

barefootWriter

**NaNoWriMo
SPECIAL
REPORT**

**Do You Have a Novel
in You? NaNoWriMo
Founder Chris Baty
Says Yes!**

**A Novel in 30 Days?
Here's How to Do It**

**The Ultimate
NaNoWriMo Pep Talk**

Barefoot Writer Chris Baty at China
Camp Beach, San Rafael, California

*I like
my
serifs
classy.*

**PLUS: How Thriller Writer J.F. Penn Found Fame and
Fortune by Double-Dipping in the Writing World •
Unleash Your Inner Novelist • 3 Ways NaNoWriMo
Makes You a Better Writer • And Much More**

in this issue

NaNoWriMo Special Edition

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There's Never Been a Better Time to Write Your Book!



There is no dream more prevalent among writers, no achievement more revered, than writing a full-length book. And if that book turns out to be successful — whoa! The rewards simply multiply.

Here at *Barefoot Writer Magazine*, we're passionate about the many profitable paths a writer can take in life. No single road is better than another, and many of them easily lead to a comfortable lifestyle laced with freedom.

Book writing, on the other hand, isn't nearly as reliable as a livelihood. Other writing opportunities are laced with demand; books, not really. Other writing opportunities have the potential for massive fees and lifelong royalties; with books ... stipends are a wild card.

But that's part of the glory of it. Books aren't work, though the completion of one is an absolute accomplishment. Writing a book can be a lengthy, drawn-out process, the likes of which makes you bite your tongue and your nails and strain every mental muscle till you have so many words jumbled in your head, they haunt you in your sleep.

Yet, like crossing the finish line of any laudable race, and particularly one that requires you to give your all, writing a book is the ultimate accomplishment. There's no the promise of a gold medal, but there's the far worthier prize of doing something for the intrinsic glory, for the sheer *thrill* of saying, "I did it!"

That's why we've put together this special report to support and nudge you along on your journey. Writing itself may be a solitary endeavor, but if you take the time outside of the sweating sessions to connect with and learn from those right beside you in the race, I guarantee you'll benefit from their momentum. And the race, the journey, the accomplishment, will be all the sweeter.

So here's to making it to the finish line and typing that final sentence. To quote NaNoWriMo founder Chris Baty, "Someone, somewhere, has waited their whole life to read your book." Let's make it happen.

To your writing success,

Mindy McHorse

Executive Editor, *Barefoot Writer*

askmindy@thebarefootwriter.com

Publishers: Katie Yeakle and
Rebecca Matter

Executive Editor: Mindy McHorse

Copy Editor: Nan Hughes

Layout: Debi McKee

Published by:

American Writers & Artists Inc.

245 NE 4th Avenue, Suite 102

Delray Beach, FL 33483

Questions?

Contact Member Services:

www.awaionline.com/contact

866-879-2924 or 561-278-5557

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“Novels aren't written by novelists. Novels are just written by everyday people who give themselves time and permission to write novels.”

— Chris Baty, Author and Founder of National Novel Writing Month

By Mindy McHorse

If you truly want to be a writer, you're going to love Chris Baty's approach to making that happen.

He's the “accidental” founder of the wildly successful literary marathon known as National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo, for short), which first launched 16 years ago. Since then, Chris and the NaNoWriMo organization have inspired hundreds of thousands of people across the globe to sit down and write. And even though NaNoWriMo started as an ironic experiment, it's since prompted the writing and eventual publication of thousands of novels, nonfiction books, and even screenplays.

Chris has enjoyed great writing success as well.

He's the author of *No Plot? No Problem! A Low-Stress, High-Velocity Guide to Writing a Novel in 30 Days*, and is the co-author of the *Ready, Set, Novel* workbook. He also teaches writing classes through the Writer's Studio at Stanford University, works as a freelance travel and culture writer for various publications, and travels around the world to speak to writing groups.

I met Chris on a bright, Saturday afternoon in Albuquerque and was immediately wowed by his enthusiasm for writing and his keen understanding of the peaks and valleys all writers face. Enjoy his honesty as you read about why writing helped Chris overcome an early sense of failure, and how doing so unintentionally prompted the biggest writing movement of this century.

What's the biggest benefit of participating in NaNoWriMo?

I think it helps give you this great sense that *you* are a writer. We're all writers, and doing this feels great. And it does have some amazing returns. Around 2003, we had the first published NaNoWriMo novel. It was by John Mertz, and was part of a vampire detective trilogy. We've now had at least 10 *New York Times* Bestsellers. An author named Lani Diane Rich won a RITA best-debut novel award for her first NaNoWriMo novel. We've had hundreds of traditionally-published novels that started as NaNoWriMo manuscripts. Tens of thousands of self-published novels. A couple of years ago, I had a very surreal experience of going and watching my first big Hollywood feature that was based on a NaNoWriMo novel. It was *Water for Elephants*, based on Sara Gruen's novel. That actually began as a NaNoWriMo manuscript.

Wow ... and to think, you launched the contest that got her writing! Can you tell us how NaNoWriMo first came about?

It is kind of a strange writing contest, and it came out of a strange time in my life. I started this in 1999, when I was 26 years old. I was living in the San Francisco Bay Area and everything was going crazy at that time. That was when Internet 1.0 was happening and the economy was in full bloom. It felt like the rules of life had been forever changed, like you could launch any dot-com and succeed. And most of my friends were getting these jobs at these companies and they were all making

ridiculous amounts of money. Their offices all had slides in them. It was this really amazing time. And I was five years out of college, working at the one uncool website in San Francisco. It was a website for business travelers and I was editing listings of high-end florists in Houston, Texas. And I just had that moment that hits around age 25 or 26, that quarter-life crisis moment where you're just feeling like, "I thought I would have done *more*."

I can relate. That was the age I dropped everything to become a writer.

Exactly. And I think I was just so hungry for something that was going to shake me up and give me something big to bite off, and to test myself. So I looked around at my life, at the things I wanted to do. And I have always loved books. I'm an only child, and you know, books are kind of like your sibling when you're an only child. I remember spending so much time in the backseat on road trips just devouring these books. And I had always kind of thought that novels were written by novelists, you know what I mean? That novelists were this super-human species of person who had a different brain from the rest of us and were born with the ability to type. I was just a huge fan of whatever they were producing. There was nothing more magical to me than books. And so when I was trying to come up with something that would be my biggest challenge, I thought, "Okay, I want to write a novel." And I decided to invite all of my friends to do this thing with me.

And this was because I was terrified, and I was

National Novel Writing Month, also known as NaNoWriMo, is a creative-writing competition that takes place every November. Participants are challenged to write 50,000 words of a new novel, between November 1st and 30th. Entry is free and consists of registering on the NaNoWriMo website at www.nanowrimo.org. Official enrollment gets you emails with tips on how to write faster and stay motivated, as well as information on local writing meet-ups where you can connect with other writers participating in the challenge. Completion is emphasized over perfection, and once signed up, you can post word-count updates to your NaNoWriMo profile. No official prizes are awarded and anyone who completes the challenge is considered a winner and receives a certificate (plus bragging rights).

pretty sure it was going to be this doomed quest and that it was going to be kind of humiliating and it would be one more thing that I hadn't done in my life. So I sent out this email to all my friends that basically said, "Hey, is anybody up for this?" And I was blessed with a group of friends who say "Yes" to very bad ideas. *Very bad ideas!* They all have a long track record of doing this and I preyed upon that for this novel-in-a-month scheme.

And they said yes?

Yes, 21 of us agreed to do this. Nobody knew what they were doing, nobody had any experience. We hadn't really written anything since ninth grade or something like that. But we all liked this idea of doing something together. So we had this 50,000-word goal, and we would get together, once the month began, and we would actually write together.

I love that you all just dove in without overthinking it.

You know, there are some advantages to not knowing what you're doing. Like, I tried to get into a creative writing course in college, but I was an anthropology major and wasn't good enough to get in. So, my idea of how you write a novel was one, you get terrified, and two, you get your friends together, and you all write in the same room. Obviously not a traditional approach to writing!

Certainly not the secluded-writer stereotype. What did your meetings look like?

We would go to the coffee house that was near my house, and we would all set up in the booth. But remember, this was 1999, so we're bringing our 1999 laptops that were the size of washing machines with keyboards attached. Their battery life was like three nanoseconds. So we're also bringing those long orange extension cords and literally using gaffer tape to tape down these cords. The coffee shop had never seen anything



Chris designs and prints inspirational posters for writers

like it. We would sit kind of facing each other, and people would come up to us and say, "Are you guys playing Battleship?" We became known as the laptop people. You know, nowadays we all take it for granted how easy it is to go to Starbucks and set up your laptop. But in 1999, it wasn't that common. You know, you might have been on the cutting-edge of bringing a writing tool out in public, but it was weird. We were weird. People would stare.

I would kill for a picture of that.

So we started writing and Week One came and went. It was all right. Week Two came and went and we started getting that book malaise that comes around as the novelty wears off and your character isn't all that exciting anymore. I think all of us would have happily quit at that point but we had already scheduled out our month with these times to get together. So it was a lot like when you get a gym buddy, because you hate exercising so you decide to get a buddy who will show up at

the gym at the same time as you. It works. Because you don't want to be the loser who flakes. And that's what kept us writing through Week Two, which sucked so badly. And then around Week Three, this really amazing thing started happening. These books that we had started without characters, without plots, and without competent storytelling ability of any kind whatsoever, started to come alive. And these characters quit their jobs and joined heavy-metal bands and they started going in different ways than we thought they would during our first week. It was that moment when the electricity starts flowing through a writing project and you can just feel it. And all of us were feeling that.



Chris Baty and other writers celebrate California Bookstore Day at Mrs. Dalloway's Bookstore in Berkeley, California

What do you think was the turning point?

I'm not sure, but I knew that it happened because I had listened to so many interviews you know, on *Fresh Air* and the BBC with my favorite authors, and there's always that one moment in interviews with authors where the interview starts with, "In your latest masterwork, your protagonist meets an untimely demise at the beak of an angry penguin ... " And the author says, "Yes." And the

interviewer always says this line that I've never quite understood, which is, "It was so true." And the author says, "Yes, thank you thank you." And the interviewer says, "I have to ask ... how did you pick a penguin?" And there's always this pause where the author kind of rises up to full magisterial authority and says, "I didn't pick the penguin. The penguin *picked me.*"

[Laughter] Yes, I know exactly what you're talking about!

Because it turns out, that if you start writing and you keep writing, the penguins just *come*. They come for everybody. They come, whether you know what you're doing, whether you studied writing or not. And for those of us that had not written a novel before, this was incredible. This experience really changed the way I think we saw ourselves, and for me, the way I saw the potential of everybody around me. Because that was when I discovered that novels aren't written by novelists. Novels are just written by everyday people who give themselves time and permission to write novels.

So how did that one month of writing turn into a national movement?

Six of us made it to the finish line and crossed the 50,000-word mark. We had a thank-God-it's-over party on my living room floor, and you know, those books that we wrote that first year ... I wouldn't say they were great. I would say the industry definition for the books we wrote that year was that they were bad. They were bad books. But they were promising. You know, it's that feeling of starting a month with nothing, and ending it with a reasonably unhorrible novel. It was amazing. And nothing was really the same for me after that. So what started as this over-caffeinated dare became this important meaningful experience in my life.

That was 1999. And that first year of the event I actually put up a website. I used this little-known function in Word called "Save as HTML." Oh yeah,

it was beautiful. We had maybe two links in the website and only one of them worked. So the second year, a friend volunteered to build a website and we put it up and it looked like a reasonable website for the year 2000. And we had 140 people that year. I didn't even know everybody, and that was the first time I thought, "Oh God, who are these people?" I remember my mom asking me, "Where did they come from?" And I said, "Mom, they came from the Internet!"

So word had started to spread.

Yes. And remember, this was before social media. So the fact that it was starting to get some traction was all because of word-of-mouth. There was no PR plan. I think it had a lot to do with the name, National Novel Writing Month, which started as this kind of ironic, funny banner. Because remember, we were all in the Bay Area and none of us thought we were actually going to write a novel or survive the month but we had this solid, important-sounding name, *National Novel Writing Month*.

Everybody thought it was the real deal.

