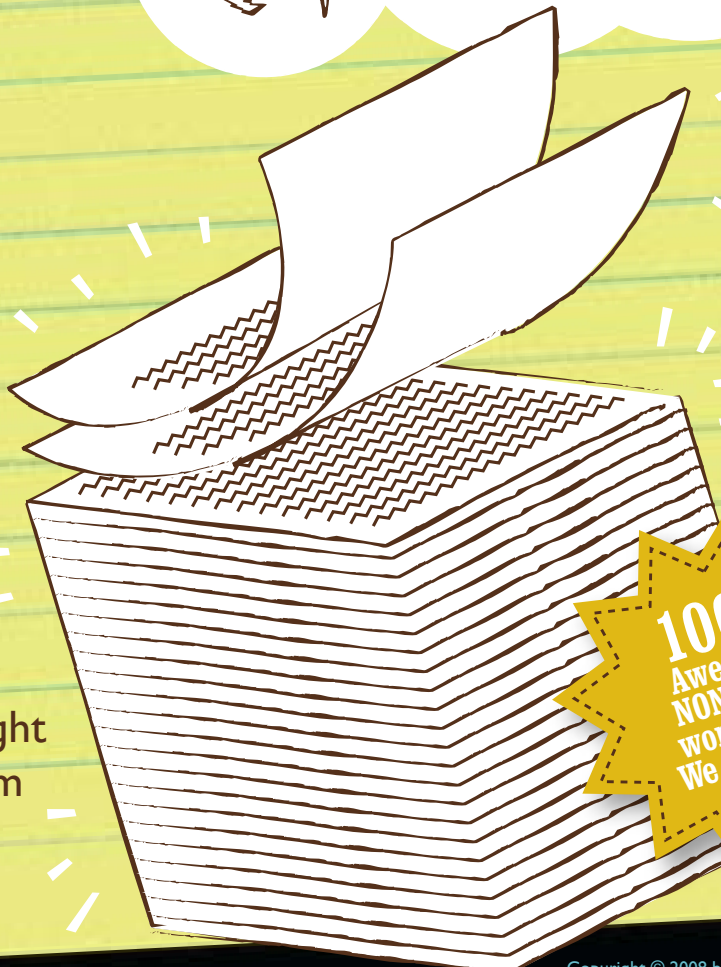
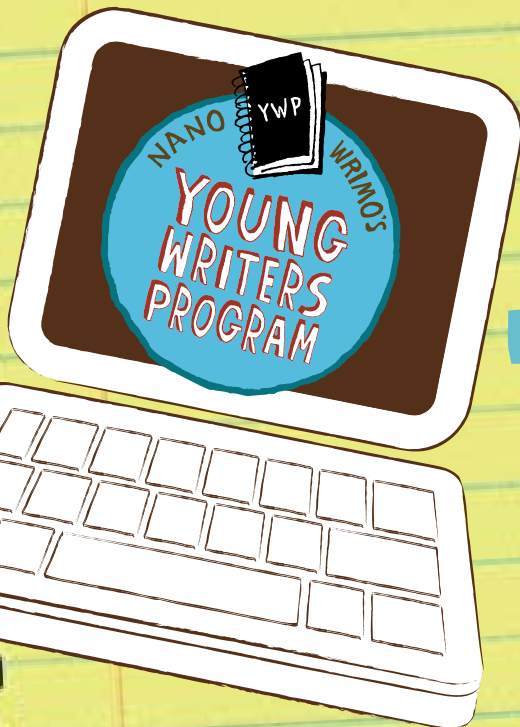


