

November is National Novel Writing Month!

www.nanowrimo.org

November Spawned (2007)

A Novel Writing Handout

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

Your novel's title here!

Space for a drawing!

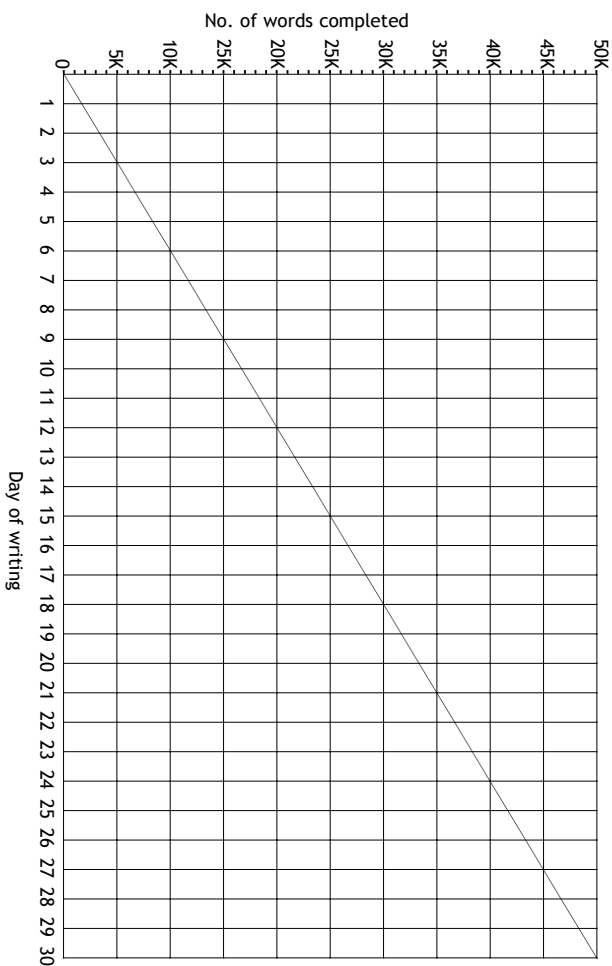
Your name here!

My Novel	2	NANOwRiMo Mechanics	17
Characters and Relationships	4	Previous Years in	
Timeline	6	Birmingham	18
Maps	8	This Year's Plans	18
Random Character Generator	10	Novel-Writing Hints and Tips	19
Unstucker	12	Useful Websites	21
Notes	14	Novelling Progress	22
Check This (Later On)	16	Writing Achievements	23

My Novel

Title	_____	Pre-planning (% or description)	_____
Genre	_____	Influences	_____
Theme	_____	Music to Write By	_____
Movie tagline	_____	Years Taken Part	_____
Protagonist's Name	_____	Years Won	_____
Protagonist's Goals	_____	Note to self	_____
Protagonist's Catchphrase or Motto	_____	Encouragement from friend or loved one	_____
Antagonist's Name	_____		_____
Antagonist's Goal	_____		_____
Antagonist's Catchphrase or Motto	_____		_____

© 2006, 2007 Stephen Theaker and John Greenwood. Thanks to Ranjita Theaker, Annika Feilbach and Sam Colenette for corrections and suggestions. Permission to make unlimited copies for non-commercial use granted. If just an extract is being reproduced, please credit "November Spawmed: a Novel Writing Handout (2006)". This is not an official publication of National Novel Writing Month - it is a unofficial local handout, and all opinions within are those of the authors alone.