Yeah. So Year Three, we jumped from 140 people to 5,000 people. Yeah. And I'm freaked out of my mind. The website that this friend of mine built, it was all manual. So — keep in mind, 5,000 people did this — to register for National Novel Writing Month that year, they sent me an email, I sent them back a personal welcome email, and then I sent them out an invitation to our Yahoo! club. I would then get into the HTML of this website and hand-alphabetize their names. So this is where that first crew of friends who have trouble saying no to bad ideas came in handy again.

What was the bad idea this time?

My bad idea that year was that I asked them all to come over to my house and drink Red Bull all night and help me process NaNoWriMo sign-ups. Which they did, and it was incredible. And it took us about two weeks to get everybody in there.



Chris and his wife at Battle Rock Park in Port Orford, Oregon

And the other thing was back then, to update your word count, which you were supposed to do two or three times throughout the month, you emailed me your word count, and I built a progress bar with these little gifs. And that was obviously not going to happen in Year Three. So, there was a participant who stepped forward and said we could create a way for people to just update their word counts. He said, "We can create a box, but I don't have time to put in a password or any kind of security." So, being remarkably un-savvy about websites, I thought, "Well, nobody's going to mess with somebody else's word count."

Oh no ...

So within maybe 30 minutes of implementing this feature, the entire website was hacked, there were nearly-naked tennis players posted all over, and all kinds of things. So that year was a crash course in me doing exactly what you should not do and paying the price for it. It was a growing year, as they say, but I survived it, and I think the people that had signed up for it kind of believed

in it in a way that they wouldn't have if it were just called "Ass-Kicking Writers of Berkeley, California." It's like they saw it and thought it must be a vetted literary initiative funded by the federal government.

So the website issues didn't shut you down.

Well, hey, nobody's websites worked in the year 2000. But that's the amazing thing about confidence when you are a writer. You rarely have your own self-confidence, but you can take confidence from other writers and other sources. And I think that name, which really was just supposed to be funny, ended up reassuring people that, "Okay, this is doable. There are people who did this before and I'm going to do it." And they did it. And that was the start of this idea of the month-long novel.

How did it feel to have launched something that got so big, so quick?

It really felt like a virus that had escaped the lab and started mutating in the wild. And that's when we started having the first chapters that were formed — people in Los Angeles and people in South Africa who were like, "Hey, let's have some

get-togethers and we'll have a celebration at the end." And so I'd say, "Alright, here's the structure. You have a kickoff party and you have some write-ins during the month, and so forth." And it was amazing. The next year we jumped to 14,000 people, and it just kept rolling from there.

NaNoWriMo isn't just for fiction writers, correct?

The very interesting thing about National Novel Writing Month is that we have a lot of writers doing it, but we also have a lot of other people using it to get other things written. So I would say about 80% of the participants are writing novels. And other people are writing everything from memoirs to screenplays to PhD dissertations. So it's great. And we send out all these encouraging emails; some are from me, some are from other authors who write these pep talks from all different genres. The idea is to really fill your inbox with this message to "keep going" in November.

What are some of the advantages of going the distance and signing up for NaNoWriMo, as opposed to just doing it on your own?

So you write offline, but you get to use these message boards. If you've ever spent time on a NaNoWriMo message board, it's like its own little city: Equal parts help and terrifying. But one of the things I love, is that for those of us who are really research-impaired and tend to forget to do research, there's this "Character and Plot" section where you'll find answers to anything. Like one question is, "Can a brown bear outrun a golf cart?" Another one, which was from a 13-year-old participant who was writing her debut novel, and she asked, "What does it feel like to fall in love?" And the answers are just so good you can't stop reading. People try to put into words the things we take for granted.

What do you get for completing the 50,000 word count challenge?

So you write and you update your word count,



*This was Chris last month at a launch party for the new edition of his book, *No Plot, No Problem*, in Berkeley*

and at the end of the month, you aim to have written at least 50,000 words. When you get to that point, you upload your number onto the site and our magical robots count it, and there's this moment of terror, and then all of a sudden you get the PDF award that says you have completed NaNoWriMo. You have to download it and print it and write your own name with a pen. [Laughs]

But it feels great. It feels pretty amazing. And the whole prize is obviously just the manuscript itself and getting to spend a month running amok in your imagination. Kind of just bringing a world to life and seeing it through.

How big is NaNoWriMo now?

Last year was the 15th NaNoWriMo, and we had somewhere north of 400,000. We have volunteer-run chapters in 500 cities and towns across the world. We have a Young Writers Program that brings a version of National Novel Writing Month where kids in K-12 classrooms get to set their own word count goal and then they battle against each other to see who reigns supreme. And we provide stickers to children because if you have children, you know that they will do anything for stickers, so we airlift thousands of these stickers to classrooms. We also have Common Core mapped curriculum for teachers and free downloadable workbooks for every grade level. And last year, we had 1,000 classrooms that were teaching National Novel Writing Month. So, there were elementary school kids who were writing their first books and coming away from this experience with a relationship to books and writing that will never be the same again. Because when you write your first novel when you're in fifth grade, nothing is scary again. No writing assignment is going to give you pause.

Incredible. So do you still actively participate in NaNoWriMo?

Absolutely. I still look forward to this month-long novel writing challenge with just as much excitement as I did that first one. I keep waiting for this



This sums up a lot of what NaNoWriMo (and Chris Baty) represent

to get old, but instead, every November, there's this almost Pavlovian response for me and a lot of other writers. The weather gets a little cooler and you just start typing.

If you had to give one word of advice to somebody starting a novel for the first time, what would you say?

I think the biggest thing I would say is that everybody has a novel in them. In fact, everybody has *dozens* of novels in them. And the secret is just having faith that you can pull this off because you *can*. Just knowing you can do it is the most important thing. I never would've thought that I have a novel in me, and now I've written 15 first drafts and I've revised a bunch of them, and I love it. There's nothing I love more. And I never would have known I could do that if I hadn't tried this. So just know that you can do it and know that it's important. ■

The Ultimate NaNoWriMo Pep Talk



By Chris Baty

I live in Berkeley, just a short drive from the Pacific. The coast of Northern California is a thing of wild beauty. It's a craggy place where cold waves crash, winds whip, and the cries of seabirds are drowned out by the cries of Spanish tourists who are sad that no one told them you need to bring a parka when you come to San Francisco beaches.

Whatever the temperature, I love being at the ocean. My trips to the shore always leave me feeling simultaneously awed and calmed. When I stand on the beach and gaze out at that expanse of blue, I'm reminded of the bigness of life, and the swashbuckling adventures awaiting anyone brave enough to sail out and meet them.

It's no accident that the NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) logo is topped with a Viking helmet. The Vikings felt the same pull of the sea, and they were helplessly drawn to those unknown worlds beyond the horizon. This was even before GPS technology, when sailors only had stars, a magnetized lutfisk bone, and a race of hyper-intelligent talking penguins to guide them.

But I'm boring you with Viking history when I should be confessing a secret. I almost never go to the ocean. My excuse: I'm just too busy.

I think many of us face the same problem when it comes to our writing. We're lucky enough to live alongside these vast oceans of our imaginations. Whenever we make the trek out to our creative waters, we come away delighted by the things we discover. All of us harbor enough characters, settings, and stories to fill dozens of books. It's kind of weird to have all that stuff swimming around inside you, but it's there. A novel is really just a chance to pluck some of those marvels from our inner depths and pin them to the page.

Sadly, the older we get, the harder it is to find time to visit these wild places within. Between school, work, and family, the days just get away from us. There might be an hour of writing here or a few minutes of dreaming there, but it's usually sandwiched between tasks and errands. The roar of that creative ocean becomes a distant sound that occasionally drifts in through our windows at

.....
featured essay (continued)

night, reminding us of a place we once loved, and keep meaning to get back to.

But you know what?

This November, we're going to the ocean.

We're heading out together, and, once there,



we'll give ourselves an entire month to explore and play and adventure. At night, bonfires will blaze, and hot dogs (or soydogs) will be roasted, and we'll stay up late sharing that day's discoveries. I will bring my guitar and serenade you with my inept cover of "Brown Eyed Girl" and you will politely take the guitar away from me, and then everyone will go to bed, happily knowing that the next day will be as full of inspirations as the one that came before it.

It's going to be big. We should probably start packing.

I'll see you on the beach. ■

Editor's Note: To learn more about NaNoWriMo or to register for the contest, visit www.nanowrimo.org. For more information on Chris Baty, visit www.chrisbaty.com.

You're Not Alone!

Writing can seem very isolating at times. Most people in your life won't understand what you're going through. In some ways, you're all alone with your keyboard. At the same time, voices may be swirling around you. Your characters may be talking back, or worse, they won't talk to you at all. We've all been there!

When you need to connect with actual people, we're here. You can connect with Barefoot Writer online through Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Just click an icon and let's get in touch!

Keep in mind there are resources and forums on the NaNoWriMo.org official site. And search hashtags like #NaNoWriMo, #amwriting, #writing, #ambleeding, and #writingtips to meet fellow



authors who understand just where you're coming from.

A note of caution: Don't let social media become a procrastination tool. As NaNoWriMo creator Chris Baty has said, "The Internet devours novels. It's the death-bringer of novels."

So take a short break, connect with live humans, and then get back to your characters. They're waiting for you to tell their story.

A Novel in 30 Days? Here's How to Do It (Plus, 6 Ways You'll Become a Better Writer at the Same Time!)

By Li Vasquez-Noone

Write a novel in 30 days? Yes, it really is possible! Here's an easy way to do it, and improve your writing at the same time.

I'm talking about participating in National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo, which is held in November of each year. Billed as "30 days and nights of literary abandon," it's a contest to write a novel over the course of the month. To "win," you must write at least 50,000 words during that time. There are no entry fees, and no prizes, except for the satisfaction of knowing you did it.

But can writing fast fiction really help you become a better writer?

Well, for the past five years, I've written novels during NaNoWriMo, and the experience has helped my writing immensely. Here are six ways that NaNoWriMo will help you become a better writer, too.

Improve your storytelling.

As a writer, you learn that it's important to weave

a story into whatever you write. But let's face it, often you must focus on facts — making things up is usually frowned on. So writing fiction can be a somewhat foreign experience.

But writing fiction can also take you outside of your comfort zone and force you to think about

Want to write a novel?

Join me and over 400,000 others this November! Sign up for free at www.nanowrimo.org. This will allow you access to your own profile page where you can upload details about your novel, a word count scoreboard to keep track of your progress, as well as pep talks and writers' forums to keep you motivated. If you write at least 50,000 words in 30 days, you'll receive an electronic winner's certificate and badge. Plus, you'll forever have the satisfaction of knowing you wrote a novel in an insanely short amount of time.

what makes a compelling story. And this skill will transfer to your business writing or copywriting.

Once you get a taste for making stuff up, you can try your hand at other literary techniques. For instance, last year I tried epistolary writing, which is telling a story through letters or documents. I was writing a story that took place in present day, but had a subplot with two characters writing letters to each other in the 1930s. It forced me to really stretch and think about the details of when these characters lived, what they would have talked about, and how to keep it interesting.

Increase your writing speed.

To get through 50,000 words in 30 days, you need to write a minimum of 1,667 words each day. Every day. If you miss a day, you will have to make it up before the end of the month. And all this writing takes place around life, work, family, friends, pets, holidays, sniffles, and anything else going on.

To maintain this pace, you must write quickly, and you'll likely get even faster over the course of the month. It takes me a few hours to craft a well written, 500-word article, depending on the subject. But during NaNoWriMo, I can knock out 800 to 1,000 words in an hour. I'm not saying they're great words ... but hey, they can always be edited later!

Learn to silence your inner editor.

To paraphrase Voltaire, perfect is the enemy of good. Have you ever tried to write something perfectly on the first try, only to become so frustrated by your internal editor that you can't get much written at all? When you take on writing a novel in one month, one of the first things you learn is that you just need to *write*. Editing can wait till next month. You'll learn to write down every thought in the name of word count, and sift through it later. When you allow yourself to simply write, you'll be amazed at what you come up with.

Write in Diverse Genres to Improve Your Skills.