# NATIONAL NOVEL WRITING MONTH'S YOUNG NOVELIST WORKBOOK

High School



Created by the  
Office of Letters and Light  
Young Writers Program

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

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Hello Author,

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

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

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

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

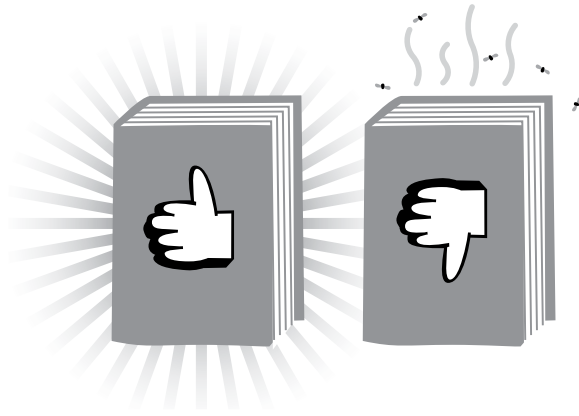
If you don't have any ideas about what to write next month, don't worry. We've put together this workbook to spark your imagination before NaNoWriMo. We'll walk you through creating well-developed characters and settings. We'll show you how to create conflict, outline your plot, and write dialogue that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

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

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

# **Novel Writing How-Tos**





## Good Novel, Bad Novel

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

### Good Novel

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

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

Author \_\_\_\_\_

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

Author \_\_\_\_\_

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

Author \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

-----

## Bad Novel

**In the spaces below, write as many things as you can think of that make a novel not fun to read.** Think about all those books you’ve read (or started to read) that put you to sleep by the end of page one. You know—the books you’d rather eat mayonnaise straight from the jar than read again. You can be as general or as detailed as you like: this list can include anything from “cheesy dialogue” to “unbelievably happy endings.”

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

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

# Creating Well-developed Characters

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

## Flat Characters vs. Original Characters

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

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

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

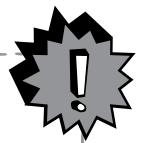
Not only are characters with hidden depths and secrets more fun to read about, they're also more fun to write about. Though you'll end up writing about a bunch of different people in your novel next month, all of them will fall into one of three categories: **The protagonist, the supporting characters,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

### The Protagonist

The **protagonist** is the character with the starring role in your book. In most novels, the protagonist is on a journey to get what he or she wants more than anything else in the world, whether it's fame, revenge, reuniting with a long-lost brother, or something much more elusive, like overcoming poverty or cancer.

### The Supporting Characters

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



### The Physical Antagonist

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

OR

### The Abstract Antagonist

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

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

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

# Character Questionnaire

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



## **Section One: All Your Characters**

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

## **Section Two: Questions for Your Supporting Characters**

**Complete Section Two just for your supporting characters.**

## **Section Three: Questions for a Physical Antagonist**

**Complete Section Three if you have a physical antagonist.**

**OR**

## **Section Four: Questions for an Abstract Antagonist**

**Complete Section Four if you have an abstract antagonist.**

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

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

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



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

## Section Two: Supporting Character Questions

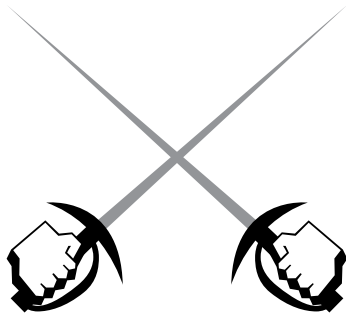
1. Relationship to the protagonist:
  2. Favorite thing about the protagonist:
  3. Similarities to protagonist:
  4. Differences from protagonist:
- 

## Section Three: Antagonist Questions

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

## Section Four: Abstract Antagonist

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



## Creating Conflict

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

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

That story has both **external conflict** and **internal conflict**.

### External Conflict

**The external conflict is the one between a protagonist and antagonist.**

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

### Internal Conflict

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



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

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

**Your Protagonist**

More than anything in the world, my protagonist wants:

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But he/she is afraid of:

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And his/her greatest weakness is (is it something like Hostess snack cakes or shopping?):

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## Physical Antagonist

Complete this section if you have a physical antagonist.