Writing Achievements

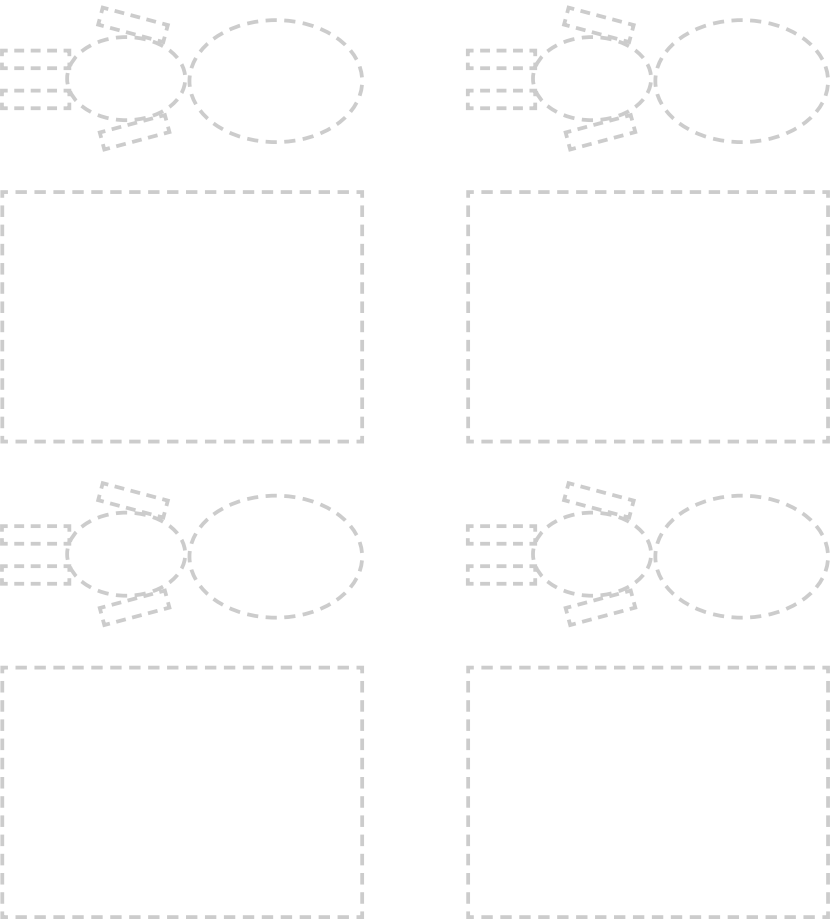
- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quadruple Figures!
1,000 words | <input type="checkbox"/> Two Thirds Done!
33,333 words | <input type="checkbox"/> Ninja Focus!
1,667 words without getting up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekend Warrior!
3,000 words in a weekend | <input type="checkbox"/> Almost There!
40,000 words | <input type="checkbox"/> The Great Concluder!
Bring your novel to a conclusion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One Third Done!
16,666 words | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Scriber!
1,000 words at a write-in | <input type="checkbox"/> All Downhill Now!
25,000 words - halfway point |



Characters and Relationships

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

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



Useful Websites

www.nanowrimo.org

The home of National Novel Writing Month. Sign up to take part in novel-writing during November! Watch out too for official spin-offs from the main event - one devoted to scriptwriting took place for the first time in 2007 (see www.scriptfrenzy.org).

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

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

<http://spacejock.com>

Home of ywriter², free novel-writing software that comes highly recommended by a lot of November novelists.

www.openoffice.org

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

www.wikipedia.org

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

<http://writing.teiru.net>

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

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/temptblocker>

Visit here to download Temptation Blocker - choose the programs likely to tempt you during writing hours, say how long you

want to work for, and it'll stop you accessing them till you're done.

www.nanowrimo.org/eng/forum/188

The Nano Technology section of the NanoWrimo forums is where I first heard of the Dvorak keyboard, the Temptation Blocker, the Alphasmart, and so on.

www.peltorro.com

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

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

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

www.silveragebooks.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/shortschafes/shortschafes2007.htm

The Short Story Challenge for Earthlings! Write a story a day for as many days as you can - set a high score!

www.birminghamwords.co.uk

Birmingham Words is a great place to go to keep up with literary activity in our city.

www.lulu.com

Lulu offers a free book offer to Nanowrimo participants, but that makes it easy to ignore how good it is in so many other ways - basically it lets you publish your book without it costing you any money! If you need any help formatting your book for publication, or with doing a cover, just email me (Stephen/Rolinkov) at silveragebooks@blueyonder.co.uk, or talk to me at one of the meet-ups. Typesetting a novel only takes about twenty minutes, and I'd be happy to help you out.

Chatterboxes

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

Block the internet

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

Build up a good rhythm

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

Weekends

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

Keep your momentum high!