My first NaNoWriMo novel was a feminist romance called *Gamble with the Heart*. The second year, I wrote a murder mystery, *Stimulus for Murder*. And last year, I wrote a literary novel set in both the present day and the early 20th century titled, *Find My Way Home*. This year I'm planning to write 30 short stories that will be tied together with common themes and characters.

Develop a habit of writing every day.

Keeping up with your word count forces you to write just about every day, which is a habit that nearly every successful writer has developed. Ernest Hemingway wrote 500 words every day early in the morning, before the heat set in. Stephen King writes 10 pages a day, every day, no matter what.

At the end of the month, it will be second nature to sit down and write every day.

Discover your unique writing schedule.

Writing a novel in 30 days allows you to try out different writing techniques, styles, and times of day. You'll have the chance to discover what works for you. During NaNoWriMo, I've tried getting up early to write, staying up late, writing at my office desk, at the kitchen table, in my car at lunch, and in a notebook while standing in line at the grocery store.

I've discovered I like to get up an hour early and write while still half asleep, and I also like to change things up and drag my laptop computer from my desk to the kitchen table or living room couch. But I do not like to write longhand on paper, and I don't write as well when I go elsewhere, like the library or sitting in my car.

Gain confidence as a writer.

Sure, NaNoWriMo takes a lot of time and focus, and can be stressful. It forces you to really push your limits. But when you reach for such a lofty goal and succeed, the sense of confidence you gain will be worth it. It shows you that you're capable of anything. And the ability to say, "I'm a novelist" ... is priceless.

Are you ready to improve your writing skills, as well as take on the enormous challenge of writing a novel in 30 days? Join me this year and try NaNoWriMo! You'll impress yourself with what your imagination comes up with, and who knows? You may just get a publishable novel out of it. ■



So You Want to Write a Book ... Then What?

Maybe writing a book has always been your dream, your goal, your lifelong ambition.

But after it's written ... what comes next?

Technically, the next step is to take your book through the marketing and publishing process.

And that's exactly where most writers get tripped up, since common advice from those in the industry is along the lines of "don't bother, your odds stink, it's hard, and it's disheartening."

Well, you know what? Our goal is to change that. That's why we've launched the [MAP Blog](#), designed to teach you easy, doable ways to

Market and Publish your book.

Barefoot Writer Editor Mindy McHorse has even taken on the goal to write and publish a book this year and shares her ups, downs, and lessons learned along the way. Plus, she features interviews with published authors, agents, marketers, and other industry experts, all designed to help propel you forward in the easiest way possible.

[Join her over at the MAP Blog](#) and commit to not just writing your book, but getting it marketed, published, and in the hands of those who were meant to read it!

How Thriller Writer J.F. Penn Found Fame and Fortune by Double-Dipping in the Writing World



By Mindy McHorse

Joanna Penn has succeeded at something many Barefoot Writers aspire to: Write and publish a novel. She's now working on the third installment in her self-titled ARKANE action-adventure series with nearly 50,000 copies already sold.

She's also done something else many Barefoot Writers aspire to: position herself as a top blogger and an expert in marketing writing.

Joanna's fiction works are Indiana Jones-style mysteries. She dispatches readers on hair-raising quests to unheard-of locales. Sinister and deadly artifacts are often the key to surviving near-deadly adventures.

Her blog, TheCreativePenn.com, is also about survival. As a "how-to" for writers, it chronicles Joanna's own ups and downs in finding her writer's voice and positioning herself as an author worth reading. She generously shares insight into all she's learned along the way, with an aim to spare both creative and commercial writers the mistakes she made. Her earnest effort paid off, as her blog was awarded the "Top Ten Blogs for Writers"

title for two years running (2011 and 2012) by the website Write to Done from a pool of over 2,000 writer blogs.

Joanna's blog recounts her initial efforts of putting pen on paper, and takes readers all the way to the transformative realization that she had a viable business model in the making. (For the record, she really does put pen on paper, taking a break from screen time occasionally to hammer out ideas the old-fashioned way in the Reading Room of the London Library, St. James' Square. Laptops not allowed.)

Joanna now commands a multiple-stream income, proving that writing for both the commercial and fiction markets pays off. For her, making a living is no longer about fending off bills and pleasing someone else. It's about following her passion.

I recently had an opportunity to interview Joanna, who is now based in London after 11 years in Australia and New Zealand. Our conversation follows.

How did you first get started as a writer? **W**as it always your dream?

Like many of us, I always wanted to be a writer. I'm a huge reader and my dream life was to read and write for a living. But I think I was stifled for many years by the idea that the only valid book is a prize-winning literary fiction novel. This may be a peculiarly British obsession, intellectual snobbery being one of our cultural faults. Since I couldn't seem to write such amazing sentences, I gave up for many years, writing only in my copious journals.

But back in 2007, after 10 years of being an IT consultant, I was totally miserable in my job and desperate to change my life. I started to investigate ways to change careers and in the process I wrote *How To Love Your Job or Find A New One*. That book changed my own life, as through it, I discovered self-publishing and a network of writers online. I have just re-released a revised version of the book as I have now achieved the goals I set out using the method I wrote about. It also helped release my blocks and I'm now focusing on fiction. I finally understand that writing is rewriting — and that commercial fiction is just as valid (and sells more!) than literary fiction.

What motivated you to start your blog for writers? (As opposed to simply writing your own books.)

Back in 2008 when I wrote that first nonfiction book, I made some huge mistakes that cost me money, time, and heartache. For example, I didn't know about print on demand, so I did a print run which cost several thousand dollars. There were a lot of problems with the printing and then I didn't have any way of distributing the books. I also didn't know about marketing. So I was determined to learn about all these things, but also to share what I was learning so other people wouldn't make the same mistakes. I started my blog, TheCreativePenn.com, in December 2008 as a way to share lessons learned, and from that

I began to get speaking appearances and it has spiraled from there. The primary purpose of the site is still to educate and share lessons from the writer's journey, but I am also now a full-time author-entrepreneur selling multimedia courses as well as speaking, consulting, and writing fiction.

You write and self-publish. Do you collaborate with anyone during the process, or is it all you?

I believe the definition of an independent author is someone who uses other professionals in order to produce a quality product, so collaboration is critical. I have two editors — a developmental and a copy-editor, as well as beta readers. I also have a professional cover designer. When I did print, I hired a print formatter, but I do my own e-book production through Scrivener software. Then of course, we still need distributors and I primarily use Amazon KDP, Kobo Writing Life, BookBaby, and Smashwords. But I don't collaborate creatively with other authors on content at this point in my career, although I would consider it in the right situation.

Pentecost, the first in your ARKANE series — took over a year to write. How did you keep yourself motivated during that time?

I started *Pentecost* during NaNoWriMo in November 2009 and published it in February 2011, but I did have a full-time job during that time, so it wasn't my only focus. I was also learning the nuts and bolts of writing fiction, which were all new to me. Motivation has never really been an issue as I was determined to make the book a success.



Now, writing isn't a *With Pentecost, Joanna's first thriller*

hobby, it's my business. I do find that blogging and Twitter are motivating though, as you see other authors getting 2,000 or even 5,000 words done in a day and you feel you have to get words on the page to match them. People can follow the #amwriting tag on Twitter to see what I mean. I want to publish at least one novel a year, so I set deadlines and goals in order to achieve that.

Here's an overview of Joanna's experience writing *Pentecost*, from first ideas to first royalty check, and then the story of how she signed with a New York agent for the series. <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/firstnovel/>

You're clearly an adventure-seeker, based on the photos from your website. What's been your wildest real-life adventure yet?

I'm definitely an experience junkie and I love to travel! I'm a PADI Divemaster and I've had some amazing experiences underwater in Western Australia and also in New Zealand. Probably the most exhilarating was a drift dive through a canyon off Fiji filled with reef sharks, and the most terrifying was a night dive on the Barrier Reef with a school of giant barracuda. They have seriously menacing teeth!

But I always like to push my comfort zone and learn new things. Sometimes it's harder to face internal challenges. One of the last trips I did alone was to India and at Varanasi I watched bodies burn on the ghats. That was wild in a whole different way!

I noticed from your blog we have something in common, as I'm a fellow pinot noir lover — what's your favorite label?

New Zealand's Peregrine estate in South Otago, probably the Saddleback, although I've never had a bad bottle from that vineyard. I hope we can have a glass sometime!

Absolutely. Now, you rebranded yourself as



Chilly scuba diving in New Zealand

an author halfway through your journey by changing your author name from "Joanna Penn" to "J.F. Penn." Why? Has the decision served you well?

There were a couple of reasons for this. Firstly, I received several reviews from men who said they were surprised that a woman would write such violent scenes, and that I seemed far too nice a person to write of burning nuns alive (*Pentecost*) or ritually murdering children (*Prophecy*). I don't want my gender to have anything to do with whether or not someone buys a book. I also write in the action-adventure thriller genre, which is mainly populated with men, so I thought a gender-neutral author name would be a good way to avoid the issue. J.K. Rowling went with initials for the same reason. For anyone wondering, my middle name is Frances, so this is my real name, not a pen name as such.

The second reason is a branding thing as I have the nonfiction career change book under Joanna Penn and also intend to write more nonfiction. By having a different author name, you can segregate how books are shown on Amazon and other stores. I now have website dedicated to my

fiction writing and a separate mailing list, so the branding decision is going well so far.

You mentioned you wrote your first fiction novel as part of NaNoWriMo, 2009. What was it about that challenge that finally prompted you to follow your dream to write?

Funnily enough, I think it was the community that I was mingling with by that stage. I had started TheCreativePenn.com and was blogging about writing in terms of nonfiction but I wanted to expand my expertise. I had also done a podcast on unblocking and that helped me face my own fears (of writing something truly terrible!). I also read Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, where she says

it's important to write "shitty first drafts." NaNo is great because it frees you from expectations of creating a masterpiece. You can write 50,000 words of crap and maybe something will come of it, maybe it won't. I wrote 20,000 words and the kernel of the novel was born, although maybe only 2,000 words of that made it into the final version. I'm thinking of doing NaNo again this year to create a new project and challenge myself on word count. I haven't done a 50,000-word month, so perhaps this year I can achieve that!

What was the first step you took in getting your name out there and building recognition and a following?

I sold about 100 copies of that first nonfiction book before I understood that I needed to learn marketing! Seriously, it took a while for the penny to drop. So, first I tried traditional media. I did press releases and made it onto national TV, radio, and newspapers, but still no impact. So after eight months of that, I went online and learned about blogging because of the ability to have incoming links over time.

TheCreativePenn.com was my third blog; the other two fell by the wayside. I understood content marketing from the start, so I was happy to write and be useful and see what happened. I still recommend blogging as my #1 long-term marketing strategy along with building an email list.

Then I started a podcast (it's now on episode 135 and on iTunes), mainly in order to learn from experts and share what I was learning with others. The next step was discovering Twitter and then video blogging. I think that the multimedia channels of audio and video have probably helped me stand out in a crowded text-based market. But each step had a few months in between as I learned and investigated. Tools change, but I've basically kept to the same principle — be useful, interesting, and consistent over time.

You use social media to attract publicity and fans. What's your favorite platform?



Teaching on a writer's retreat in Ubud, Bali



A thriller novelist has to learn to shoot!

It has to be Twitter. I am @thecreativepenn and I really use Twitter in two ways. Firstly, my feed is basically a news channel for writing, publishing, and marketing. I read a lot of blogs and tweet useful articles. The second way is for connection and peer support. I have found pretty much all of my podcast interviewees on Twitter and many of them have become good online friends. Some people may think online friendships are shallow but it's just not true. You can take them further with Skype and later meeting in person, but you already feel you know them. I am an evangelist for Twitter! I have just started using Pinterest for my fiction and I'm loving the visual medium after so much text.

You've put yourself out there in a big way — featuring live interviews on your website, tweeting over 23,000 times, and attracting nearly 30,000 followers. What self-promotion effort has given you the biggest payoff?

If it was just self-promotion, I would have given up years ago! My main focus still remains to be

useful or interesting so everything I am blogging about, tweeting, or sharing is for that reason. The blog wasn't started as marketing, it began because I was crazy mad at getting ripped off and heartbroken at not selling any books. The podcast was started, and continues now, as a way for me to learn from experts and in the process, share it with others. I am a learning sponge. I must learn something new every day, so I enjoy sharing that.