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

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

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

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His/her greatest weakness is:

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### **Abstract Antagonist**

Complete this section if you have an abstract antagonist. \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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My protagonist is battling against this antagonist by:

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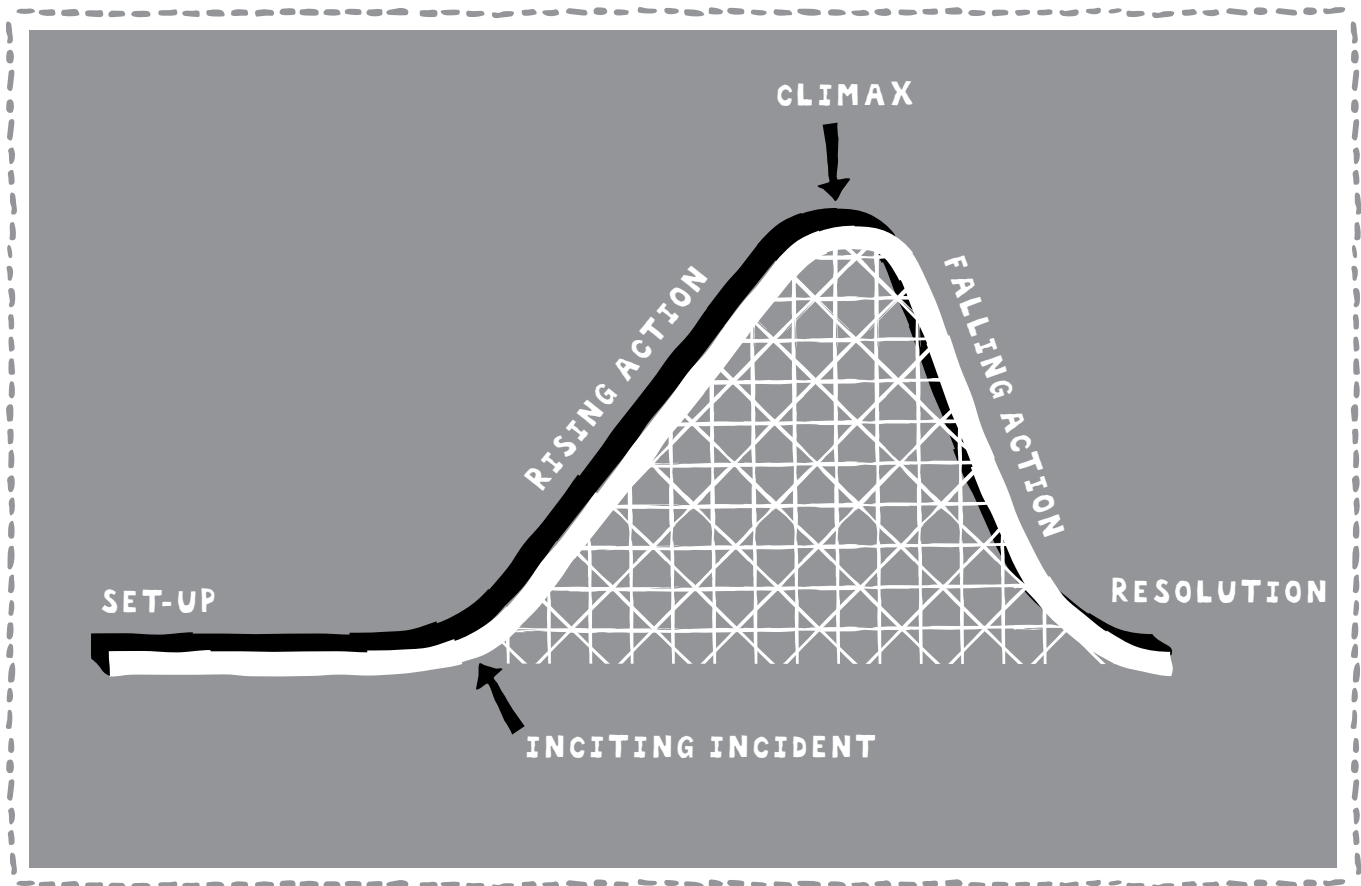
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Congratulations! You now have the two basic ingredients for an excellent story: **external conflict** and **internal conflict**. Know that your internal and external conflicts will overlap throughout your novel. Once your characters find out about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

