dreams come true.

# Outlining Your Plot

Now that you've created some exciting conflict for your novel, you probably have an idea of *what* is going to happen in your book this November. You may know what kind of journey your protagonist will undertake, and you know what will stand in his or her way. Now it's time to take the next step and map out *how* everything is going to happen.

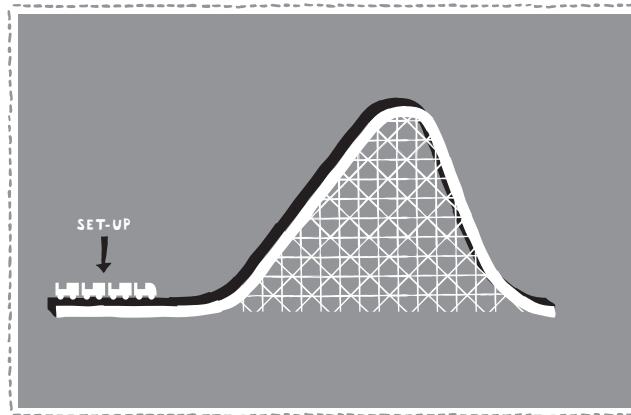
Writing an entire novel from beginning to end may seem impossible, but it is not as hard as you think once you have a plan. Trust us. Most stories have the same structure, and they break down into the same six sections that make up a **plot**. See the diagram below.



This diagram may look familiar to you. It is most commonly in the shape of an **inverted checkmark**, but we think a **plot rollercoaster** is much more fun than a checkmark, so we're going with that.

**Even if this is stuff you already know from English class, read all the sections below carefully before you move on to map out your own plot.**

## The Set-Up



**What kind of rollercoaster are we getting on?**

Though some novels begin with an “inciting incident”—which you will read about in just a second—many of them start by telling the reader a little bit about the characters, the setting, and the conflict before jumping into the action. Just like you'd want to know what kind of rollercoaster you're getting on before waiting in line, a reader wants to know what kind of novel he or she is about to read before committing time to it.

### Here is an example of a story's set-up:

Boris is in his bedroom playing guitar. His unruly hair bobs up and down as he plays and jumps from side to side. He knocks over his Coke can by mistake, adding to the litter on the floor. The walls within his room are covered with posters, and his floor is covered in guitar magazines and how-to books, pedals, and various cords and connectors.



His mom, Wilma, walks in with a plate of uncooked Pop Tarts, a childhood favorite of his that he hasn't quite grown out of yet. She dodges him as he swings his guitar behind his back, and continues to play.

“Showoff,” Wilma says playfully.

“Mom, I'm so over it!” Boris shouts over his amp.

Wilma turns his amp off. “Over what?” she says. “What does that even mean?”

“I am bored with everything.” Boris pushes some dirty clothes off his bed and sits down.

“I don't understand you at all, little man,” Wilma says, handing Boris the plate of pastries. “You have every guitar and guitar gadget in the world. What else do you need?”

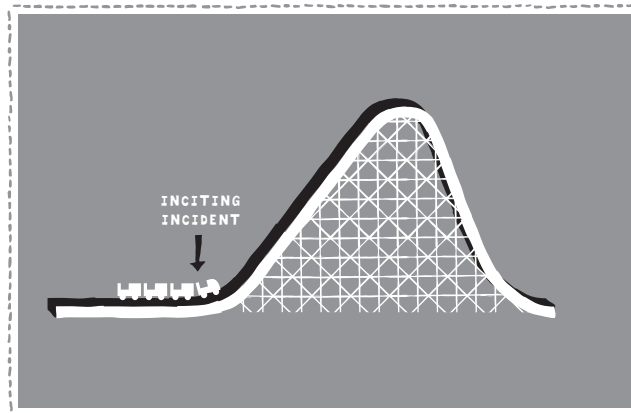
“How many times do I have to tell you to stop calling me ‘little man’? I’m 18. I’m way too old to be sitting in my bedroom like a loser.” Boris shoves a Pop Tart in his mouth. “I want to be in a band. I want to travel the world . . .”

“I’ve been telling you, you should check out that new reality TV show, *So You Think You Can Rock?*! I hear auditions are coming to Detroit next weekend, and the grand prize is a \$2,000,000 contract with Capitol Records.”

“Yeah right!” Boris says. “I’d pass out cold in front of an audience that big. And that judge, Billy Van Carnage, is a total jerk. I get nervous even thinking about him.”

Okay, that was a good set up. We have been introduced to the protagonist and story’s main conflicts: Boris wants to join a rock band and travel the world, but he has crippling stage fright (**internal conflict**). Plus, it has been hinted that Mr. Van Carnage is also going to pose a problem for Boris (**external conflict**).

### The Inciting Incident



### Getting on the rollercoaster

The inciting incident launches your protagonist into the adventure whether he or she is ready or not. It can be a pretty scary moment for your main character. Once it happens, there's no turning back.

### Here is the inciting incident that happens in this story:

Boris is looking at a deep-red Stratocaster when he sees Abigail at the counter. Afraid of saying something stupid to her, he ducks behind a drum set, but it's too late. He's been spotted.

Abigail walks over and picks up the guitar Boris was just looking at. “Look—it matches your shirt perfectly. You have to get it.”

“Yeah. Sounds like a plan.” Boris face is slowly turning a color that also matches his shirt.

Abigail doesn’t seem to notice. “So guess what?” she asks.

“Nothing,” Boris stammers. “I mean, I’m great!...I mean, what?”

Abigail laughs. “My band is trying out for *So You Think You Can Rock?* this weekend.”

“Wow, you’re so cool.” Boris says by mistake. “I mean, that is so cool. What is your band called?”

“Crude Medicine,” Abigail says, looking a little nervous herself. “I’m glad I ran into you. I’ve heard you’re a pretty awesome lead guitarist and our guy is M.I.A. We’re starting to freak out.”

She pauses, looks around the store, and then her eyes lock on Boris’. “If he doesn’t show, would you fill in for the tryout?”

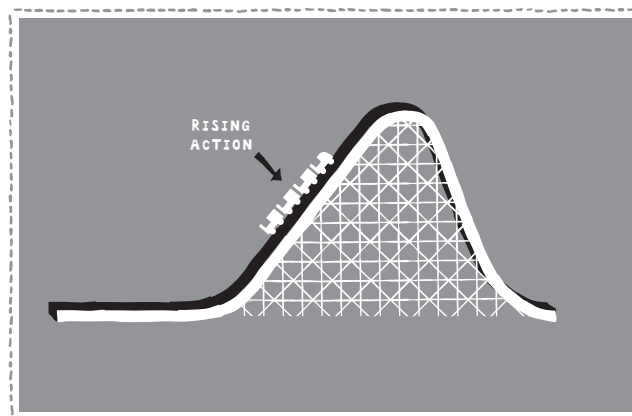
“Wow. . .” A bead of sweat runs down Boris’ forehead.

“I’ll take that as a ‘yes!’” Abigail hugs Boris, catching him totally off guard.

“I’ll be at your place at 8 AM sharp Saturday morning. Make sure you know the guitar solo in this song by then.” Abigail hands Boris a burned CD and runs out the door.

If an inciting incident never happened, Boris would more than likely continue to eat outdated breakfast pastries and play guitar alone in his bedroom. This might sound like a pretty fun life to live, but it's not a very fun life to read about.

## Rising Action



### Climbing the big hill

This will be the longest section of your novel. You will develop your characters, deepen their relationships with one another, and carefully pace all the important things that happen to them before the **climax**. Think of the rising action as the biggest hill on the rollercoaster—the higher you go, the more suspenseful it gets. The rising action is made up of many events, each of them building to the most exciting part of your story: the climax.



**Here is a summary of some of the rising action in this story:**

1. Abigail pulls up outside in her beat-up Volkswagen Jetta and Boris—trying not to look back to his room where his guitars, amps, and pedals are looking sad and deserted—says goodbye to his mom.

Abigail honks until Boris finally hugs his mom, grabs his vintage Fender Jaguar and runs out the door.

2. As soon as they get to the auditions, Boris starts to get nervous. He can barely talk to people, but Abigail and the other two band members, Zach (the drummer) and Megan (the bassist), do all the talking. Though Boris is nervous about getting on stage, he finds himself becoming more and more comfortable around Abigail. She is unlike any other girl he has ever met. And she seems to like him.

3. When it's time for Crude Medicine to get up in front of the judges to play, Boris can hardly see straight. Boris knows the song like the back of his hand, so all he has to worry about is not throwing up or passing out.

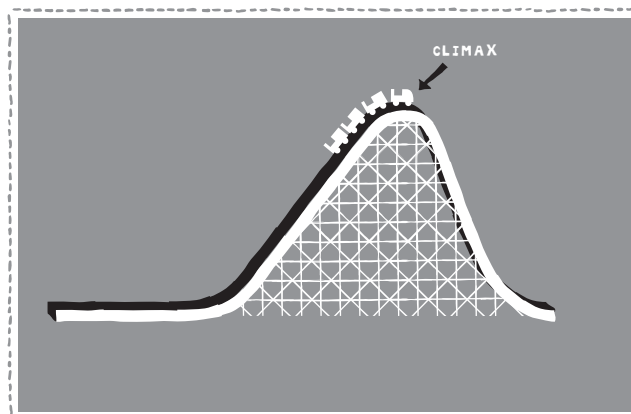
Boris makes it all the way through the song just fine, and Abigail sings lead and nails it. All the judges are blown away, except one.