So to answer your question, let's call it marketing, since I do have a business and make income from the site. The biggest payoff is still blogging as it consistently brings me traffic and builds long-term fans. Everything else is peripheral and brings people to my hub, my blog, and my email list.

To promote my fiction, I blog through my author website. But I think the best marketing for fiction is

1. Professional editing and cover design so the book can sell itself
2. Amazon sales page optimization and using the correct categories (so there is an existing target market that fits your genre)
3. Reviews on Amazon, Goodreads, and other sites. I review all books I love at these sites and that's critical for authors
4. Everything else is extra and I do a lot of the rest too, but many fiction authors are successful without the effort in marketing

You spent 13 years in an office as an international business consultant, complete with commute and lunch meetings. What was the hardest part about transitioning to a writer's life where you're the one in charge?

I've been a contractor for many years, so I was always in charge of my time, but the biggest issue for me has been the change in income, which I have found (to my astonishment!) relates directly to my self-esteem. I was at the top of my ladder before and paid accordingly. Now I am at the bottom of a new ladder and again, paid accordingly! I

have significantly downsized to make this change, but it has taken some adjustment. I see from your story that it took three years to get to six-figures and I expect it to be the same for me.

Don't get me wrong though. I am absolutely overjoyed to have left that life, mainly because I could never see the point in what I did. IT is soul-destroying because everything you do is overwritten within a few years. Nothing remains and there is little creativity in the daily grind. I'm so excited as a writer to build a body of work over time that endures, and to still be writing when I'm 90! I know that my income will ramp up over time as I write and publish more, so this step is temporary, but the transition is hard. It was fantastic for me to go to Thrillerfest in New York in July because I met big-name authors at the top of the game — Lee Child, Jeffrey Deaver, Lisa Gardner, and others. I see them further up the ladder, now I just have to climb the rungs too.

Now that you've signed with an agent, will you still be doing your own self-promotion?

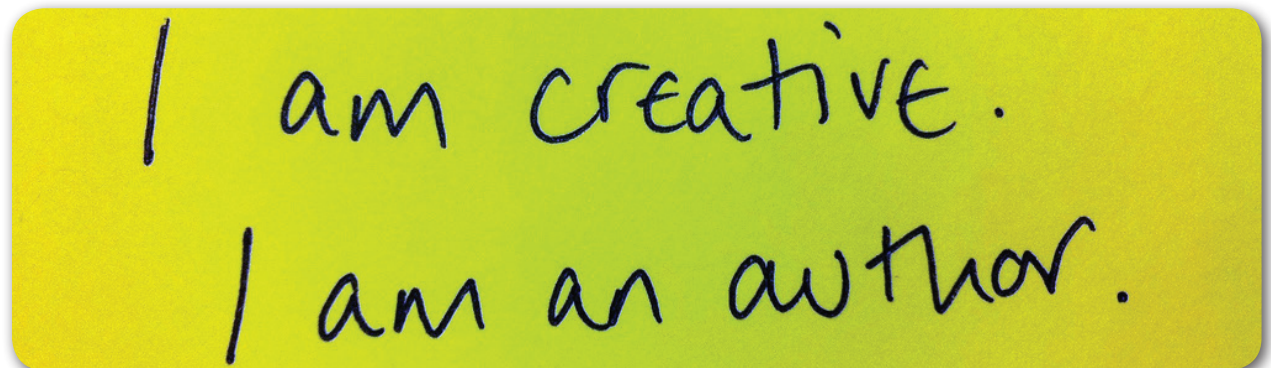
Absolutely. It's not an agent's job to promote and as I write this, the books haven't sold to a publisher so nothing has changed as yet. But I love marketing and I also believe it's the author's responsibility to build their own career and to take care of their own business. No one else cares as much as you do about your books. So even if I get a big publishing deal, I will continue to do my

own marketing. Plus I will continue to self-publish other works as I am determined to be a hybrid author, someone who blends both publishing options for the best of both worlds.

This September marks the one-year anniversary of your life as a full-time writer-entrepreneur. How will you celebrate?

I prefer milestones, rather than dates. I recently celebrated signing with my agent with a new necklace and champagne. That was a milestone. But the one-year anniversary for the business is not significant yet as I have not achieved my stretch targets. I just wrote a post on how the Olympics are a great measuring tool for us. Four years is long enough to see significant change, but short enough to remember where we were. In September 2008, I was nowhere. I had no business, no blog, no online presence. I hadn't considered writing fiction. In September 2012, I am a full-time author-entrepreneur with two Amazon bestselling novels that have sold ~50,000 copies, signed with a New York agent, as well as an international speaker. So I'm excited about 2016 and will (hopefully) celebrate milestones before that! ■

Editor's Note: Learn more about Joanna Penn at her fiction site, www.JFPenn.com, or follow her blog for writers at www.TheCreativePenn.com. You can also find her nonfiction book, [How To Love Your Job or Find A New One](#), available free on Amazon Kindle.



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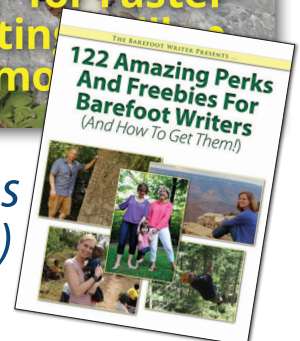
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**“Be grateful for criticism.
Use it to become a better writer.
Praise is useless.”**

— Becky Masterman, Published Author

By Mindy McHorse

Becky Masterman, author of a two-book series with a third on the way, is both a connoisseur and creator of enticing phrases and fascinating storylines.

After getting her start from a friendly NaNoWriMo-based competition with her husband, the seed of Becky’s first published novel was born, called *Rage Against the Dying*. A debut thriller, *Rage* went on to be nominated for seven awards including the Edgar, Anthony, Gold Dagger, Macavity, Barry, International Thriller Writers, and Audie. On top of that, the entertainment rights were recently purchased by Tomorrow-ITV Studios. Since publication, Becky has amassed a

healthy number of fans who celebrated the recent debut of Book Two in her series, called *Fear the Darkness*.

Becky was kind enough to give us an interview from her home in Tucson, Arizona, where she shared some backstory into her writing journey, including how she’s able to enjoy the (sometimes painful) process.

Born with a true love for reading, Becky is proof you can successfully pursue the writing dream at any age. Note her interesting advice on learning about the people we love most, and a clever way to go about it, not to mention her entertaining “sweater” take on the rewriting process!

Was writing a lifelong dream or something you grew into?

I only started studying the craft in earnest when I was 40, writing plays. But I think there are qualities that fit us for being writers from early on. A love of stories, and a tendency to ask “what if?” Being comfortable on the outside of a group, observing. And those times I would make my mother a card and she’d burst into tears reading it. I thought that was pretty cool, being able to move someone to tears.

The New York Times review of your book, *Rage Against the Dying*, called it a “scorching debut” and “cleverly manipulative,” among other compliments. Did this — plus the seven awards you were nominated for — make it harder or easier to write the sequel?

Those were heady times. It was very hard to write the second book but I think if the first had been an abysmal failure that would have been worse. Because I prefer to read something new, rather than a repetition with, say, a higher body count, I tried to throw an entirely different problem at my protagonist. As a result, there are a few people who tell me they liked the first book better. I don’t feel badly about that, just grateful for their honesty so I can try to do better with my third. It’s not about satisfying my own creative drive, it’s about delighting readers.

A photo posted by the Facebook Community, Readers of New York, shows a woman reading your book on the subway. What does it feel like to see a stranger who chose, out of all the thousands of books out there, to read your book?

This is such a good point. Writers feel badly when their books don’t sell as well as anticipated, but I always said, hey, there are 100,000 new books published every year, not counting those published in previous years! That any one person should choose mine is a miracle.



*Readers of New York, a Facebook community, spotted and photographed a woman reading Becky’s book, *Rage Against the Dying**

Do you prefer reading digital books or paper versions?

I like paper at home because it’s easier to mark pages and flip back and forth. But digital is wonderful for traveling. I can take a trip and not worry about whether I have enough books packed.

You’ve said that one of the best things about writing is attending book clubs. As a writer, what do you gain from that experience?

It’s like a free focus group. Once the club trusts that they’re not going to hurt my feelings, I can ask what worked for them and what didn’t, and get better.

Where do you find the inspiration behind your writing?

You never know where an idea is going to come from. It could appear in a book, or in watching two strangers interact, or a news item, or a magazine article, or a friend telling you their troubles. That means you have to stay alert and ready to make that leap into story. You have to be “writing” all the time.

What’s your favorite indulgence?

Going to the movie theater and bringing home a big bag of kettle corn, then watching a Netflix movie.

Your bio mentions experience as a copywriter. What kind of copywriting did you do, and does that background help when it comes to fiction writing?

It's embarrassing to talk about this with AWAI folks who really write copy. In my job, I just described scientific reference books for catalogs. Most of the time I didn't even know what I was writing about, like schistosomiasis (it's a parasite) or electromagnetics. But it's always valuable to write on deadline, and what I was able to learn in science and medicine (especially forensics) has served well in writing my stories.

Do you think someone can earn a living successfully as a copywriter by day and a novelist by night?

Everyone, at least at first, needs to have a day job. Anthony Trollope, the 19th century British author, worked at a post office his whole life. He would write from 5:30 to 7:30 in the morning, sometimes stopping mid-sentence. That's how disciplined you need to be. It took me nearly 25 years before I was able to support myself on fiction writing alone. Besides, just think of all the great material you collect while moving through the world, working with other people, in copywriting or any other profession.

You've said you go through several revisions in the editorial process. What does that entail — assuming it's more than just tweaking a sentence here and there?

In attempting to cut down to three drafts instead of the seven I was doing for the first two books, I submitted a 50,000-word rough draft of my third book. Here are just a few of the comments I got from my agent and editor: "Change the motive for the villain." "Have a different villain, one who isn't dead before the story starts, it's not satisfying."

"Place the final reveal at a more dramatic moment." "Give the loan shark a bigger part to play, and go deeper into his character because right now he's cartoonish." "Move that murder into the second act." You see, rewriting is more like reknitting a sweater from the inside out, changing the stars to polka dots. It's often agonizing, but it makes a better book, and that's what you want, right?

If you could time travel, where would you want to go?

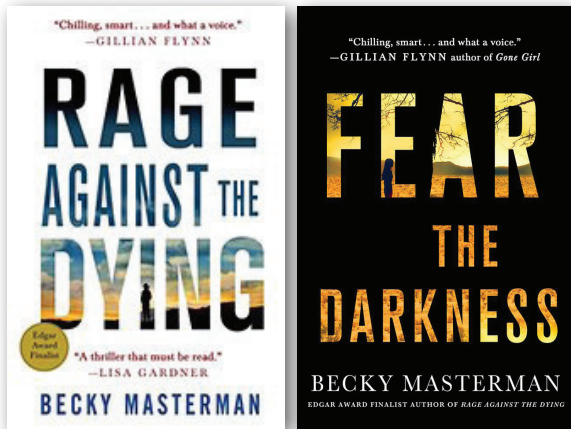
I never met my husband's parents. I would like to go back to when they were alive, and ask them hard questions about themselves that my husband can't answer. Maybe this is being a writer, wanting to dig into the lives of people we love. I already asked my parents about themselves and now I understand them, and me, much better. Ask your parents the questions. Try to encourage them to answer honestly. They may be more interesting than you think.

What did you gain from the first six books you wrote, even though they were never published?

There's a story about a conductor who was recording a symphony. After the 85th take, he said,



Career Day with Cathy Molina's 5th grade class at Mission Manor Elementary, Tucson, Arizona. Becky collaborated with the kids on stories to show what authors do.



Becky's first two books in her thriller series featuring detective Brigid Quinn, a highly original heroine

"Go ahead and use it, but I think I could do better." This is the glory of the creative process, always reaching for an unobtainable vision. I may be a genre writer, but that doesn't mean I'm a hack writer. Those first six books taught me the craft of character and plotting, and how, as Roger Rosenblatt says in his book on writing, how to move the human heart. I learn more with each successive book I write.