# Outlining Your Plot

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

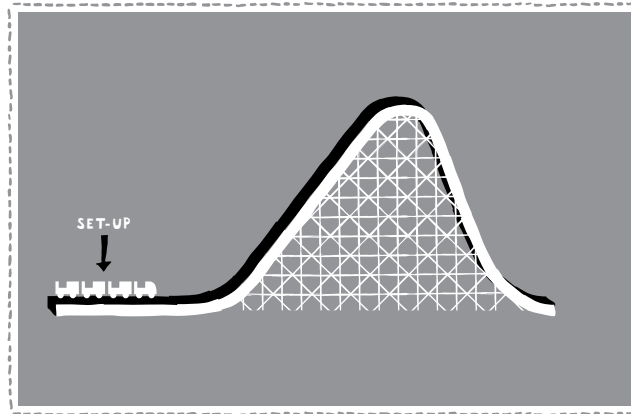
Writing an entire novel from beginning to end may seem impossible, but it is not as hard as you think once you have a plan. Trust us. Most stories have the same structure, and they break down into the same six sections that make up a **plot**. See the diagram below.



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

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

## The Set-Up

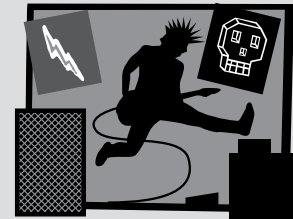


### What kind of rollercoaster are we getting on?

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

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

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



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

“Showoff,” Wilma says playfully.

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

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

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

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



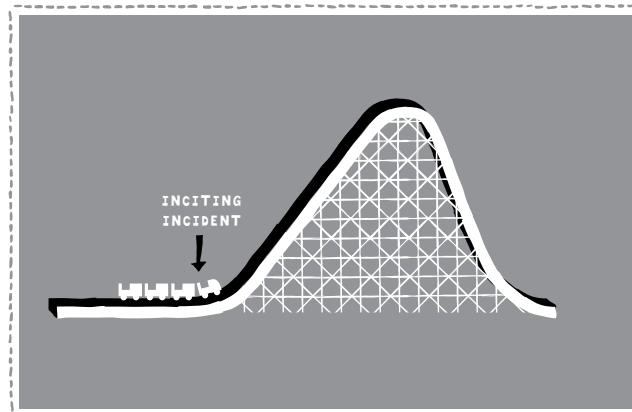
“How many times do I have to tell you to stop calling me ‘little man.’ I’m 18. I’m way too old to be sitting in my bedroom like a loser.” Boris shoves a Pop Tart in his mouth. “I want to be in a band. I want to travel the world . . .”

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

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

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

### The Inciting Incident



### Getting on the rollercoaster

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

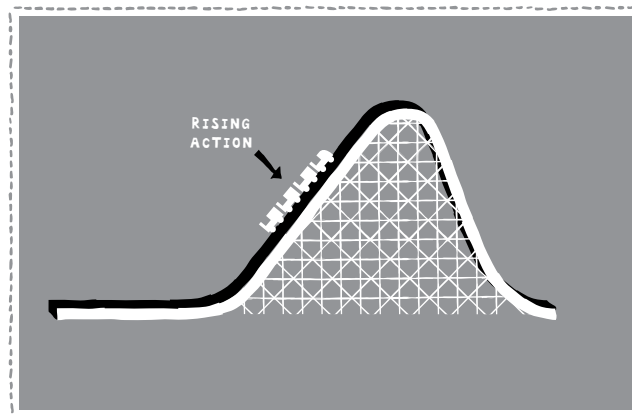
“Wow. . .” A bead of sweat runs down Boris’ forehead.