“Girl lead singers are cliché,” Billy Van Carnage says, and then points at Boris. “And I’m pretty sure that this guy will lose his lunch on stage opening night, and that would not be pretty.”

But the rest of the judges outvote him. Crude Medicine is on its way to stardom.

4. Each performance gets easier for Boris, and Crude Medicine make it all the way to the final episode. Boris figures they are going to win, and spends less time worrying about impressing the judges and more time daydreaming about all the ways to spend his part of the prize money—a six-month tropical vacation with Abigail, a new house for his mom, or maybe a large donation to a local music school for urban kids. Losing, at this point, is not an option.

**The Climax**



**The top of the rollercoaster**

This is the moment at the very top of the rollercoaster, right before your high-speed drop. This moment doesn't last long, and neither does the climax in your novel. It can be as short as a couple paragraphs—just enough to make your readers hold their breath in suspense and ask, “What’s going to happen next?!”

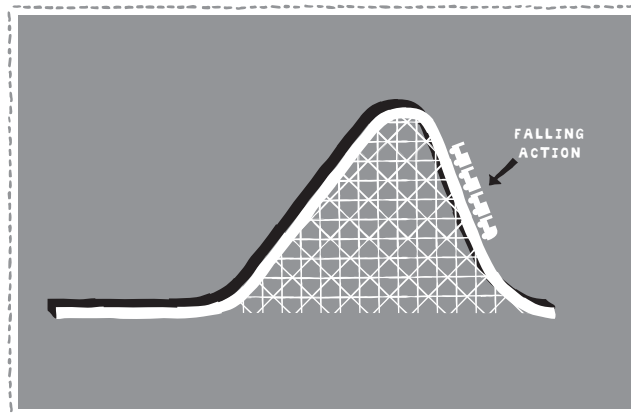
**Here is an example of a climax:**

The members of Crude Medicine take the stage in their new bright orange jumpsuits and white sunglasses. The audience cheers. Boris and Abigail wave to the crowd, and then Zach counts them in with a few clicks of his drumsticks.

As soon as Boris hits the first note on his guitar, they know that something is terribly wrong. His guitar sounds like a sick cat crying, and the bass doesn't sound much better.

Abigail begins to sing, but her voice sounds horrible. The band members all look around with expressions of total disbelief. An empty can of Rockstar energy drink is thrown at Abigail, and the audience starts booing until the show cuts to commercial break.

**The Falling Action**



**The high-speed drop**

The falling action is what happens next. It is the fast-paced, action-packed part of your novel. You're finally speeding down the tracks of the rollercoaster with your hands in the air! Does the antagonist get defeated? Do the protagonist's dreams finally come true? If so, how?

Keep in mind however that just because the falling action is fast-paced, it doesn't have to be over quickly. In some novels, the falling action actually takes place over whole chapters. What's important is that the action is paced to feel exciting whether it spans mere minutes or whole years of your characters' lives.

### Here is an example of falling action:

Crude Medicine, humiliated, exits stage right. None of them speak, but they all shoot suspicious glances at one another while the judges make their final decision.

"It's just so strange," Gill says. "They were doing so well."

"I told you chicks can't rock," Billy says. But before he can say another word, the stage manager runs out to the judges' table with a tape. Kendra pops it in the instant re-player and, lo and behold, it shows Billy messing with the band's equipment before the show.

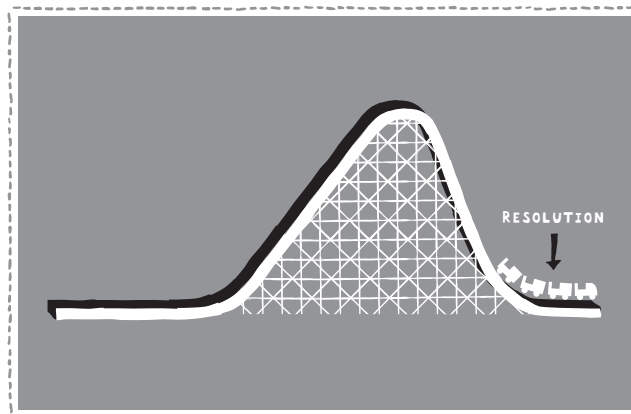
"I never . . ." Billy begins, but it is too late. Two beefy security guards carry him away.

Gill gets up on stage and the show goes live again.

"Sorry about that everyone, looks like Billy Van Carnage messed with Crude Medicine's equipment before they went on, so I would like to invite them back up for an encore."

The band plays, and there is no doubt in anyone's mind that they are the winners of *So You Think You Can Rock?* 2008.

### The Resolution (Also Sometimes Known as the "Conclusion")



#### Getting off the rollercoaster

The resolution, which is also sometimes known as the "conclusion" since it comes at the very end of your novel, is how things work out in the very end after your protagonist gets (or doesn't get) what he or she wants. It has been said by creative writing sages that your characters—especially your protagonist—must change over the course of the book. This change happens gradually as your character battles his or her fears, defeats villains, and forges friendships and relationships with a cast of amazing characters. All of these adventures will end up changing the way your main character sees the world and his or her place in it. Try to use the final scenes to highlight those changes.

### **An example of a resolution:**

Crude Medicine is playing an arena full of rabid fans. "Hello Detroit!" Boris yells. "It's good to be home!" He walks over to Abigail, and they high five, then kiss, and the crowd screams. "Let's rock!" Abigail says. The band plays, the crowd sings, and Boris looks just as comfortable on stage now as he did less than one year ago rocking out alone in his bedroom.



-----

**Now it's your turn to create your plot. Believe us, if you fill out this worksheet, noveling will be ten times easier in November. You don't have to describe everything that will happen in your novel here. This is just to help you get an idea about what'll happen in the beginning, middle, and end of your book.**

#### **1. Describe Your Set-Up**

In one to two paragraphs, describe a scene that introduces your characters, your setting, and the main conflicts in your story. You may want to review your Conflict Worksheet before you do this.

#### **2. Describe Your Inciting Incident**

In one paragraph, describe the event that causes your protagonist to begin his or her adventure.

#### **3. Describe Some of Your Rising Action:**

Write a list of five events that build up to the climax of your novel. Don't forget to include all of your supporting characters!

#### **4. Describe Your Climax:**

In one paragraph, describe what will happen in the climax of your novel.

#### **5. Describe Your Falling Action:**

In one to two paragraphs, describe what happens after the climax. Does your protagonist get what he or she wants? Does the antagonist get defeated? How?

#### **6. Describe Your Resolution:**

In one to two paragraphs, describe how everything works out in the very end. Is it a happy ending? Sad? Remember to show how your characters changed because of their journey.

-----

After you've finished your plot outline, you can take it one step further and fill out the blank "Plot Rollercoaster" on Page 26. To get an idea of how to use the blank rollercoaster, check out the example we've created on the next page.

# Example Plot Rollercoaster

Boris and Abigail leave for tryouts. Boris starts to fall for Abigail. crude Medicine make it onto the show. crude Medicine makes it to the final episode.

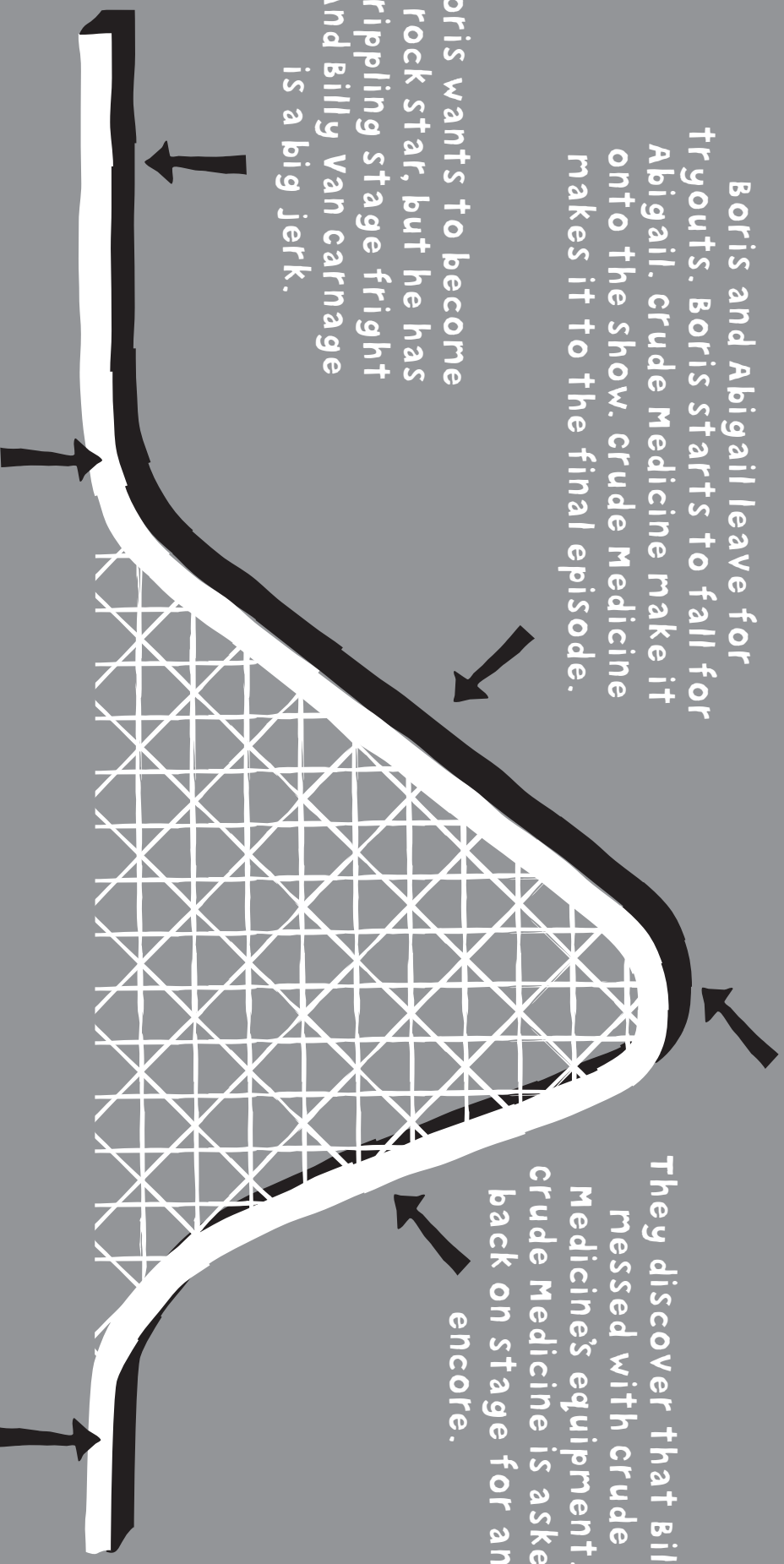
Boris wants to become a rock star, but he has crippling stage fright And Billy Van carnage is a big jerk.