How do you measure your success as a writer?

Certainly, advances on royalties are gratifying, and I suppose that's one way to measure success,

but once you have enough to survive, the rest is a game. If money is your measure, you'll never feel like a success because someone out there will always be making a lot more. And what felt like a lot of money in your bank account this year, next year doesn't feel like so much. No, success is measured in those moments when you look at a sentence you've written and think, "Now that's original."

What are your future book-writing plans?

I want to keep writing about Brigid Quinn, my 60-something retired FBI agent. I just signed contracts for the next two in the series. I'm finishing what I hope is the final major revision of the third book, and am very excited about an idea I have for the fourth.

What's your top advice for someone who wants to get published someday, regardless of the type of book?

Read, read, read. Did you know Stephen King reads about 80 books a year? And be grateful for criticism. Use it to become a better writer. Praise is useless. ■

"What's Your Book About?"

Be prepared for the question you'll hear most frequently once you confess you're writing a book. Your answer should be a one-sentence summary that's clear, easy to understand, and emotionally intriguing. And, it should only take about 30 seconds to relay.

This summary is described as a one-line hook, a log-line, or an "elevator pitch" (as in, sum up your plot in the length of an elevator ride).

Here are two simple formulas you could use to create your summary:

When [initial conflict] happens to [characters], they must [do something to overcome conflict] in order to [wrap up their mission or goal].

[Your protagonist] must [active verb] [active goal] [antagonist] in order to [stakes].

Hint: For inspiration, look at the one-line descriptions of your favorite movies on IMDB.com.

Capturing your novel idea in one sentence is a great way to give your story focus, and keep you on track as you're writing.

..... become a better writer

3 Ways NaNoWriMo Helps Make You a **Better Writer**



Bonus Wisdom from Chris Baty

After our interview, Chris Baty stayed to share some additional thoughts on how NaNoWriMo helps improve your writing skills. Enjoy his three bonus tips ...

Mindy: In your experience, how is the writing affected when you try to compress a big project like a novel into a short amount of time?

Chris: On January 1st, we all have our New Year's writing resolutions, right? I still cling to these where I say, "Okay, this year I'm going to finish revising this novel ... or I'm going to write two more novels." We all set these writing goals. But then, we kind of revise them when everything goes awry two weeks into January. **Right, because life gets in the way.**

Exactly. Things like your day job, or lack of confidence, having to care for others, the Internet,

whatever. You know, I feel like the Internet is really one of my largest foes. I start writing in Word and somehow a browser window is open. And before I know it I have checked every social media site I have. The Internet devours novels. It's the death-bringer of novels. Health issues can also make it difficult to spend a sustained amount of time typing. And lack of focus. Perfectionism is a huge one, and a hard one. Or maybe your ideas are truly just bad ideas.

[Laughing.] And you're saying NaNoWriMo helps writers overcome these things?

I think there are three things that NaNoWriMo does that are helpful to writers, maybe counterintuitively helpful. Number one is that NaNoWriMo lowers your expectations. Because I think as writers we have a really great sense of what good writing is, right? We have a very good ability to detect good writing versus bad writing.

And yeah, we've all gone to workshops and read books on writing, but when it comes time to sit down at the page, we have all these voices in our heads. Like, "Do this, don't do this," or, "You know, that's going to make an agent hate you someday." That's all there. But I think the worst thing we've done is we've just read a lot of really wonderful books. Right? We've read so many books, books that have changed the way we see the world. Books that open up new ways of seeing and feeling things we've never felt before. And so when we sit down to write, even though we know we're not supposed to do this, we hold those up as the ballpark model for where our writing should be. And when it strays from that, which it inevitably does, we get discouraged and think that maybe there's a problem with the idea itself.

Or, maybe we just decide to quit that project and start something new. And then sometimes we get caught in "Beautiful First Chapter Syndrome." It's this idea that as soon as you get every word of that first chapter right, then you can move forward. But that quest will take the rest of your life! So the nice thing about NaNoWriMo and this idea that output is the most important thing, is that it really gives you permission to write a flawed novel.

A flawed novel?

It sounds strange, but it really unlocks things like that inner critic who comes along on all of our journeys and tells us where we've made a mistake and what we can do better. That creature is terrified by the 30-day novel. That critic will tell you, "No, you can't write a good novel in 30 days." But remember, that inner critic is really great at certain things. Inner critics and inner editors are really good at helping us revise things and hone things. We need them, right? We need them to help us shape that first draft into something more beautiful. But when we let that inner editor loose while things are still forming, it will go in and tear them apart and second-guess ideas right out of

existence — things that really could have been the best parts of our books.

So the nice thing when you tell yourself you are going to write a flawed novel is that you do not have to check in with your inner editor about these things. And I think that is such a powerful place to write from.

So lowered expectations is the first thing NaNoWriMo helps writers with.

Absolutely. Number two is speed. It seems a little weird, but writing so much so quickly can actually improve the quality of your writing. I think that this gets into the interesting power of momentum. Take Isaac Newton. I don't know if you heard of him ... that he was this novel-writing coach who lived back in the 1600s. He wrote this excellent treatise — it was like the *Bird By Bird* of its time — called *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. Great book, right? Still a bestseller today. He thought it was about physics, but it was actually about fiction writing. And it contains these two natural laws that we all remember from science class, which is that objects in motion tend to stay in motion, and objects at rest tend to stay at rest, right?

1,667

words is what you want
to hit every day.

So I have spent a lot of time talking to people who have dedicated their lives to writing and have had really successful novel writing careers. And I feel like the one thing that I've seen them do better than most people is leverage this power of momentum. They may not be fast writers, but they are very consistent writers. And I think that the nice thing about NaNoWriMo is that you really have no choice but to write with a sense

of momentum. 1,667 words is what you want to hit every day. There's a lot of pressure to get that word count in. Because you do not want to fall into that horrible pit of word-count debt. Right?

Word-count debt?

It's the worst. I have spent entire months in that hole — it's not a pleasant place to be. So one of the nicest things about NaNoWriMo is that people start to really take this seriously and they start to structure their day so they can hit that count every day.

You know, when I give advice to people who are just starting out writing, one of the things I say is to write a lot. Just get those words down on the page. Because I think that when you embrace this idea of momentum, when you turn off that inner editor, when you are hitting the page every day, you are really more deeply in contact with your

“There's a saying that you can edit a crappy manuscript into a great book, but you can't revise a blank page into anything but a blank page.” — Chris Baty

characters and their voices. You're more in the center of it because you're not doing that thing we typically do where you spend half of your writing session trying to remember who these people are and what they wanted. And because of that, you're kind of pushed to keep going, and your writing becomes looser. You're freed up from this sense of perfection that we talked about, and as a result you end up tapping into these great worlds of improvisation and intuition. You have these giddy late-night writing sessions, and they end up surprising you and forming the heart of your favorite parts of the book. As a result, you end up writing some things that you normally wouldn't get to access otherwise.

This is why when I talk about National Novel Writing Month, I say that a lot of times when you write for quantity rather than quality, you end up getting both. So that's the second one.

Love it. And the third thing NaNoWriMo helps writers with?

Yes, and this is my last one. Though I feel like I could do seven billion lessons on what I've learned from NaNoWriMo.

This is probably the single most important one. NaNoWriMo helps you make time for your writing. I do this all the time, where I make excuses like, I'm teaching, or I'm tired and I don't want to write when I'm tired. And there's the fact that as adults, we get so caught up in helping other people get their stuff done. We do this as parents, we do this as employees, we do this as friends, and our to-do lists really are long, right? So we have all these non-negotiable things that we're getting paid to do. Or our child will have to hitchhike home from the bus stop if we don't pick them up. Plenty of things we really have to do. And so you end up pushing your writing aside and as a result, I think these creative projects consistently drift down on your to-do list. And the nice thing about November is that for 30 days, you agree that you are going to orient your life around your writing rather than vice versa.

Such an excellent point, and so important. Any closing thoughts you'd like to share?

If you're reading this, it's because writing matters to you. It takes on adventures it opens up new worlds to you. It makes life more magical. And our time on this planet is really short. And right now, you have your own unique inspiration, your own way of seeing the world, this set of insights that you have now but you will never have again. Every year that you're alive, a new book becomes possible. But also every year that you're alive, a book you might have written and didn't goes

away. And part of what I love about NaNoWriMo is that it forces you to finally make time to capture one of these fleeting, ephemeral stories that only you can write. And that makes you feel happier and it makes you feel more fulfilled.

And I think you are doing the world a really big favor. Because your voice is really important and

your stories really matter. And whatever it is, this next idea that you're thinking about working on, whatever project it is that you're going to embark on, I can guarantee that there are people out there that have been waiting their entire lives to read it.

So here's to an inspired, and over-caffeinated month of getting the first draft done! ■

grammar check



Who and Whom – Which One Should You Use?

When you ask writers what words give them trouble, *who* and *whom* almost always make the list. It's no wonder — there are some complicated grammar rules that govern how they're used. But with a simple trick, you can make sure you always get it right.

The Grammar Rules

Who is used when it's the subject of a verb or the complement of a linking verb. Here's an example: *Who* ruined the keyboard? It was Elliot *who* spilled the glass of water on it.

In the first sentence, *who* is the subject. The second sentence is a little trickier. First, find the verbs in the sentence — in this case they're *was* and *spilled*. Then pick out their subjects: *Elliot* and *who*. *Who* is the right choice because it's a subject.

Whom is used as the object of a verb or preposition. For example: You told *whom* to write the article? (Object of the verb *told*.) Or: George is the one to *whom* I was speaking. (Object of the preposition *to*.)

One exception is when you have a prepositional pronoun that's also a subject. In this situation, the correct choice is *who*: I didn't know either team, so I cheered for *who* had the brightest uniforms.

The Trick

If you're not sure whether to use *who* or *whom*, try replacing it with *he* or *him*.

- If *he* sounds better, use *who*.
- If *him* sounds better, use *whom*.

Note: You may have to split the sentence for it to make sense. Now, try this trick with the previous examples:

Who ruined the keyboard?

He ruined the keyboard?

It was Elliot *who* spilled the glass of water on it.

It was Elliot. *He* spilled the glass of water on it.

You told *whom* to write the article?

You told *him* to write the article?

Plotting, Pantsing, or Something Else: How to Maximize Your Productivity by Tapping into the Writing Method That's Best for You



By Stacie Dugan Vourakis

There's been a controversy brewing in the fiction writing world that should be of interest to you, the freelance writer. That controversy is which writing method is the most efficient for creating quality work quickly. The current main contenders are "Plotting," or the use of copious outlines that identify every action to be written in a book, versus something called "Pantsing," an approach where the writer just sits down and goes with her gut until the book is finished.

Both methods have their champions, and successes. Stephen King is known to be a Pantser, while J. K. Rowling is an ardent Plotter. So obviously both methods have merit, but how can you apply these methods, or aspects of them, to help you do your best, most productive writing?

And what's the payoff for finding out which you are?

Simple: When you know which writing style is best for you, you'll enjoy faster, easier, more flowing, creative, and engaging writing. Not to mention less pain and fewer writing blocks.

So today, I'm going to help you discover whether you're a Pantser or a Plotter. You may be surprised, because even if you file all of your books in alphabetical order and have a color-coded closet, you're not necessarily a Plotter.

And just because your desk is littered with empty soda cans over stacks of old bills does not automatically mean you're a Pantser.

So how do you decide? Simple. Try both.

How to Be a “Pantser”

Start by doing your homework for your writing project. Be sure to compile all of your research, print it out, then read it until you have internalized it. Don't memorize it, just feel it.

Then, take a break. Have lunch, go for a walk, nap, even go to bed for the evening. Put a little space between you and the research material. When you're ready to write, you should be refreshed and the source material should still be fresh in your mind.

Of course, you should have access to your research notes so you can check facts as needed. But don't worry about reading through it again.



Just sit back, relax, and write as though you were talking with a friend or colleague, or even a relative. Think of it as an imaginary “chat” where you anticipate his questions and include the information he needs. Do your best to be persuasive and engaging. This is your time to shine.

When you're finished with your writing, put it away for at least one day. Then review it against

your notes, research material, and whatever guidelines are appropriate for your project. If things seem a little disorganized, now is the time to line it up with an appropriate template. Include anything you may have missed, and polish your copy.