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

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

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

## Rising Action



### Climbing the big hill

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

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

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

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

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

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

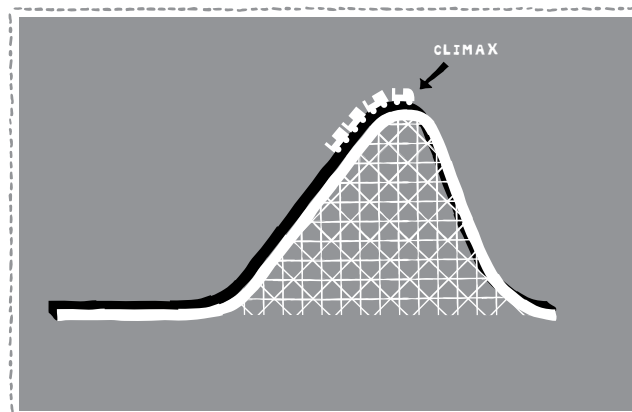
Boris makes it all the way through the song just fine, and Abigail sings lead and nails it. All the judges are blown away, except one.

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

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

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

## The Climax



## The top of the rollercoaster

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

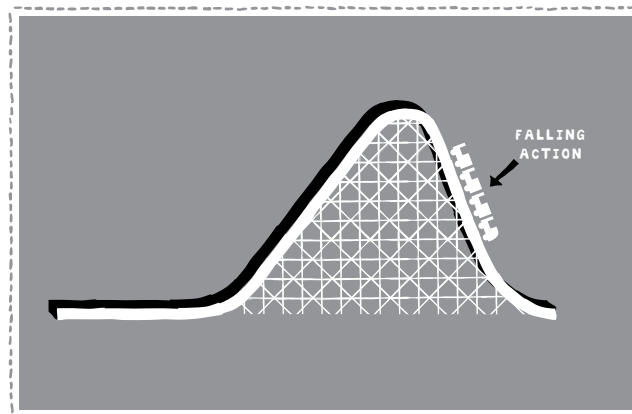
### Here is an example of a climax:

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

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

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

## The Falling Action



## The high-speed drop

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

### Here is an example of falling action:

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

“It’s just so strange,” Gill says. “They were doing so well.”

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

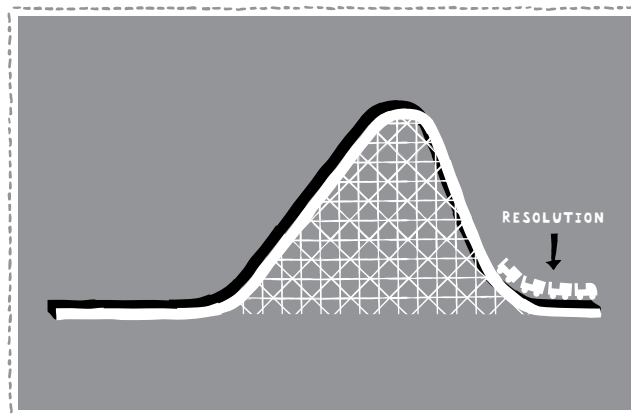
“I never . . .” Billy begins, but it is too late. Two beefy security guards carry him away.

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

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

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

### The Resolution



### Getting off the rollercoaster

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

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

Crude Medicine is playing an arena full of rabid fans. “Hello Detroit!” Boris yells. “It’s good to be home!”

He walks over Abigail, and they high five, then kiss, and the crowd screams.

“Let’s rock!” Abigail says.

The band plays, the crowd sings, and Boris looks just as comfortable on stage now as he did less than one year ago rocking out alone in his bedroom.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Now, fill out your very own plot rollercoaster using the plot outline you just made.