crude Medicine goes on stage for their final performance. Their instruments are out of tune. They get forced off stage.

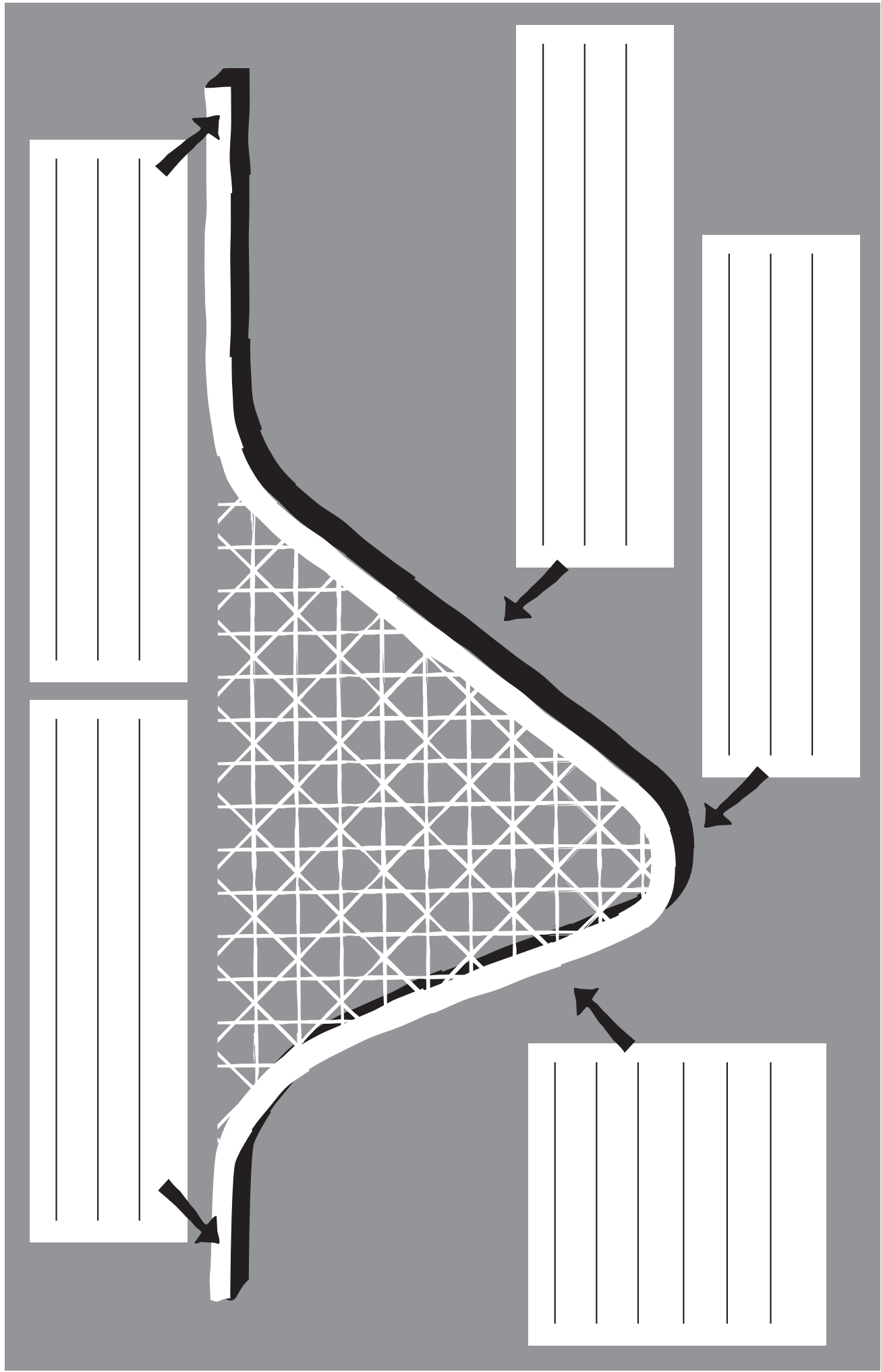
They discover that Billy messed with crude medicine's equipment. crude Medicine is asked back on stage for an encore.

Abigail invites Boris to stand in as crude Medicine's guitarist for the *So You Think You can Rock?* tryouts.

crude Medicine becomes a hugely popular rock band. Boris and Abigail get together. Boris has gotten over his stage fright.



# Plot Rollercoaster



## **FINAL NOTE ON PLOT!**

As you probably know, not all rollercoasters have the same track. They all have different hills and drops, twists and turns, and loops and tunnels. The same goes for novels. That is what makes them different and exciting. Sometimes they begin with the inciting incident or work backwards from the resolution to the beginning. Novels are filled with flashbacks, flash-forwards, and unexpected plot twists. And novels don't have to have happy endings either. Just like life, sometimes things don't work out exactly the way you planned them to. In November, experiment with the plot you create by thinking beyond the "typical one-hill rollercoaster" formula. Rearrange events, add some twists, and flip that resolution on its head. You'll be surprised at how much this can energize your story.



# Setting

## Settings That Reinforce Characters

Now that you have a good idea of what the plot of your novel is going to be, it's time to really nail down some of the settings. The setting is where and when your novel takes place. Of course, many novels have more than one setting, ranging from the general (a city, country, or world 100 years ago) to the specific (a character's house or room during the Superbowl). What's great about setting is that you can use it to mirror or reinforce your characters.

For example, if you are writing about a mysterious person, you might place him or her in a dark, creepy mansion on a hill outside of town. Or, if one of your characters is feeling trapped in his or her life, he or she might live in a small town in the middle of nowhere.

### **Here's us just telling you about Larry:**

Larry was having a hard time. He felt sad and trapped. He was once a famous author, but he hadn't written a word for years.

### **And here's us telling you about Larry, but *through* the space that he is living in:**

Larry's apartment was less of a living space than a glorified closet. The bathroom was just big enough to sit on the toilet without having his knees touch the sink, and the window was more like a ship's porthole. The bed was so small his feet hung over the edge, and there was really not much to do but watch static on the television. The sound of that static often kept Larry company late into the night.

The place did not have a kitchen, so he bought a camping hotplate to make his single-serving meals. He ate the same thing every night, but he did not seem to mind the monotony of his repeated dinner of rice, wilted spinach, and baked beans or the peculiar odor that the beans left on his sheets.

The only item on the wall of Larry's apartment was a framed, yellowed copy of the New York Times Best Seller list from 16 years ago. Larry's name was at the top of it. Below the newspaper clipping, on Larry's desk, sat an old, dusty typewriter and an even dustier stack of blank paper.

Larry doesn't even have to speak for himself; his apartment speaks for him.



**For each of the following characters, try to come up with a setting that will reflect or reinforce what you imagine about them. You'll start by thinking about characters we made up, and then move into writing about some of your own. As you write, try to be as detailed as possible. Don't forget colors, sounds, and even smells.**

A shy teenage girl who's starting to come out of her shell

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

A superhero who has lost his or her powers

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

A corrupt politician

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

An old, lonely woman

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Your protagonist

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Your antagonist

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

\_\_\_\_\_  
(supporting character's name)

---

---

---

---

---

---

\_\_\_\_\_  
(supporting character's name)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

\_\_\_\_\_  
(supporting character's name)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Settings That Enhance Mood

Settings are not only used to reinforce your characters, they can also enhance the different moods in your novel. A **mood** describes the emotional quality of something, whether it is a song, a painting or, in this case, a scene in your novel. **It might help to think of mood as the way you want someone to feel while reading your novel.**

If you wanted to create a creepy mood for a scene in your novel, you could start with something like:

*A one-eyed crow is picking at something on a branch of a dead tree in the yard, while a three-legged dog howls at the moon.*

These images remind us of dark, disturbing things, and show the reader that the scene of the novel is “creepy” without having to tell him or her directly.