After you've completed a project as a “Pantser,” sit back and reflect on how it felt. Did you sleep like a baby, assured your writing project was going to be breezy and stress free? Was it enjoyable to “chat” with your friend, colleague, or relative? Were you able to have an imagined conversation that flowed naturally and honestly?

If the answer to these questions is not a resounding “Yes,” and your copy is not anywhere up to your standards, clearly you need to try writing as a Plotter ...

How to Be a “Plotter”

Again, the preliminary research for your project is the essential first step.

Next, you need a template. Think of it as the bones on which you will hang your well-thought out and directed words.

Every project has at its most basic, a beginning (or introduction) a middle (an argument), and an end (a satisfying conclusion). This is the plotting stage that the Pantser skips until he edits his first draft.

When you are finished, take a break as in the Pantsering exercise. A little space will make for fresher copy even if you're a Plotter. When you come back to the copy, you should have a fresh mind and clear pathway to complete your project.

Now that you've completed a project as a “Plotter,” how did you feel? Were you empowered? Did your writing come across as tight, cohesive, and compelling? If you're happy with the results, this is the method for you.

But what if you aren't so satisfied with either approach? What's left?

The Secret Alternative ...

I'm going to let you in on a little secret. Though Ms. Rowling is a Plotter, I'm sure if she has a brilliant idea while she's writing, she doesn't throw it out because it wasn't in her outline. She's likely flexible in her approach while relying on her detailed plan for support. She has the best of both worlds working for her, and who can argue with her results?

By the same token, Mr. King probably has ideas jotted on napkins or backs of envelopes

reminding him of storylines that he can refer to in advance of sitting and Pantsing out his stories. I'm sure he also has advanced notions of what he wants to see happen in his books, even if they're just thoughts he has while in the shower.

So which method is best for you? Experiment with both. The reality is that writers are complex and intuitive creatures. Give both methods a try, either strictly or as a blend. Eventually, you'll find the balance that will bring out your best and most prolific work. ■

How to Master **Active Voice** in Your Writing

A general rule of thumb for good writing is to use active voice as much as possible, and to avoid passive voice. But what exactly is passive voice, and why should you stay away from it? Here's what you need to know:

Passive voice means that in a sentence, the subject is being acted upon. In active voice, the subject is performing an action. For example:

Passive voice: The dishes were washed.

Active voice: Tom washed the dishes.

In the first sentence, it's hard to tell who washed the dishes, but in the second, it's clearly Tom. That's the reason editors and writers, as well as readers, prefer active voice — it's more direct and meaningful. You don't have to avoid passive sentences all the time, but choosing active voice when you can will make your writing stronger.

Many writers are in the habit of writing with passive sentence structure. That's especially true for those with an academic or technical background. Don't worry, though, there are some easy ways to spot passive voice in your copy.

Use the **Find function in Word** to look for passive verbs. Here are the most common:

is, was, had been, will be, and **will have been.**

Change them to stronger active sentences where possible.

Use **Hemingway App** (www.hemingwayapp.com). Just paste your text into this free online app, and it will highlight passive voice for you.

"By Zombies" Trick. Not sure if something is passive voice? Insert the phrase "by zombies" after the verb. If the sentence still makes sense, then you have passive voice.

For example:

The survivors were hunted (by zombies). It makes sense, so it's passive voice.

Zombies hunted for survivors (by zombies). It doesn't make sense, so it's active voice.

Active voice makes your writing clearer and more interesting. Get rid of passive voice where you can, and your writing will improve.





7 Quick Prep Tips Before You Start Writing

If you're eager to write a book in 30 days, there's a good chance you already have a story percolating in your mind ... an idea that popped in your head recently, or one that's been trying to get out for a long time. To successfully focus your 30 days on writing, lay some groundwork in advance:

Define your genre.

It may be an obvious point, but identify your book's target audience.

Decide what the book is about.

Write down your one-line hook describing your characters and the central story idea. (See page 25.)

Identify who the characters are.

Build character sketches. Make these profiles as three-dimensional as possible, including names, demographic and psychographic details,

personality traits, social beliefs, and goals. Who are they now? And who do they become? Develop main and secondary characters — what makes them tick? Recap relationships and conflicts that exist or evolve between them.

Write an outline.

Brainstorm how your story is going to unfold. Some people only write a synopsis, that is, a rough idea of what they want to have happen. Others will write a more complex outline with details about events and scenes. Even if you're a pantsier, a roadmap will help you stay on track and avoid tangents. Whether you jot ideas on paper, use a mindmap, or build a spreadsheet, a framework will help you write in a short amount of time. Think "what if?" and start plotting. Generally, you need an opening, an inciting event, and three obstacles or disasters for your protagonist (one

at the end of Act I, one at the midpoint, and one at the end of Act II) before the climax (the final battle). Finally, it's time for the resolution.

Build an idea bank.

Write down any random ideas for scenes, dialogue, or events. You may not be sure how they connect to your plan, but these elements may fit in a place you don't know about today.

Compost.

Spend some time letting your subconscious percolate about your characters, their conflicts, and the basic premise of your story.

Write what you know ... or do your world-building in advance.

If you stick with what you know, you'll avoid time-consuming research. But, if your novel requires you to create an exciting, original world, you'll want to take time before you start writing to develop all the details about this new place.

Use these quick prep tips to get a clear picture of the story you want to tell, and then let your muse go wild. ■

How to Prep Your Personal Life

Writing a book is a monster undertaking — especially if you want to do it in 30 days! Here's five tips for prepping before you start writing in earnest.

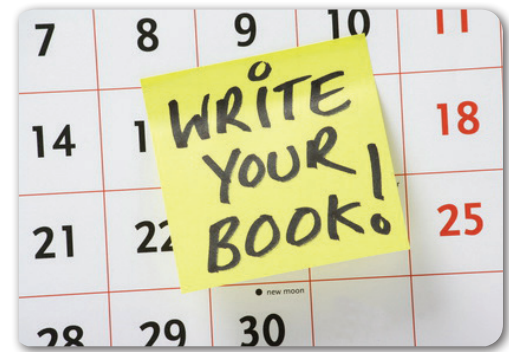
- **Talk to your family, roommates, friends.** You're going to need their support so you can focus your energy on cranking out your novel. Notify them of your plan, and explain why it's important to you. If you're ready to share, tell them what your book is about.
- **Build your schedule.** Designate writing times and let everyone know. Avoid making any unnecessary appointments.
- **Ask not to be interrupted.** Avoid commotion by explaining ahead of time that you'd appreciate not being disrupted when you're in the writing flow. You may want to define what constitutes an emergency ("Joey is bleeding" vs. "I can't find my pink sweater!"). Make a fun "I'm Writing, Do Not Disturb" sign to post. One dad we know wore a special "Do Not Disturb" shirt when he was camped at his keyboard.
- **Complete chores ahead of time.** Set up bill paying in advance, stock up on necessities, and pre-clean and launder as much as you can. Split up chores that can't be done in advance and ask family and friends to chip in and help. (Of course, say thank you!)
- **Set up your workspace.** Choose your perfect place to write. Set up a spot in an office, the spare bedroom, the end of the kitchen table ... wherever you think you'll be comfortable and productive. Collect the things you'll need: computer, printer, paper, dictionary, paper and pens, reference books, a place for your coffee mug or water bottle, and any notes you've written.



Complete these simple steps and you'll set the stage for success.

Unleash Your Inner Novelist

Write a Novel in 30 Days – Without Losing Your Sanity



by Li Vasquez-Noone

Do you have a novel in you, waiting to get out, but just can't find the time to write? Well, I have the perfect opportunity for you, one that "forces" you to write every day and get that novel done.

Plus, it offers all sorts of other benefits to writers, including building your confidence, tapping your creativity, and establishing good writing habits.

National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo, begins every November 1 at midnight. To "win," you must write a novel, or at least 50,000 words, by midnight, November 30.

There are no judges and no prizes. No one ever reads your submission. Yet, over 400,000 people stepped up and took the challenge in 2014, including 81,311 students and educators in the

Young Writers Program.

NaNoWriMo was founded by freelance writer Chris Baty in 1999. From its humble beginnings — 21 participants and 6 winners — it's grown into a massive, worldwide event. Many of these would-be novelists are kids and teens, participating in NaNoWriMo's Young Writers Program. There's also a Script Frenzy contest in April for aspiring screenwriters.

But, if there are no prizes, why do it?

"The 50,000-word challenge has a wonderful way of opening up your imagination and unleashing creativity," says Baty. "When you write for quantity instead of quality, you end up getting both. Also, it's a great excuse for not doing any dishes for a month."

All kidding aside, writing a novel in 30 days forces you to be disciplined and committed to your writing schedule. You will tap your creativity not only in your storytelling, but also in your time-management skills.

By the end of the month, you'll feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment about what you've achieved. And, NaNoWriMo can do wonders for your self-esteem. Tackling such a large project on a tight deadline — and finishing it — will give a boost to your confidence that will carry over into other projects you work on throughout the year.

And, while there are no official prizes, there can be rewards. More than 250 novels begun during NaNoWriMo have been published, including *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen, *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern, and *The Darwin Elevator* by Jason M. Hough, all *New York Times* bestsellers.



NaNoWriMo is an immense undertaking. It can be tricky juggling your writing with work, family, and the Thanksgiving holiday (if you're in the U.S.). But, if you've ever dreamed of writing a novel, the feeling of satisfaction upon completion makes the effort worth it.

I participated and won the last five years. From my experiences, I've come up with some tips to help you not only make it to your 50,000 words (or beyond), but also enjoy the ride.

1. Plan your story in advance. If possible, get your story down in outline form before you start. Usually I have some notes about my characters and a few paragraphs about my story. One year, I started with no plan, and I struggled all the way to the finish.

2. Set a daily word goal. But remember, there may be days you won't be able to write. If you have any family gatherings, special projects you're working on, or are going to be out of town at all, that should figure into your calculations.

To write 50,000 words in 30 days, you need to write 1,667 words a day minimum. But, suppose you're going out of town for four days. If you don't want to worry about writing during that time, then you only have 26 days, and need to write at least 1,924 words per day.

3. Exceed your daily word goal if possible. If you have extra time, take advantage of it to knock out 3,000 words in an evening, or do a marathon of 5,000 words or more on a Saturday. And then, stay ahead. If life gets unexpectedly hectic, you'll appreciate the extra cushion!

4. Avoid the NaNoWriMo forums. The forums may be a great way to connect with others, but the conversations can take up a lot of your time. Time that would be better spent writing. The exception to this is ...

5. Take advantage of the word wars, sprints, and prompts on the forum. Have writer's block? Can't get motivated? Need help getting your plot going again? There's a thread for that.

Word wars and sprints are informal contests to write as much as possible in a short amount of time. They are great tools to get your creative juices flowing again. And, if your plot is dragging, you can go to the Plot Doctoring forum and get all sorts of suggestions to rev it up. One of my favorites was, "When in doubt, just add zombies."

6. Get creative about time management. I'm not much of a morning person, but I usually get up an hour earlier to write during November. It's such a sense of accomplishment to start the day with 1,000 words! I also write at lunchtime, and right before going to bed.

7. Treat yourself. That might mean splurging on your favorite coffee creamer, some meditation, or carving out the time to go to the gym. Indulge a little in whatever energizes you and gets your creativity flowing. Also, try to stay caught up on your sleep. By the end of the third week of November, you'll be glad you did.
8. Don't delete anything you write during NaNoWriMo. Editing can wait until December! The folks at NaNoWriMo suggest that if you feel you must revise, simply strike through or change the font to white, but leave it in place for now. You wrote the words; let them be a part of your word count.
9. "Stop when you are going good and you know what will happen next." Employ Ernest Hemingway's trick and end each day's writing in the middle of a thought. I've found it's a good idea to take down a few notes to remind myself in the morning what I was planning to write next.
10. Backup, backup, backup. Every year, I hear about someone losing their entire novel to a corrupt file or faulty hard drive during the last week of NaNoWriMo. Don't be a statistic! Back up early and often. Each evening, I make a new copy of the file, email a copy to myself, and back it up on a flash drive. I also set my word processing program to automatically save every five minutes.
11. Finally ... bask in your success. You did it! You wrote 50,000 words, or more, in 30 days. Take a bow, take a nap, email your friends, get a massage, and start editing! ■

Stuck? 5 Fast Tips to Cure Writer's Block

1. DETERMINE WHY YOU'RE STUCK.

Are you tired? Get some coffee or take a nap. Are you out of ideas? Do more research. Just don't feel like writing? Then try again tomorrow. If you know *why* you're stuck, it will be a lot easier to fix!