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

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

A meal a day

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

Support

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

Word can help

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

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

What about next year?

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



Timeline

Novel-Writing Hints and Tips

The most important tip of all

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

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

Try and write regularly

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

Attend your local meet-ups

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

Ignore the nay-sayers!

Be ready to fight to the death anyone who

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

Names don't matter

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

Turn off the TV

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

Previous Years in Birmingham

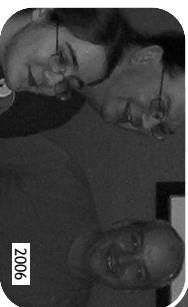
The first meet-ups in Birmingham took place in 2003, when Nottingham uber-ML Raeble, at that point effectively the ML for all of England outside

London, flew in to meet up. A couple of people were there, but I'm afraid we don't have photos of this historic event.

The following year, in 2004, a small group met up regularly at the Martineau Place Starbucks, with almost all of them finishing their novels, followed by very boozy (at least on the ML's part) TGIO drinks at the Malt House by the canal.

In 2005 a much larger group met for a kick-off meeting at the same pub, followed by a number of excellent write-ins at Starbucks on New St and a not-so-excellent TGIO at Bacchus - it was too busy and there was nowhere for anyone to sit.

2006 was the best year yet. A kick-off party at O'Neills in the Arcadian Centre was followed by a series of very successful write-ins at Starbucks, and we ended it all by booking into Pizza Hut as a Christmas Party.