**For each of the moods listed below, write some details about a setting that would be appropriate in creating that mood. Think of details about how that place looks, sounds, smells, and feels to visit. Try to write two or three sentences for each mood.**

Stressful

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Romantic

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Comfortable/peaceful

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Now make up three of your own “moods” and describe a setting that would go along with each one.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**The last step is to apply your new skills to your upcoming novel. If you mapped out your plot using the previous worksheet, take it out. For the following plot points, describe a setting that would fit the mood of that scene.**

Set-up

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Inciting incident

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

The climax

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

A selected scene in your falling action

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Resolution

---

---

---

---

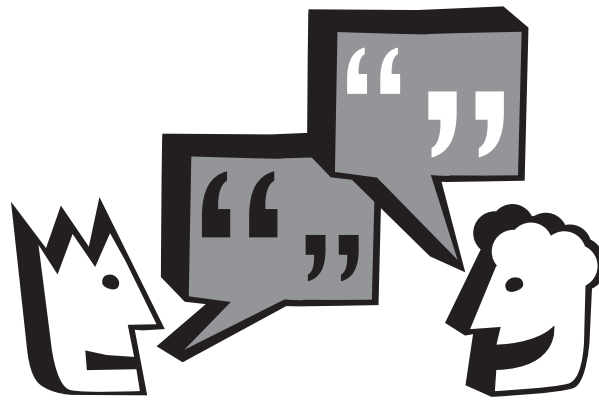
---

---

---

---

Great, now you have settings that enhance the different moods that are in your novel-to-be. You may want to keep this page close at hand and use it as you write your novel next month.



## Writing Really Good Dialogue

You're doing great! You've got some original characters, an action-packed plot, and some settings like no other. In fact, you're moving so fast we're having a hard time keeping up with you. Give us a minute so we can eat a delicious energy bar.

*(Cue sounds of delicious munching.)*

All right! Now all that's left is learning how to write dialogue. **Dialogue, as you probably know, is what happens when two or more characters speak to one another.** We experience dialogue all the time in our everyday lives.

**Here's some dialogue you might've heard today. Notice how the author indents each new quote and places quotation marks after the end marks:**

"Hey, dude. How are you?" Isobel said.  
"I'm really good. Thanks for asking. And you?" Gabe said.  
"Good, thanks," Isobel said.

Of course, this kind of dialogue is important. If we didn't say hello and ask people how they were doing, we might lose a lot of friends, fast. But in a novel, long scenes of daily dialogue end up being boring. Readers want to hear characters make interesting or exciting declarations, or challenge each other, or reveal the whereabouts of hidden treasure.

**In a novel, dialogue should do one, if not all, of the following:**

1. Reveal characters' relationships to one another.
2. Move the story forward.
3. Increase the tension.



It should also include indents and quotation marks in the right spots. You may have seen dialogue that does not follow this rule in other places, such as in a comic book or IM chat. When you write a novel, however, follow the rules so that readers won't get confused.



Here's a couple of example exchanges to illustrate each:

**Dialogue that shows the relationship between characters:**

"What's the capital of Spain?" Jerry asked, pausing over his crossword puzzle.

Susan looked up from her book and rolled her eyes. "Madrid, duh."

"Why are you so sarcastic all the time?"

Jerry slammed his pencil on table. He looked like he was going to cry. "I don't think I can take much more of this."

Jerry and Susan have a tense and unhappy relationship. It's clear from this exchange that they've probably known each other for a while, and that Susan treats Jerry with disrespect. Jerry's reaction to Susan in this exchange shows that he has been putting up with Susan's behavior for too long and is at his wit's end. We've learned about how these two characters interact—and a lot about who they are—all through a few simple lines of dialogue.

**"Dude, totally!"**

In your own novel, you might think about the ways an accent, some slang, or funny quirks of speech can really work to enhance and define your characters. A character that says "Shiver me timbers!" all the time is certainly a different person than a character that says "Dude, totally!"

**Dialogue that moves the story forward:**

The phone rang, and Jerry picked it up.

"Hello?"

There was a moment of silence on the other end.

"Is this Jerry Simmons?" a male voice asked.

"Yeah. Who is this?"

The man paused. Jerry could hear him take a deep breath.

"Jerry, my name is Dave. I'm your brother"

"If this is a prank, it isn't funny," Jerry said. "My family died a long time ago."

"Not your whole family," Dave said.

Jerry hung up the phone.

Right away, we want to know who this Dave guy is, if he's telling the truth, and why Jerry hung up on him. Basically, we want to know what will happen next. In fact, this is a great inciting incident. The discovery of a long-lost sibling is certain to move your story forward in interesting ways.

### Dialogue that increases the tension:

"Dave!" Jerry shouted. "We've got to get away from here! The building's gonna blow!"  
"We've got to go back!" Dave screamed.  
"Why?"  
Dave pointed at the roof. "Susan's still up there!"

Talk about tense. Are Dave and Jerry going to save Susan? It's a matter of life and death here, and this little exchange of dialogue has us wanting more.

### Dialogue Tags Other Than "Said":

acknowledged  
admitted  
agreed  
answered  
argued  
asked  
barked  
begged  
bellowed  
blustered  
bragged  
complained  
confessed  
cried  
demanded  
denied  
giggled  
hinted  
hissed  
howled  
interrupted  
laughed  
lied  
mumbled  
muttered  
nagged  
pleaded  
promised  
questioned  
remembered  
replied  
requested  
roared  
sang  
screamed  
screeched  
shouted  
sighed  
snarled  
sobbed  
threatened  
warned  
whimpered  
whined  
whispered  
wondered  
yelled

# Dramatic Dialogue Exercise

Think about some of the fascinating conversations you've overheard recently. What kept you tuned in as those people chattered on and on? Chances are, you learned a great deal about those people in just a few short moments and were left wanting to know more. You can do that with your novel dialogue, too!

**Start by writing a dramatic conversation, using two of the characters you've created for your novel. Here are some suggestions to get you going:**

- 1. Write a scene of dialogue that creates tension between your protagonist and a supporting character.**
- 2. Write a scene of dialogue where your antagonist reveals something to your protagonist.**
- 3. Write a scene of dialogue where a supporting character tells your protagonist something that will change the course of the protagonist's actions.**
- 4. Write a scene of dialogue that shows how a supporting character and your antagonist interact.**
- 5. Write a scene of dialogue that shows the relationship between your protagonist and your antagonist.**
- 6. Write a scene of dialogue that reveals a plot twist!**

Later, if you like what you've written, you can plop this dialogue right into your novel.

# **Getting Ready for NaNoWriMo**

# NaNoWriMo Survival Tips

Now that you know how to write a novel, you may be wondering how you write a novel in a month. We've put together a few ideas to help you get ready for your noveling adventure. First we would like to share with you our **Top Five NaNoWriMo Survival Tips**:

5. **Reward yourself.** Make sure you treat yourself right during November. Every time you reach a word-count milestone, give yourself a reward. You can reward yourself with naps, candy, video games, music, clothes, phone time, and/or anything that floats your boat. You are doing a brave thing, and you should reward yourself.

4. **Keep moving.** Get out of that chair and stretch your arms and legs. Do a couple of sit-ups or jumping jacks. Challenge your next-door neighbor to an arm-wrestling competition! Keeping your blood moving will keep the ideas flowing.

3. **Get plenty of sleep.** Just because you're writing a novel in a month doesn't mean you should neglect sleep. You might argue that your most creative hour is 4 AM, but without sleep, you won't have the energy to get through all 30 days. Besides, you never know what kind of interesting characters and settings your dreams might reveal.

2. **Borrow from your everyday life.** It is totally okay to borrow material from your life, and the lives around you. Professional novelists do this all the time, even if they don't admit it. In fact, writing about your life is a great idea if this is your first novel. Just remember to change the names before you let your best friends read it!

1. **Never say you "can't."** This is the most important thing to remember next month! There are no *can'ts* in month-long novel writing.

You can do it.

Remember that tens of thousands of people just like you write a novel in a month every year. No matter how busy you are, or how little you might know about writing a novel, you can finish. If you begin the month thinking you *can*, you are already way ahead of the game.

# National Novel Writing Month Contract

This is an agreement that lays out your rights and responsibilities as a novelist. Make sure that both you and a reliable teacher, parent, or friend sign this contract.

## NATIONAL NOVEL WRITING MONTH



I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby pledge my intent to write a \_\_\_\_\_  
-word novel in one month.

By invoking an absurd month-long deadline on such an enormous undertaking, I understand that notions of craft, brilliance, and competency are to be chucked right out the window, where they will remain, ignored, until they are retrieved for the editing process. I understand that I am a talented person, capable of heroic acts of creativity, and I will give myself enough time over the course of the next month to allow my innate gifts to come to the surface, untouched by self-doubt, self-criticism, and other acts of self-bullying.

During the month ahead, I realize I will produce clunky dialogue, clichéd characters, and deeply flawed plots. I agree that all of these things will be left in my rough draft, to be corrected at a later point. I understand my right to withhold my manuscript from all readers (except possibly my teacher) until I deem it complete. I also acknowledge my right as author to substantially inflate the quality of the rough draft and the rigors of the writing process, should such bragging prove useful in garnering me respect, attention, or freedom from household chores.