2. DO SOMETHING OTHER THAN WRITE.

Go for a walk. It's the closest thing to doing nothing while still being productive. Do some chores. Watch the sunset. And whatever you do, *do not think about writing*. Return to your project refreshed.

3. TALK IT OUT.

Talk with someone about your project. More often than not, they'll say something that clicks — and voilà! Your block is gone.

4. DICTATE.

Sometimes you just get tired of typing. Walk around your office with a recorder or use dictation software like Dragon Naturally Speaking. Don't worry about sounding silly — you can edit everything later. Watch as your ideas start to flow!

5. TAKE A SHOWER.

There's just something about hot water and the smell of soap that lets your brain relax. Showering is also very similar to walking — you're doing something without having to think about it. Many writers find they have some of their best ideas in the shower!



5

Must-Have Tools for Writers

Compiled by the Barefoot Writer Staff

Typing over 1,600 words a day can be tough on your body and your mind. Here are some gadgets that will help you maintain your productivity, write better and faster, keep your writing projects organized, and help you come up with great ideas. And, they're fun and easy to use, too!



1. Wireless Pen

Sometimes staring at a blank computer screen can empty your head of all good ideas. That's when it's time to break out the old-fashioned legal pad.

Now, with the Logitech Mobile Digital Scribe wireless pen, you won't have to spend time typing your notes later. Just attach the receiver that comes with the pen to the top of your paper.

Write like normal. The receiver collects and stores your notes as you write.

When you're done, plug the receiver into your computer's USB port. You can then import your notes as an image file or have the program turn them into digital, editable text.

This pen is ideal for authors. It's portable, gets the good ideas flowing, and it turns longhand notes into typed text in minutes.

Another option if you like the feel of writing by hand, but dread retyping your notes is the LiveScribe SmartPen. It transfers your handwriting — even drawings — into digital text and images. It records audio, too, transferring it into digital text as well. It's great for fast and furious brainstorming sessions.

2. AquaNotes, The Waterproof Notepad



It's true; writers get the best breakthrough ideas in the most inconvenient places.

I think we'd all agree the shower gets credit as the best place to generate ideas.

But, what do you do when you have your next Big Idea and shampoo on your head? That's no longer an issue with AquaNotes, the waterproof notepad for your shower.

AquaNotes hangs in your shower by a suction cup and includes a pencil. Water rolls right off the paper but your message stays clear. No more jumping out of the shower before you're done to capture an idea.

3. Evernote

Evernote is like a virtual filing cabinet. It allows you to organize all the research and notes you're collecting for a writing project in one place. You can clip web pages (not a link that could expire — the entire page as you saw it originally), save videos and images, record audio, scan in paper documents, and make notes on everything you collect. It's completely searchable, so you can easily find what you're looking for when you need it.

It's online, too, so you can access your files from your home computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet computer. And it's free!



4. Dragon Dictation

If you type slowly, hate to type, or prefer to speak your ideas aloud, Dragon Dictation is a lifesaver. It's a handy program available for laptops, desktop computers, and some smartphones.



All you have to do is talk. Dragon instantly converts your spoken words into type on your device. Because it learns to recognize your voice, it gets better the more you use it.

If you get the app for your smartphone — or use Siri on the iPhone — it's a great way to record ideas away from your desk without having to type them later. You'll save time and keystrokes.

5. Digital Voice Recorder

We writers often get some of our best ideas when we're away from our keyboards and without a pen in sight. That's why every writer should carry a digital voice recorder at all times. If you're out and about at your child's soccer game, walking the dogs, or running errands, and a great idea pops in your head, simply whip out your trusty recorder and start talking. Your great ideas will be saved!



A digital model is ideal as they store hours of talk time, but you don't need to get anything fancy. Just look for one with good battery life and a decent number of recording hours. And you can download files to your computer for easy playback.

Of course, you can buy a digital recording app for many smartphones as well. If you have an iPhone, try "iProRecorder." ■

Effortlessly Write, Organize, and Export Your Writing into Various Formats

By Joe Lilli

Writing a book, white paper, or sales copy? Consider using Scrivener, a word processor and project management tool.



Originally created for writing fiction, Scrivener works great with all kinds of writing — from novels to blog posts, from screenplays to speeches. It allows you to move ideas from your head to your screen faster, more efficiently.

Research Any Type of Writing Project

For instance, say you have a big writing project and face the challenge of collecting and tracking research.

Scrivener includes a research binder that holds text, PDFs, URLs, pictures, video, napkin doodles, mindmaps, and most other digital media.

So whenever you find a helpful resource, simply drag-and-drop it into Scrivener.

When you're writing, you can jump between writing and research views. Or, split Scrivener's screen so your text and research document are displayed next to each other.

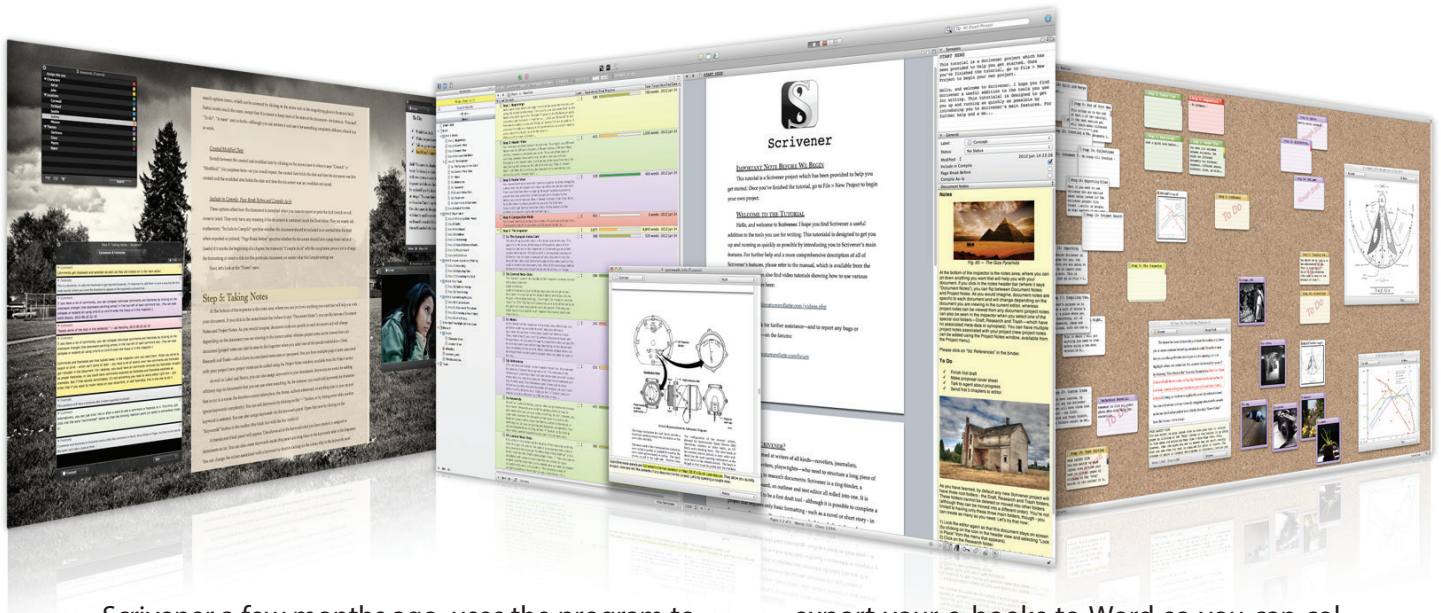
Organize Thoughts, Notes, and Much More

Scrivener also makes it easier to organize your writing.

Ever stick note cards to a corkboard? You can do the same with Scrivener's digital corkboard.

Every document is attached to a virtual index card, allowing you to jot a synopsis. This makes it easy to rearrange sections and chapters while letting you see everything at once.

Barefoot Writer Steve Coombes, who purchased



Scrivener a few months ago, uses the program to help him outline and organize his writing faster.

"I've already moved my special report and book writing into it, and I'm also looking into using it for my long-form sales letters and the monthly newsletter I'm Managing Editor for," he says.

Write ... And Keep at it

Ready to write? Go into Scrivener's composition mode. It gives you a single column of text — and nothing else.

Want to check on your word count or need a useful tool? Mouse over the bottom of the screen.

Scrivener's "snapshot" feature allows you to return to an earlier version of your text. So before editing a block of text, just take a snapshot of it. You can go back to the original version for reference, or restore it if you prefer the older version.

Export to Your Platform of Choice

Scrivener allows you to export to nearly any format. You can export your blog posts to HTML

... export your e-books to Word so you can collaborate with others ... or export directly to PDF, Kindle, ePub, or iBooks Author.

Check Out the 30-Day Free Trial

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Scrivener does a lot for you, so it may seem a bit overwhelming at first. It also uses several icons and symbols that take getting used to.

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Do you want to write a book? Join your fellow Barefoot Writers at the new Barefoot Writer [MAP Your Book Blog](#) where Executive Editor Mindy McHorse will walk you through the process of getting a book written, marketed, and published — while enjoying the process along the way!

Barefoot Writers Come From All Walks Of Life...

Proof You Can Live *The Writer's Life* Doing Whatever You Like Best

Read Li Vasquez-Noone's story and you're bound to get a smile on your face. Better than that, discover how she's creating a *writer's life* around *her* needs, based entirely on the kind of writing and lifestyle that makes her happiest.

How did you get started as a Barefoot Writer?

Instead of making a plan to become a writer and

pursuing it while I had a paying job, I did things backwards. I quit my corporate job with no plan, and then had to figure out what to do! I had always loved writing — I've kept a personal blog for years, and wrote novels during NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) a few times. After I left my job, I spent a couple of months looking at my options, trying to figure out how to make writing pay. And then I learned about AWAI. It seemed like fate.

What kind of writing do you do?

My first writing job was an article for an online teen magazine in 2011. I met my client through LinkedIn, and ended up writing two more articles for the publication. After that, I had the opportunity to write a few articles for AWAI. I realized I love the style and format of articles and blogs. So I focused on them.

I now blog full-time, with several steady clients. I cover a variety of topics. Most are business and travel-related, but I've written some blogs for industrial and automotive topics that I had to research a lot. I don't worry about not writing for a particular niche, though, because these are recurring assignments and I'm getting to know



Li bids a newly-hatched sea turtle "Good luck!" before releasing it into the ocean near Playa del Carmen, Mexico

the topics as I go along. Plus, I've learned some very interesting things along the way — like the finer points of drag racing!

How do you measure your own success?

I won't deny it — I like making money. And the fact that I can support myself with my writing makes me very happy. But I also love what I do! If I didn't need to make money, I would still be blogging for myself.

Do you have anything nearby that inspires you?

I kept the very first check I ever got as payment for my writing and had it framed after cashing it. It sits on my desk where I can see it every day as I work. (And I still have the actual check! My bank

allows checks to be deposited using a computer and scanner.)

Any time I feel down, I look at it to remind me that my work has value. I also made a sign with my monthly income goal and put it up on the wall above my computer. It inspires me to keep pushing forward.

What does your future hold?

Amazing things! It's always been my goal to be able to travel when I want, and my husband and I plan to semi-retire overseas. As a Barefoot Writer, being able to work from anywhere, that goal is in sight. There are so many destinations both in the U.S. and overseas that I've wanted to see for years but couldn't because of time or finances. All that's left is to decide where to go.

I now have the chance to spend more time on my hobbies (wine making, running, and gluten-free cooking), and more time connecting with friends. And I plan to double my income. All thanks to becoming a Barefoot Writer!

What would you tell someone brand-new to the Barefoot Writing world?