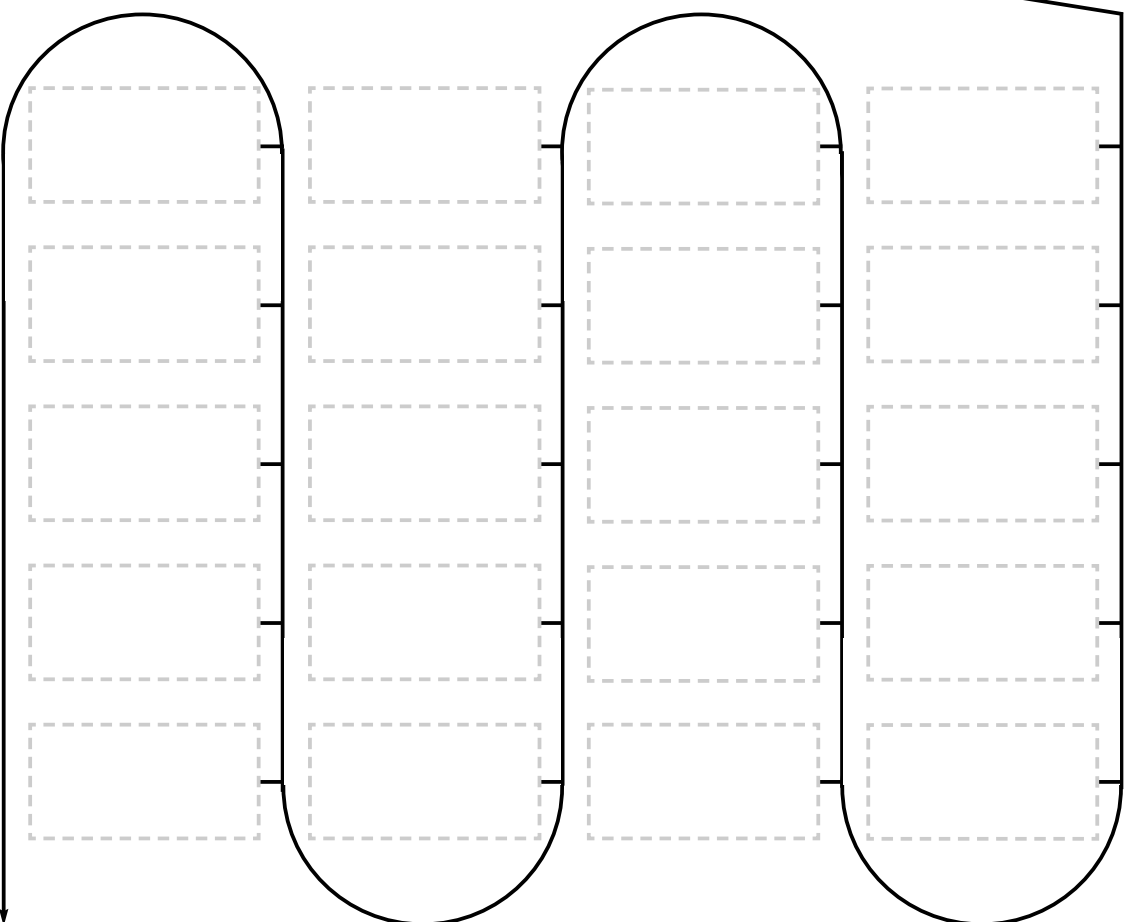


This Year's Plans

This Year in Birmingham there will be write-ins every Sunday lunchtime, probably downstairs at Starbucks on New St, but check the local forum to confirm each week.

There will also be a kick-off party on the last weekend in October, at The Malt House, hallowed scene of Bill Clinton's beer-drinking adventure.

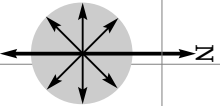
Finally, we will have a Thank God It's Over party, on Sunday, December 2, probably at Pizza Hut on Martineau Place, at which we will celebrate our amazing achievements, and anyone who wants to can drop their emails into a hat to randomly exchange novels.



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

Maps

If you're planning everything out in advance, maps are a good place to start. On the other hand, if you prefer to wing it, it's useful to make a quick note of the places you mention as you go along.



NaNoWriMo Mechanics

Know the rules

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

There are always quite a few people taking part who aren't quite following the rules. Maybe they are continuing a novel they've already begun (but only including the new writing in their word count, of course), or writing something that isn't strictly speaking a novel. If that's you, don't worry about it too much, though you shouldn't really claim a winner's certificate at the end.

However, please do remember that the rules are there to focus the event, and to help as many people as possible to finish their novels, and that it's really up to Chris Baty and his team to decide on the rules of the challenge that they have set, so do try at least to respect the rules, even as you're ignoring them!

Read the FAQs on the NaNoWriMo website

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

Affiliate to your local region and set it as your home

It means you'll get messages from your ML, your local forum will be highlighted on the website, and your word count will be included in our regional total.

Update your word count

This isn't all that important, but in previous years some people have been a bit

disappointed to realise how this works: the graph of your writing in your profile uses your updated word counts as data points, so to get a nice smooth graph, update every day, even if you only add a single word. (Though the graph may work differently this year.)

Remember that you have to verify to be a winner

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

Help out with costs if you can

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

I know that loads of those participating here in Birmingham are students (see pictures overleaf!), and so don't feel guilty if you can't afford anything, but if you can, please do. The t-shirts from the online shop arrive remarkably quickly, even here in the UK.

Notes

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

Roll D6 for number of distinguishing features

1	2	3	4	5	6
One	Two	Three	Four	Five	None

Roll D6 for each distinguishing feature

1	2	3	4	5	6
Scar D6	Congenital D6	Tattoo D6	Glasses D6	Mutations D6	Piercings D6
▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼

1 Face	1 Limp	1 Butterfly	1 Metal	1 Extra toe	1 Ear
2 Hand	2 Hare lip	2 Lower	2 Plastic	2 Extra nipple	2 Nose
3 Leg	3 Lazy eye	3 Mother	3 Contacts	3-6 Webbed	3 Navel
4 Neck	4 Short leg	4 Dragon	4 Monocle	▼	4 Chest
5 Chest	5 Baldness	5 Mermaid	5 Sunglasses	1-3 toes	5 Eyebrow
6 Belly	6 Foolishness	6 Frodo	6 Goggles	4-6 fingers	6 Other

Roll D6 for motivation

1 Lust	2 Greed	3 Vengeance	4 Duty	5 Love	6 Pride
D6	D6	D6	D6	D6	D6
▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼

1 A man	1 Money	1 Mother	1 Environment	1 Pet	1 Looks
2 A woman	2 Food	2 Father	2 Police	2 Country	2 Brains
3 All men	3 Chocolate	3 Sister	3 Friends	3 Enemy	3 Strength
4 All women	4 Toys	4 Brother	4 Family	4 Friend	4 Position
5 Power	5 Books	5 Lover	5 Mentor	5 Partner	5 House
6 Animals	6 Knowledge	6 Friend	6 Job	6 Music	6 Prowess