I acknowledge that the month-long, \_\_\_\_\_ - word deadline I set for myself is absolute and unchangeable, and that any failure to meet the deadline, or any effort on my part to move the deadline once the adventure has begun, will result in well-deserved mockery from friends and family. I also acknowledge that, upon successful completion of the stated writing objective, I am entitled to a period of gleeful celebration and revelry lasting days, if not weeks, afterward.

\_\_\_\_\_  
YOUR SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
TEACHER/PARENT'S/RELIABLE FRIENDS' SIGNATURE

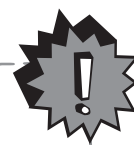
\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

# NaNoWriMo Calendar

Your word-count goal for the month may seem impossible from where you're sitting now. That's totally okay. Big creative projects like novel writing are daunting even for professional writers, but we're here to tell you a secret: **If you break big goals into a series of smaller goals, the impossible becomes doable. Easy, even.** To help make next month's challenge a piece of cake, we've come up with this NaNoWriMo Calendar.

It is best to set aside time each day to write, but be realistic. If you can only write three days a week because you have soccer practice, be sure to take that into consideration when filling in this calendar. Jot down the number of hours and words you plan on writing each day.

**Tip: If you want to find out just how many words you will need to write each day to make it to your word-count goal, divide your total goal by the number of days you've set aside for writing during the month. For example, if your word-count goal is 10,000, and you can make time to write on 20 days, you will need to write 500 words each day you've scheduled.**





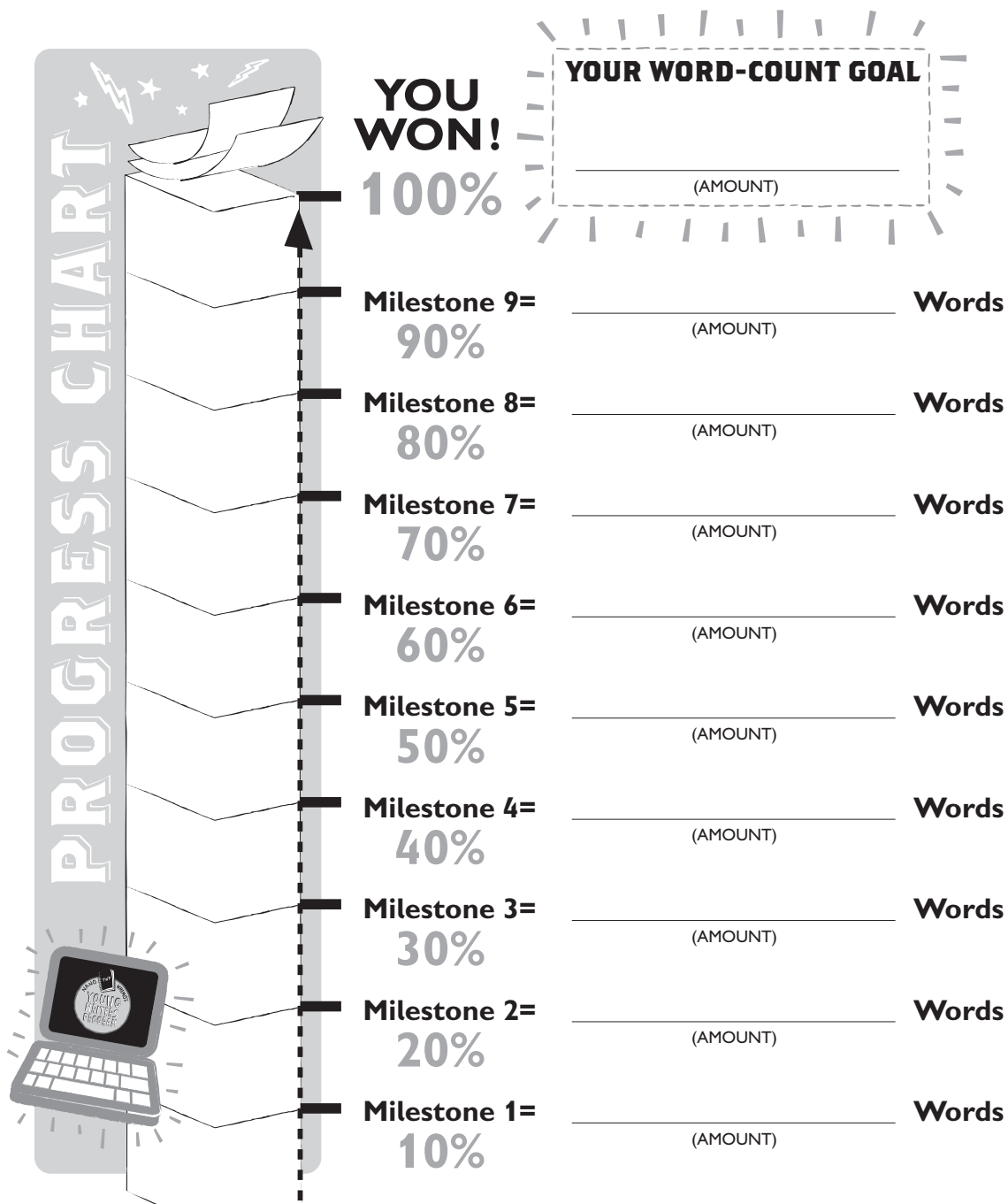


**Ready, Set,  
Write . . .  
And Keep Writing!**

# NaNoWriMo's Personal Chart of Noveling Progress

Write your word-count goal at the top of this page, and color this chart in as you make progress on your novel. To find out what each milestone should be, divide your total word-count goal by 10. This number will be how many words you have to write to reach the next milestone.

If your word-count goal is 10,000, you'll need to write 1,000 to reach the first milestone, then another 1,000 (or 2,000 total words) to reach the second milestone, and so on.



# Beginnings

Here you are, ready to start your novel. If you are feeling a little nervous, and the blank page and you are having a staring contest, don't worry. It's perfectly natural. Many novelists will tell you that figuring out the first few lines of a novel is the hardest part. That's because a lot is riding on those first lines. Have you ever picked up a novel, read the first page, and said to yourself, "Wow, this is the worst beginning of a book I have ever read. It's so boring, it hurts. I think I'll go ahead and read the whole thing"? We bet not.

Like we said at the end of the plot worksheet, there are several ways to start your novel. You can begin with the inciting incident or work backwards from the resolution to the beginning. Novels are filled with flashbacks, flash-forwards, and unexpected plot twists. So feel free to begin anywhere you like!



## You can:

- Start at the beginning.
- Start at your inciting incident.
- Start *in medias res* (in the middle of things).
- Start at the end.

## Start at the beginning

As you learned in the "Outlining Your Plot" worksheet, the beginning or set-up of your novel needs to introduce your characters and your conflicts. Starting a novel at the very beginning is a great way to ease your readers in. So many stories and fairy tales begin this way, that your readers will feel right at home in your story almost immediately.

Leaving was all Marrison could think about.  
Fallbrook would drive any teenage girl crazy. It was the kind of place where nothing ever really happened and, certainly, nothing ever changed.

**Try starting your novel at the beginning. Take out your plot worksheet and review your set-up. Make sure you include your protagonist in your beginning. You may also want to introduce your main conflict, and a supporting character or two.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Start with the inciting incident**

The inciting incident, as you know, is the moment that changes your protagonist's life and launches the book's adventure. Starting with this moment sucks your readers into your story, and leaves them wondering what will happen next.

When she woke up later that afternoon with a splitting headache, Marrison could only remember two things: one, someone dressed in an unfamiliar uniform had broken into her home; and two, that person had not been alone.

**Now try and begin with the inciting incident. Go back and review your inciting incident and then write a beginning to your novel that starts with this event.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Start *in medias res***

"*In medias res*" (pronounced en *med-ee-ya rez*) is Latin for "in the middle of things." It literally means starting your story right in the middle of the action, and then filling in the rest—explaining who the characters are and what got them into the mess they're in. A lot of suspense, mystery, and action novels begin *in medias res*. It's a great way to draw readers in and to make sure they stick around for all the details.

Marrissa stood face to face with General Fernandez—his fists clenched at his sides and an unforgiving look on his face. Marrissa wished she were back at home.  
Unfortunately, there was no home for her to return to.

**Start *in medias res*. Check out your rising action, falling action, and climax to see if there are any moments you might want to start with.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Start at the end**

This one is a bit tricky, but well worth a try! You basically reveal the ending to your readers, but leave just enough mystery and intrigue to keep them reading. Then, you can either work backwards to reveal just how that ending came about or jump to any other point of your novel and continue.

Though Marrissa’s home would never be the same after the war, she was glad to finally be back in Fallbrook. The burnt homes and storefronts, though barely recognizable, symbolized the end of one era, and the beginning of the next.

**Start at the end. Take a look at your resolution to see if it would make sense to begin at the end.**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Now, you have a bunch of beginnings to start with. Recopy your favorite one in your notebook or on your computer and start noveling.**

# Sub-plotting

*The More Plots, the Merrier*

A sure-fire way to guarantee that there is enough action in your novel to fill the pages, meet your word count, and keep your readers reading is to add subplots starring your supporting characters. Just like your protagonist and antagonist, your supporting characters have dreams, fears, and weaknesses of their own.