When I decided to become a writer, I thought I had to write sales letters. The problem was, I didn't want to write sales letters! Luckily I discovered I love to write articles and blogs. It thrills me to be able to do what I love and actually get paid for it. That makes me feel successful.

You need to find what works for you, whether it's sales letters, blogs, travel writing, e-Books, or whatever. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking, it's there. Once you find it, keep at it, even if it takes a while to get established! Your effort will pay off. ■



Li visiting the archaeological site of Chichen Itza in the Yucatàn

From “Layoff to Payoff” Penny Thomas Masters the Barefoot Living Lifestyle

Looking for the inspiration to get started in your writing career? Then look no further than Penny Thomas. Not only has she built up a successful, control-beating copywriting career, she's also just completed her first novel during NaNoWriMo and is well on her way to leveraging her writing ability to build what she terms her “empire.” As someone who grew up reveling in social events and constant fun (just read her story to see), Penny has clearly figured out how to create a life that mirrors those same elements — and it's all possible because of her Barefoot Writer status.

How did you come to be a copywriter?

My last “traditional” job was in the investment banking industry. After 9/11, the industry went through a lot of challenges – lots of people got laid off, bonuses were cut, and morale was very low. Around this time, I got the AWAI letter “Can you write a letter like this?” My job involved a lot of writing sales material so I was intrigued, and I signed up for *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*. It arrived just before I got laid off (along with 25% of the bank's staff) at the end of 2002. I scraped together the money to go to Bootcamp 2003, which gave me the boost to really go for copywriting (if you pull up my e-book *Layoff to Payoff* on pennythomas.com, or AWAI's site, you'll see the full story).

Sounds like you found out about copywriting at the perfect time. I've also heard that you're working on a novel. Can you tell us about that?

I had three stories lying around unfinished, and last November, during National Novel Writing Month – NaNoWriMo.org – I finished one of them.

Now all I have to do is edit and sell it! My three novels fall under the General Fiction or Women's Fiction genres.

Bravo! That's an accomplishment

worth being proud of. Do you have any pre-writing rituals that helped you finish the book, or help with your copywriting?

Not for copywriting. I just sit down and throw some words on the screen. Then I sit at my computer for an hour before I allow myself to get up. Sometimes I write for the whole hour, sometimes I can't get anything down.

But I do not do anything else during that hour – no checking email, phone, Facebook, or Google – nothing on the screen but my Word document.

For my creative writing, I meditate before I write. I sit down, close my eyes, and get into the persona of my hero or heroine.

This takes about 15 minutes, then I pull up the document, read the last few lines, write down the word count, and get writing. I do not edit as I write. I aim to add between 1,000 and 2,000 words a session (a “session” is not getting up from my computer).

I do have an “end of day” ritual — I clean off my desk and get everything lined up and ready for the morning. I make a “to-do” list for the next day and place it on my screen.

That's excellent advice. Tell us, Penny, how



Penny getting ready to fly in style down to Charleston, SC

do you take advantage of the freedom that comes with life as a Barefoot Writer?

When I worked in a traditional job, I used up at least three hours a day commuting. Add on another hour for lunch and at least an hour in the morning getting ready for work. It was difficult doing anything productive during the commute – too many modes of transportation and a lot of noise. So to do seven hours of paid work, I had to add on four hours of non-work (unpaid). Now I can use those four hours to play the piano, go curling, or do anything I like that I didn't have time for before. I also like the fact that my clients have no idea when or where I work. So if something comes up – like an all-day curling competition (called a bonspiel) in Maryland or a kayaking trip, I can participate and make up the writing time early in the morning or late at night.

I am moving away from direct-response copywriting for clients and exploring the information publishing field for myself. I'm planning to build my own IP site and subsequently an empire (big dreams!). I couldn't dream about something like this when I held a traditional 9-to-5, cubicle job! Being a Barefoot Writer has given me the confidence and skills to go wherever I want.

What's the most important thing a new writer should do to get started?

WRITE! And Write EVERY DAY.

I've seen too many writers get caught up in studying writing, reading up on marketing theory, participating in webinars, conferences, and teleseminars. But they don't write. If you don't have anything new to write, then

copy out (longhand) passages from the writers you admire and want to emulate. Writing is an art form that gets better with practice. Think about it, you practice painting, playing a musical instrument, sculpting, carving, dancing — and you do it by repeating over and over again the same brush or chisel strokes. You repeat musical pieces until you can play the tune perfectly. You shuffle and tap the same dance steps over and over again. But for some reason we think we can sit down and write something brilliant with no physical practice. The right side of your brain responds to the direct link between your hand and your brain, and writing out the same paragraph time and time again imprints the rhythm of the words and the sentence structure into your mind so you can recreate something similar later on — like control-beating sales copy or a prize-winning novel!

Another piece of advice is to attend as many writing conferences as you can — mix with other writers and learn something new. But don't neglect writing to attend those conferences!



Here's Penny at the Potomac Curling Club in Maryland for a Bonspiel

A Step-By-Step Guide to Writing Your First Book



by Christina Gillick

Last year, I went to a workshop where I learned how to write a book quickly, with the goal of increasing my expert status in my niche.

The book I'm planning to write will be about marketing to potential customers in the self-help niche. It will be like a giant business card for my copywriting business, giving me immediate credibility.

Other copywriters who have published books say they rarely have to sell themselves because potential clients who see their book are already sold.

It's a great plan, but I still haven't followed the advice in the workshop to finish my book (although I've set a goal of finishing the book this year). It's a shame, too, because the plan is quite quick and easy to follow ... and from what I've seen, very effective.

So I'd like to share a specific strategy from that workshop that allows you to finish an entire well-thought-out book in a surprisingly short period of time.

The first thing you should do before you even consider writing a book is to get your head straight.

You have to build up your belief in yourself. You have to believe that you can write and that you can be successful at it.

Learn to recognize negative thoughts and actions and replace them with positive ones.

Another example of a negative belief is, "I don't have time," or "This is a waste of time." Replace those thoughts with, "I have plenty of time to do what I want to do. If I want to write a book, I need to spend less time each day doing something frivolous and instead spend that time writing."

Or maybe you think, "I don't have the knowledge to write a book." Replace that with, "I do have the knowledge, and what I lack, I can make up in research and interviews."

The next step to writing a book is to weigh your passion and what genres interest you to come up with the topic and plan. A great way to do this is to take out a piece of paper and draw a line down

the middle to make two columns. On one side, title it “What am I passionate about?” and the other “What do I like to read?”

Put at least 5 answers into each column and see where there’s a good matchup. Now you can follow this outline to write it:

Step 1. Pre-Writing

Here, you outline everything you want to talk about and come up with ideas and stories you might share. This was from my workshop, so the type of book you want to write may require you to change a few of these steps ...

Within a week, you could have an entire rough draft outline of your book if you spend some time each day.

On day one, make an outline of your entire book, or if you prefer, mind map it.

On day two, use your outline to make a rough draft of your entire table of contents including chapters and sub-chapters.

On day three, add a few sentences to each section of your table of contents.

On day four, take a tactic used by Zig Zigler to build credibility and add ideas for two stories to each point you want to make. This also entertains the reader and gives you more to talk about.

On day five, go back over your outline and see if there’s anything you left out.

On day six, fix the flow of your outline. Make sure it all makes sense and moves from point to point with ease. If you need to move a point to another chapter or swap chapter 3 for 5, this is the time to do it.

On day seven, rest.

Step 2. Drafting

During drafting, avoid revisions and editing. Instead, just get everything written down or typed.

This isn’t about formatting, spelling, grammar, or writing properly. This is a brain dump! Get it all

out and get it out fast so you don’t lose anything.

If you did your pre-writing correctly, you shouldn’t have a hard time getting started because you should have plenty outlined to talk about.

But if you’re freezing up, tell yourself you can always edit later — and you will. For now, you have to get something on paper — even if you think it’s horrible.

Step 3. Revision

In the revision step, you can finally go back and edit your work.

If you have parts that need to be moved, this is the time to do it. Reorganize your thoughts, and add more details where you need them. Then do another round of revisions to clean, enhance, and polish it. This process could take a while because you might want to go through several revisions to get it as good as possible.

Step 4. Proofreading and Editing

The instructor of the book-writing class said it would be very beneficial to hire out this process, and I agree.

Once you’re finished with the book, you’ll be so close to it that you probably won’t notice minor errors and typos.

Hiring a copy editor will give you a set of fresh eyes to find things you missed and fix the quality of your book.

If you can’t afford to hire a professional copy editor, at least have a few smart friends and family members look for problems like spelling and grammar and things that don’t quite flow.

You might also try to find a fellow writer who has a book he needs edited. You could trade books and do each other a favor.

Step 5. Publish Your Book!

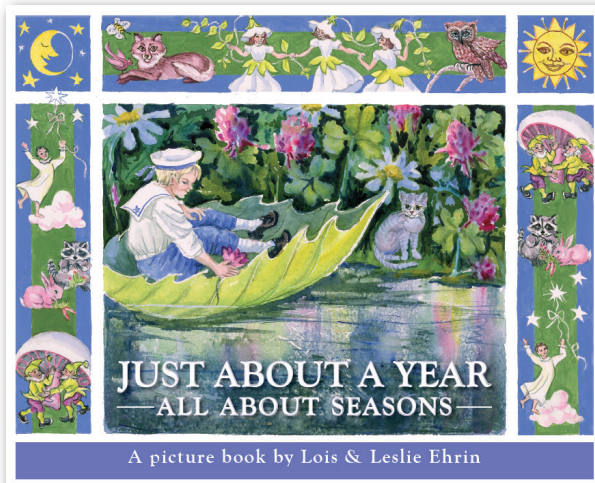
Finally, your book is ready to be read by your audience! See how easy that was? 😊 ■

What is "Glicken"? It's a Yiddish word referring to the icing on the cake. That extra reward on top of the regular benefits you get as a Barefoot Writer.

Imagine Using Your Writing Skills to Help Someone You Love Realize a Lifelong Dream ...

By Leslie Ehrin

My Mom, Lois, introduced me to painting when I was 16 months old. Shortly thereafter, I started telling stories about my paintings which she wrote down, until I could write them myself. One day, while I was studying [*AWAI's Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*](#), I asked her why she encouraged me to be an artist



The book, Just About a Year: All About Seasons, won a 2011 Gold Medal Moonbeam Award



Leslie and Lois Ehrin, Mother-Daughter Writing Team

when it was such a difficult life. She told me that she didn't try to turn me into a professional artist. She just wanted to nurture my creativity so that I would have the tools to make an abundant life. She told me that I was a storyteller first and foremost and that she hoped I would utilize those skills going forward in life.

With that, she pulled out illustrations that she had been working on for twelve years and told me that all of them were inspired by my childhood and our life together with my now late Concert Pianist Father, Mel Ehrin. She also told me that since my Dad passed away in 2006, she had become "stuck" with a creative block and didn't know how to proceed with doing a book for children, because she didn't know how to write one story that would integrate all of the images from the seasons of her life into a book that could teach children the months and seasons.

At that moment, I knew I had to help her. Using what I learned from AWAI and *The Six-Figure Program*, I embarked on writing and publishing this children's book to help mom realize her dream. ■

FREE WEBINAR TRAINING:

How to Create an Author Website that Generates Passive Income 24/7



One of the first questions a publisher asks is, “Do you have a platform?”

One of the first questions a publisher asks is, *“Do you have a platform?”*

In other words, do you have a captive audience of potential buyers?

Publishers never want to start at ground zero. They want you to have your own audience of fans, before they say yes to your book idea or manuscript.

Even if you self-publish, you still need an audience of eager book-lovers who are already fans of your writing. And the best way to build that audience is with your own website.

Web expert, Nick Usborne has created several large audiences from scratch by building content-rich, topic-specific websites – that have earned **over \$250,000 in passive income** over the last nine years.

Now you can join him for this **FREE**, one-hour webinar and learn how to create an author website that generates passive income 24/7.



In just one hour, you’ll learn how to move way beyond a regular “author website,” and build a site that is rich with information on your topic, niche or genre, attracts tens of thousands of devoted, ready-to-buy fans, and even makes you a **steady stream of passive income** on the side!

Register now — it’s Free!

[Click here to learn how to build your author platform.](#)