Roll D6 for hobbies

1 Sport	2 Reading	3 Shooting	4 Watching	5 Making	6 Travelling
D6	D6	D6	D6	D6	D6
▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼

1 Football	1 Books	1 Guns	1 Films	1 Furniture	1 Locally
2 Netball	2 Comics	2 Arrows	2 Plays	2 Model planes	2 Abroad
3 Hockey	3 Journals	3 Films	3 Television	3 Babies	3 Astrally
4 Athletics	4 Leaflets	4 Up	4 Opera	4 Observations	4 Up
5 Kabball	5 Magazines	5 Skeets	5 Out	5 Do	5 Down
6 Wrestling	6 Palms	6 Animals	6 Birds	6 Cuisine	6 All around

Use this space (and the whole handout, for that matter) however you want. Random notes, a brainstorm, flow chart - it's up to you.

Unstucker

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

- 1 Digress!**
- Roll again to find out how!
- 1 Summarise what's happened so far
 - 2 List the questions that are still bothering one of your characters
 - 3 Describe a character's [1 shoes 2 hat 3 hair 4 watch 5 coat 6 bag] and explain how it relates to his or her character and motivations
 - 4 Describe a childhood memory of one of the characters (use one of your own if necessary)
 - 5 One character tells a story about a [1 giant 2 robbery 3 flower 4 alien 5 shark 6 elephant]
 - 6 Meanwhile, on the other side of the universe...
- 2 Use this word!**
- It doesn't matter if it's in the next sentence, or the one after that, or whenever - just get your story to the point where you can use it.
- 1 Roll again [1 Discombobulate 2 Desembogue 3 Disembarrass 4 Disinfest 5 Dispassionate 6 Disconsolate]
 - 2 Terjiversate
 - 3 Abomination
 - 4 Maagisterial

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

3 Take the easy way out!

- You might feel cheap today, but holding a finished novel in your hands on December 1st will wash away the stain!
- 1 Write a letter from one character to another
 - 2 Introduce a new character (the Random Character Generator on p. 10 can help here) and have someone explain to him or her what's happened so far
 - 3 A character has a dream about [1 flying 2 fighting 3 loving 4 eating 5 drowning 6 falling]
 - 4 Ask a friend or your partner what happens next in your story - be very careful not to tell them anything about what has happened so far
 - 5 Write down everything that happened to you today as if it happened to one of your characters
 - 6 Sorry, I've got nothing... your problems are too intractable... I suppose you could try eating a lot of cheese before you go to bed tonight - or don't go to the bathroom before sleeping - then write down any nightmares that result
- 4 Something happens!**
- 1 A [1 car 2 motorcycle 3 camel 4 helicopter 5 UFO 6 cat on a skateboard] crashes nearby
 - 2 There's an earthquake of [1-2 negligible 3-4 dangerous 5-6 cataclysmic] magnitude!

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

5 Old standbys!

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

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

6 Time to get serious!

- 1 Go to bed and get some sleep - tomorrow try writing when you aren't so tired
 - 2 Have a bath and think about things
 - 3 Make a cup of tea
 - 4 Tuck your keyboard behind your monitor - let your frustration at not being able to type build up for a few minutes, then put it back in place
 - 5 Email your MUs for help, advice or just to let off steam (birmingham_england@nanowrimo.org). You could request an emergency write-in! We could even have a virtual one via MSN Messenger.
 - 6 You will channel the spirit of another writer, whether he be living or dead! You will channel the quick-writing spirit of [1 Michael Moorcock 2 Honore de Balzac 3 Reverend Lionel Fanthorpe 4 Anthony Trollope 5 Sir Walter Scott 6 Charles Dickens - "so prolific was his output and so frenzied his life, it seems miraculous he lived as long as he did" (Cambridge Guide to Literature in English)].
- If, having tried the unstucker, you are still stuck, look at the last word you wrote. Write down the word that you would expect to come next. Repeat this process until you have reached 50,000 words!