If your protagonist named Eddie is running for President of the United States, he may have a running mate named Gilda whose sole desire is to promote a "greener" environmental future, but her fear of becoming corrupted by power has her second-guessing her future as Vice President.

**Since you may have more than one supporting character, answer the following questions for each of them on a separate piece of paper. You may want to review the character questionnaires you filled out for your supporting characters before you do:**

More than anything in the world, \_\_\_\_\_ wants:  
Supporting character's name

But he/she is afraid of:

And his/her greatest weakness is:



Watching TV is a great way to learn about subplots. Shows like *The Simpsons* are filled with them. Episodes aren't always about Homer or Bart. Lisa, Marge, and even Maggie have adventures of their own that weave in and out of the main plot line. For this reason, we would like you to take a break from noveling and watch some TV. Don't get too excited though. You're not totally off the hook . . .

**You have to choose a fictional show—meaning no reality-TV shows—and it can't be a show you really like. Otherwise, you will get too lost in the episode to pay attention to the assignment. Which is to sit down in front of the tube, put your thinking cap on, and write down answers to the following questions in your notebook:**

1. Who is the protagonist?

2. How many supporting characters are there? Who are they? And how are they related to the protagonist?

3. What are the subplots? These are the plots that involve the supporting characters going after something they want. They may include the main character, but sometimes the protagonist has little to no connection to the subplot.

4. Do the supporting characters have their own antagonists? Or are they also battling the protagonist's antagonist?

5. What did you notice about the pace of action in the subplot? Was it fast? Slow? Did it happen all at the beginning, or was it spread out through the story?

-----

### **Bonus Exercise: One Antagonist Sometimes Just Isn't Enough**

To add even more conflict to your subplots, create secondary antagonists. Is one of your supporting characters having trouble with an evil school security guard or your antagonist's best friend?

**If you would like to add more drama to your story, create a secondary antagonist for a supporting character or two. You can do this by turning back to that handy "Character Questionnaire" and completing it for each new antagonist.**

Anytime you feel stuck or bored with your protagonist, go see what your supporting characters are up to. You can totally switch gears and follow their journeys whenever you'd like. Maybe they'll run into your protagonist, maybe they won't. No matter what happens, we promise that all kinds of unexpected things will unfold each time you explore a subplot.



# Details, Details, Details

The noveling has begun. You've been writing like a mad person and we commend you for it. Even if you had a great start, you may now be wondering how to keep your word count from waning. One of the easiest ways to get your word count soaring and give your readers description they'll never forget is by adding more **concrete details** to your novel.



**Concrete details are those details in your novel that come right out of your five senses.**



1. Taste



2. Touch



3. Smell



4. Sight



5. Hearing

“The storm was bad. The boat was about to capsize.” = 10 words

“The sound of the storm was deafening, and the metallic taste of bile filled my mouth as I ran frantically back down the stairs to my flooded cabin with an empty bucket. The wind had taken the sail, and three of my best men, and it took all I had not to give up completely.

I carried another bucket of water up the stairs and onto the deck. Both my feet had gone numb from the cold, so it was even more of a struggle to keep my balance as the boat swayed and dipped.

‘Captain, we’re about to capsize,’ Tom shouted over the wind.

He was right, but as their captain, I had to keep trying until the bitter end.”

= 117 words

**Below, we've listed a few things that could use some spicing up in the detail department. We've also provided you with some cool Word Banks with very impressive synonyms. In the spaces provided, answer the questions for each of the following items, using your senses and our Word Banks to make your descriptions come alive on the page.**

## The first day of school

What does it feel like to be back at school?

---

---

---

---

---

What does it smell like?

---

---

---

---

---

---

What do the halls look like?

---

---

---

---

---

---

What sounds stand out?

---

---

---



### Word Bank for "Nice"

delightful, kind,  
likable, pleasant,  
charming,  
agreeable,  
gratifying, lovely,  
friendly, appealing,  
gracious,  
polite, amiable,  
congenial,  
affable, benign,  
comely, suitable,  
respectable,  
proper

---

---

---

What does your lunch taste like?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**A rock concert**

What does it feel like?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What does it smell like?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Word Bank for  
“Interesting”**

captivating,  
compelling,  
entertaining,  
stimulating,  
intriguing,  
fascinating,  
absorbing,  
engaging,  
enchanted,  
challenging,  
attractive,  
gripping,  
riveting,  
enthralling,  
exhilarating,  
mesmerizing,  
noteworthy,  
striking,  
significant

What do you see?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What does it sound like?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**An abandoned house**

How does it make you feel?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What does it smell like?

---

---

---



**Word Bank for  
“Funny”**

hilarious, comical,  
humorous, weird,  
curious, droll,  
absurd, ridiculous,  
silly, witty,  
side-splitting,  
laughable, odd,  
peculiar, ludicrous,  
riotous, hysterical,  
uproarious,  
slapstick, zany



**Word Bank for  
“Bad”**

poor,  
unsatisfactory,  
ghastly,  
dreadful,  
terrible,  
appalling,  
horrific, awful,  
unacceptable,  
disappointing,  
substandard,  
atrocious,  
abominable,  
loathsome,  
offensive,  
shoddy, dire,  
disastrous,  
grave, ominous

What do you see inside?

What do you hear?

**Bonus Exercise: The NaNoWriMo Description Challenge**

The following things are a little more difficult to describe, but not impossible. If you can describe the following using all your senses, you will have no problem reaching your word count this November.

**A blank white wall**

Taste:

---

---

Touch:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Smell:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sight:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sound:

---



**Word Bank for  
“Good”**

excellent,  
superior,  
outstanding,  
tremendous,  
fantastic, terrific,  
exemplary,  
desirable,  
beneficial,  
advantageous,  
favorable, decent,  
superlative,  
proficient,  
marvelous, useful,  
exceptional,  
incredible,  
altruistic, angelic

---

---

---

---

---

**Embarrassment**

Taste:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Touch:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Smell:

---

---

---

---

---



**Word Bank for  
“Evil”**

deplorable,  
malevolent,  
wicked, immoral,  
depraved,  
corrupt,  
degenerate,  
diabolical,  
heinous, sinister,  
sinful, reprobate,  
monstrous,  
fiendish, infernal,  
demonic,  
malicious, hateful,  
iniquitous,  
nefarious

Sight:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sound:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Happiness**

Taste:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Touch:

---



**Word Bank for  
“Fun”**

amusing,  
enjoyable,  
pleasurable,  
festive,  
recreational,  
exciting,  
playful, merry,  
entertaining,  
appealing,  
mirthful, jovial,  
cheerful,  
celebratory, jollity,  
convivial, gay,  
jocular, animated,  
gleeful



---

---

---

---

---

Smell:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sight:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sound:

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



**Word Bank for  
“Awesome”**

brehtaking,  
amazing,  
remarkable,  
extraordinary,  
outstanding,  
incredible,  
magnificent,  
wonderful,  
superb,  
fantastic, grand,  
astonishing,  
majestic, notable,  
phenomenal,  
stupendous,  
spectacular,  
unparalleled,  
supreme, striking

## Waking up from a bad dream

Taste:

---

---

---

---

---

---

Touch:

---

---

---

---

---

---

Smell:

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sight:

---

---



### Word Bank for "Stupid"

unintelligent,  
vacuous, inane,  
foolish, dimwitted,  
imbecilic,  
moronic,  
senseless,  
dense, ignorant,  
idiotic, doltish,  
simpleminded,  
nescient, obtuse,  
imperceptive,  
absurd, inept,  
preposterous

---

---

---

---

Sound:

---

---

---

---

---

**The universe!**

Taste:

---

---

---

---

---

---

Touch:

---

---

---

---

---

---

Smell:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sight:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sound:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Does your brain hurt? We thought it might. Try and describe that!

**Your hurting brain**

Taste:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Touch:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Smell:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sight:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sound:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

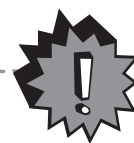
Stupendous job! If you ever feel like your word count is waning, be sure to use your senses and add a lot of concrete details.

# Lists, Lists, and Lists of Lists

*“When walking into Boris’ bedroom, you might think the guy had more guitars than Jimi Hendrix. He had every Fender, Epiphone, Gibson, Gretch, Yamaha, Ibanez, Washburn, Takamine, Ovation, Martin, Guild, and off-brand guitar you could think of. He had beautiful, hand-made acoustic guitars, rock-your-socks-off electric guitars, and everything in between.*

*In the corner of his bedroom, there was a shrine built around a very special guitar. The first one he had ever owned. The day he finally saved enough money to buy it was the best day of his life so far.”*

Oh hey, we were just doing one of our favorite noveling activities—taking the items from a list we made called "All the Guitars in Boris’ Bedroom" and putting them right into our novel.



**Lists are great because they do a lot of things at once:**

1. They help us discover new things about our characters.
2. They reveal plot twists.
2. They help boost word counts (always a plus!).

**You can use the suggested list topics below in many different ways. Here are a few ideas:**

1. You can write out the lists in your notebook to see if you discover anything interesting to add to your novel. You may discover something new about your characters or plot that will take your novel in a new direction.
2. You can take the items from your lists and write them into your novel as full sentences just like we’ve done in the example above.
3. You can just read the list of suggested lists below and see if any of them spur new ideas and write from there.

Whichever way you choose to do it, make sure to let your brain loose and just write. You may discover something totally unexpected, like a portal to the fourth dimension in a character’s closet, or more about the best day of your protagonist’s life.

**Write as many of the following lists in your notebook. You can apply these list prompts to *any* or *all* of your characters. The more characters you apply them to, the more you might discover.**



## A List of Lists

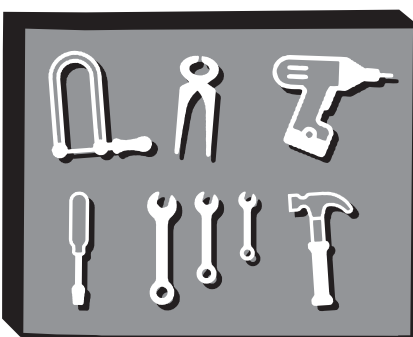
- Things about this character that no one knows
- Things in this character's room
- Hidden things in this character's room
- Undiscovered places in this character's town
- Things this character collects
- Things that fascinate this character
- Things that embarrass this character
- Things that disgust this character
- Things in this character's refrigerator right now
- This character's bad habits
- What this character daydreams about
- What other people say about this character behind his or her back
- Things that make this character nostalgic
- Things this character might include in a time capsule
- Things this character dreams about while sleeping
- Things this character carries in his or her pockets or purse
- Things this character obsesses over
- Things this character plans to do in his or her lifetime

### **Bonus Exercise**

If you like lists and you finish with these, come up with your own list of lists. Anytime you get stuck during NaNoWriMo, take out your list of lists and get writing. A list prompt like “Things my protagonist wants to eat this very moment” may help you get out of a rut and get your story moving again. . . to the taco truck!



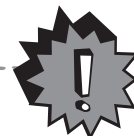
# **I Wrote a Novel! Now What?**



## The Workshop

Today is a great day for your novel, because today your novel will be read for the first time by one of your peers. Fortunately, that person is also a novelist. He or she knows exactly what you've been through in the last month and will have a lot of useful insight into your work. Unfortunately, this does not mean your work is finished. Your fellow novelist will have questions, comments, and maybe even complaints about what you've written so far. You'll need to consider these and make decisions about what to change.

Below are guidelines you and this fellow novelist—your workshop partner—will follow as you read one another's novels.



- **Read through your partner's draft once without writing comments.** Skim quickly to get an idea of what the story's about and who some of the characters are. Then read it again more carefully.
- **Forget about grammar, spelling, and how you would say something if it were your novel.** Today, focus on the content of the story—the characters, the events, the setting, and the awesome writing techniques your partner used that you've never seen before.
- **Take time to write specific comments about words, sentences, or whole sections that you really like.**
- **Ask lots of questions.** If something doesn't make sense, ask. If you need more detail about a character, ask. If you just want to know how your partner came up with a word, phrase, or idea, ask about it!
- **Be kind—and specific—as you point out things that just aren't "working."** "I lost interest by the end of this paragraph because it's so long" is much more constructive than "I don't like this paragraph."
- **Keep the criticism between you and your partner.** No one else needs to hear about all the typos you noticed in so-and-so's novel!

To get a clearer idea of what “helpful” feedback looks like, compare these two paragraphs.

### Not So Helpful

Garth clutched the rail struggling to steady him. Earlier, the captain had assured him that the storm would die down by nightfall. But as the last traces of daylight faded on the horizon, winds picked up and the sea growled ferociously. The ship seemed to moan as brutal waves pounded the deck.

?????

Cool

Suddenly, wind blew salty spray onto Garth’s face. He wiped his eyes with one free hand and squinted to regain his vision. That’s when he saw it: in the distance, another ship moved towards them.

“Burgess’s men are approaching!” Garth cried. “I’d recognize that dastardly ~~evil~~ vessel anywhere!”

not clear

The main problem with these comments is that, like a dull novel, they lack detail. The reader did not explain in his or her margin comments what he or she found confusing, cool, or unclear. The reader also did not give any clues as to why he/she crossed out the word “evil.” These comments do not give the writer a lot of concrete guidance to go on.

Now check out the comments below.

### More Helpful

Garth clutched the rail struggling to steady him. Earlier, the captain had assured him that the storm would die down by nightfall. But as the last traces of daylight faded on the horizon, winds picked up and the sea growled ferociously. The ship seemed to moan as brutal waves pounded the deck.

The wording here is hard to follow

I love how you make the sea and ship sound alive

Suddenly, wind blew salty spray onto Garth's face. He wiped his eyes with one free hand and squinted to regain his vision. That's when he saw it: in the distance, another ship moved towards them.

"Burgess's men are approaching!" Garth cried. "I'd recognize that dastardly evil vessel anywhere!"

*Delete this word -- repetitive*

*Who is Garth talking to? Explain.*

The comments here are more helpful because they are more specific. Now the writer knows what he or she needs to revise, as well as what he or she is already doing well.

# Reader Review Worksheet

Take out your workshop partner's draft and fill in the blanks below. And remember, be specific! Return this sheet to your partner when you are done.

Your workshop partner's name:

---

Novel Title: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Based on the beginning, what do you think this novel is about?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Who is the most important character so far? What is he or she like?

---

---

---

---

---

3. How could your partner improve his or her first line and paragraph to grab readers?

---

---

---

---

---

4. Where is the story set? What other details about the setting/settings would you like to know?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5. Where else can your partner add more details to tell what things look, sound, smell, or even feel like?

---

---

---

---

6. List three things you really like about your partner's work so far.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

7. List three things your partner can work on as he or she revises.

---

---

---

---

---

# Unleash Your Inner Editor

Your Inner Editor is *almost* ready to get to work. You've gotten some helpful editing notes from classmates, but your classmates were not able to read your whole novel—so you still need more information. For example, does your novel's organization make sense? Do you use enough dialogue throughout? This worksheet will help you make a plan for revising your whole novel, not just the first few pages.

Start by recalling all the hopes and dreams you had as you wrote your first draft. What was your goal in writing? Another way to think about this is to ask yourself what you hope readers will think or feel after reading your novel

## Here are some example goals:

"I want to move people to understand the potential impact of climate change."

"I want to change the reader's view of punk rock culture."

"I want to show that love really does conquer all."

"I want to make people laugh until they cry."

"I want to show that money isn't everything."

**Write your goal below, using a complete sentence:**

## My Goal for My Novel:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Now use the novel draft you've got with you, as well as your own recollections from writing, to fill out each section below. And keep that goal you wrote on the last page in mind; it will help keep you focused when you start to feel overwhelmed by details.

*Note: You may notice that none of the questions below have to do with grammar or typos. You and your Inner Editor will fix those absolutely last, after you've revised your novel in every other way.*

## I. Organization

1. Is your novel organized in chapters? If so, how did you decide where to make chapter breaks? If you didn't use chapters, why not?

---

---

---

---

2. Find and read a few transitions between chapters and/or between settings/scenes. Describe some transitions—or links—you created between chapters and/or events to make the organization clear.

---

---

---

---

3. Name three places in your novel where readers might get confused about the order of events.

- ---
- ---
- ---

4. Name three changes you plan to make as you revise your novel for organization. These changes could be big (moving whole chapters) or small (adding a scene at the end of chapter two to make the flow of events clearer).

- ---
- ---
- ---





## II. Voice and Writing Style

1. How would you describe your writing style? Tell how the words and sentences in your novel might sound if read aloud (such as dramatic, dark, simple, minimalistic, stark, dry, funny and light hearted, wordy and highly intellectual, etc.).

---

---

2. Skim through your novel, stopping to read up to five paragraphs, each in a different section of your book. Are all the paragraphs written in the same style? If not, what happened?

---

---

---

---

3. Name three changes you plan to make as you revise your novel for voice and writing style. These changes could be big (not using monster SAT words in every single sentence) or small (not using the word “confabulation,” ever).

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## III. Plot and Conflict

1. In three sentences or fewer, describe the plot of your novel.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. In one sentence, describe the conflict in your novel.

---

---

---

---

3. Think about how you plotted your inciting incident, rising action, and so on. Did you stick to your plan when writing? Does the plot still unfold in a way that makes sense? If not, write about the places your plot wandered.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. Name three changes you plan to make so your novel's plot and conflict are clearer.

- ---
- ---
- ---



#### IV. Literary Devices that Make Your Novel Fun to Read

1. A literary device is any kind of special trick an author—such as yourself—uses to make a story more dramatic or fun to read. What devices did you use in your novel? First complete the list below with features you like to see in novels, such as suspense, humor, surprises, dialogue that shows without telling, details about settings and characters, interesting sub-plots, flashbacks, flash-forwards, or plot twists. Once you write your list of tricks you like, circle all the listed items *you* used in one color and the ones you did not use in a different color.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name three ways you plan to revise your novel to improve the dialogue, sensory detail, sub-plots, or any of the other devices you listed above. These changes could be big (tell the whole story backwards!) or small (have your characters crack a joke every once in a while).

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

-----

Okay, now you have a plan for revising your novel. Let that Inner Editor loose!

# Cleaning It Up

All month, we've told you to focus on getting your words on paper. "Don't worry if it's not perfect," we've repeated. "Write as much as possible," we've reminded. Now we take it all back! Well, not really, but here's the deal. You've worked really hard on this novel, and while it doesn't have to be perfect, you also don't want it to be full of typos and grammatical errors.

No matter how you slice it, mistakes really distract readers' attention away from your brilliant story. And who knows what you may do with this novel in the future? Maybe you'll submit it to a contest. Maybe you'll try to get it published. If so, you're going to have to do the dreaded deed anyway: proofreading.

---

**Below are a few areas where writing can get messy. Read the description of each writing woe then grab your very best red pen and clean up the messy sentences!**

## Tricksters

First, check your spelling. But don't think you can count on your computer's spell check. Spell check won't pick up on tricky words that sound alike, such as *they're* and *there*. You've got to use your own brain to find those mistakes!

Mark put his foot on the gas pedal and imagined an egg under the soul of his shoe. That's what his driving instructor had told him to do. Today, Mark wasn't about to keep that pretend egg hole. He imagined smashing the shell and watching the yoke oozing onto the floor mat as he peeled out of the driveway. "Their never going to find me," he said out loud.

### Make Your Mark!

^ insert

ƒ delete

∩ switch

◉ period

^ comma

∩ quotation marks

¶ start new paragraph

### **Punctuation Trepidation**

Yes, we'll remind you. Use correct capitalization and commas, semicolons, and quotation marks correctly. Your reader will get lost if you don't!

Mark knew that he had no time to spare if he was going to have a future with melanie he had to get to the party before she found out what had happened. He took a left on beach road and saw the bonfire ahead but couldn't see her she was gone Melanie it's Mark he cried out.

### **Pick and Stick**

It is important to stay with one verb tense. There are times when you may have to switch (dialogue, flashbacks) but for the most part, pick a tense and stick to it.

Sparks from the bonfire dance around in the night sky. Mark approached the crowd. He scans the group and tried to find Melanie.

### **We Agree**

Make sure all your subjects and verbs agree. Don't forget to check your pronouns!

Finally he spotted she near the water. The profile of her face were unmistakable. She had a quirky ski-jump nose. She thought it made her ugly. However, Mark knew every guy at school would want her to be they girlfriend.

### **Keep It Active**

Make sure every sentence has a clear subject that the reader can easily visualize. Avoid using feelings or ideas as subjects; use characters instead. This is called using the "active voice." The subjects always "acts" in active voice.

As Mark was approached by Melanie, the shore was struck by waves while Mark was struck by his overwhelming nervousness.

### **Mix It Up!**

Have you ever heard the phrase "variety is the spice of life"? It's true for sentences, too. Keep your writing interesting by using different sentence lengths and types. It's a good idea to combine sentences with repetitive words or phrases. Often, just adding a semicolon or a connecting word like "and" will do the job!

He took a step forward. He opened his mouth. Nothing came out. He looked down at the sand. Melanie began to speak.

**Look at the beginning of a novel below. It's got promise, but it's also got some major problems. Wield thy mighty editorial pen!**

My ancestors came from planet earth. My great-great-grandfather lives in a place they called new york city. Pictures I have show that it was a huge city with very tall buildings. We don't build up hear on Genesis. We build underground. Its because of the night-fliers. A skyscraper wouldn't last for long here. It would be torched to the ground in a nanosecond. My father reminded me of the danger just last night.

Don't ever leave the compound he said banging his fist on the table.

If he knew what I have planned for tonight he would lock me in my room?

**Now be your own world-class editor. Apply this checklist to your own novel.**

## Inner Editor Proofreading Checklist



- Every sentence begins with a capital letter.
- Every proper noun begins with a capital letter.
- Every sentence has the correct end mark.
- I use other punctuation marks, including semicolons, correctly.
- I use a variety of sentence types and lengths.
- I use a consistent verb tense.
- All my subjects and verbs agree.
- All my pronouns agree.
- I combined sentences where I could.
- My sentences are written in a clear, active voice.
- I have checked my spelling.
- I have really checked my spelling and looked for tricky words.

After you check off all of the following, and you feel good about your book, go to the "Resources" section on the NaNoWriMo YWP site (<http://ywp.nanowrimo.org>) for opportunities to publish your book, submit to contests, and continue your brilliant writing career!

# Choosing an Exceptional Excerpt

Congratulations on completing your novel and getting it ready for publication! Hopefully, you've read your manuscript plenty of times while editing and rewriting. Now it's time to let others in on your hard work.

**The Bad News:** Most literary publications that print teen writing aren't able to include your *whole* novel. Can you imagine if they got a manuscript from every high schooler who wrote for NaNoWriMo? They would be overwhelmed!

**The Good News:** Those same publications are very willing and excited to publish *excerpts*—short sections—from your novel. This worksheet is a guide for how to pick the best excerpts to submit and—fingers crossed—get published. (If you're still bummed about the bad news, talk to your teacher or check the NaNoWriMo website for resources to self-publish or submit your entire manuscript.)



**In the most general sense, a good excerpt should represent your novel at its best.** It should be concise but intriguing; in the best case, it makes the reader want to know more about your plot and characters. Here are some of the traits of an excerpt that really **CALLS** out to publishers and readers:

**Character** - Remember that readers are most interested in original, well-developed characters. They want people they can love, hate, relate to, and so on. So be sure your excerpt includes a strong sense of at least one major character.

**Action** - Choose a part of your story where something important, crazy, mysterious, sad, funny happens. In other words, think about an event in your novel that really stands out. Chances are it will also stand out in an excerpt!

**Language** - You've worked hard on the language in your novel. You've crafted great dialogue and description, and used imagery, metaphors, and similes to put pictures in the reader's mind. What part makes you say, "Wow, I love my language here"?

**Length** - A good, publishable length for an excerpt is generally between 1,000 and 5,000 words (2–10 pages, if your manuscript is double-spaced). Don't worry if you go over or under a little.

**Stands on Its Own** - Readers may be confused if you choose an excerpt that doesn't make sense without knowing the rest of the story, or a part with too much description. Think of the excerpt as a mini-novel, with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Use the space below to brainstorm a few sections or chapters that might make good excerpts. List three different options, including page numbers for where each excerpt should start and end. What makes each option publication-worthy? Explain in your notes.

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Writing a Superior Submission Letter

In order for publishers to consider printing part of your novel, you need to give them some context and background information about what you're sending. Do this by writing a good "submission letter." **A submission letter is a brief note to an editor giving him or her an idea of who you are and what your work is about.** It doesn't have to be long—just enough to intrigue the editor to read your excerpt.

Consider the important components of a good submission letter, described below. If you have ever written a formal letter, some of these will already be familiar to you! (We've also set this section up as a checklist so that as you write your own letter, you can check to make sure you've included each section.)



**Heading** - This is where you give your name, home or school address, and the date you're sending the letter. (Ask your teacher for a model of how to format these if you're unfamiliar with standard letter writing.) Also include your phone number or e-mail address; this is often the easiest way for editors to contact you.

**Greeting** - "Official" letters don't start with "Dear So-and-So," as you might normally write to your aunt or grandmother. Instead, they simply say the editor's name—"Mr. Jones," "Ms. Jefferson," etc.—with a colon at the end. If you can't find the editor's name, you can use "To Whom It May Concern."

**Background Info** - Tell the editor your name, age, school, and any other information he or she may want to know. You might want to mention NaNoWriMo, too, since many publishers who print teen writing will be familiar with it.

**Novel Info** - Provide the editor with a brief description of your novel. It shouldn't be too detailed—about two or three sentences at most. You may have already done this before you started editing! Check page 79 in your workbook.

**Request** - Here's where you say why you're writing. State very clearly that you are including an excerpt to possibly be printed in the publication. Most editors will know the reason for your letter, but it doesn't hurt to be obvious.

**Excerpt Info** - Discuss the specific excerpt that you have chosen to submit. Include the estimated word count, what happens in the section, and how it fits into the novel as a whole. Close this section by giving yourself a compliment: tell the editors why you think it's a good excerpt. Often, they'll agree.

**Closing** - Politely remind the editor why you've written, and be sure to say thanks for his or her time. This can go a long way! Sign your letter with "Sincerely" and your name.

Now take a look at the parts of a superior submission letter in action:

Heading

Sally Student  
3354 Adeline St.  
Berkeley, CA 94703  
sally.student@gmail.com

Greeting

To Whom It May Concern:

Background Info

My name is Sally Student, and I am a ninth grader at Coliseum College Prep High School in Oakland, CA. This November, my class participated in National Novel Writing Month, a nationwide event where students write their own novels. Recently, I completed my book, *Space Case*. It is about a 14-year-old girl named Jessica who is recruited to be part of NASA's "young astronauts" program. She has a tough time in training camp, but overcomes her obstacles to become the youngest passenger ever on a space mission.

Novel Info

Request

Excerpt info

I am submitting an excerpt from *Space Case* to possibly be included in *The Sci-Fi Teen Journal*. The excerpt is about 3,000 words, and is about the first time Jessica tries the "motion sickness" simulator. She has a terrible time, but realizes she cannot give up. I think it is a great example for kids, and it's a very interesting, action-packed part of my novel.

Closing

Please consider printing my excerpt. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,  
Sally Student

It's finally your turn! Draft your submission letter below using the checklist on page 87 as a guideline. You can even lay that sheet, or the example letter, right next to this one if it helps you remember what to write.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Terrific. Now your first draft is complete. You're ready to make any little edits and proofread it—you remember how to do all that, right?—pop it in a stamped envelope with your excerpt, and voila! You're on your way to publishing success!