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

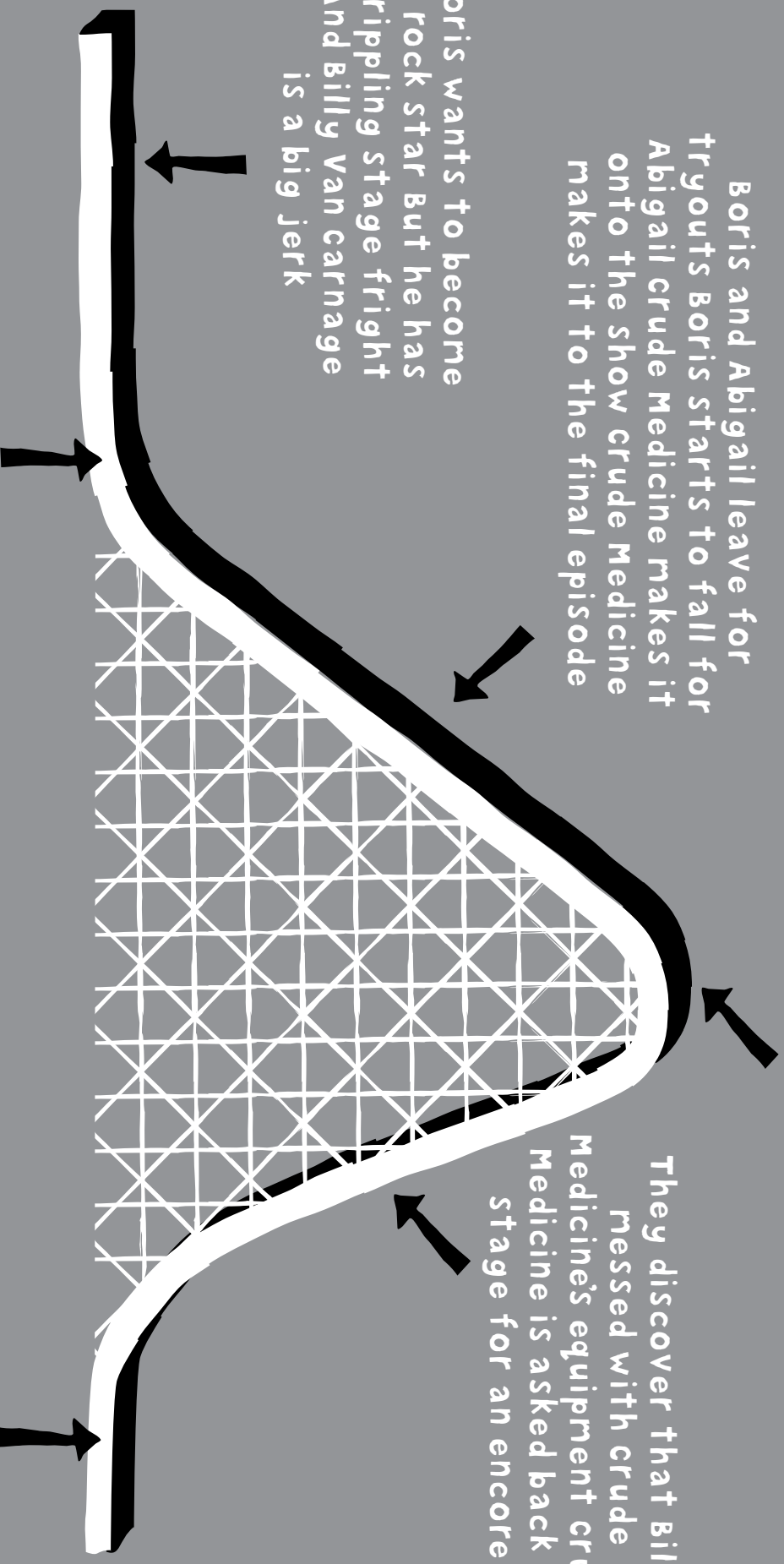
crude Medicine goes on stage for their final performance. Their instruments are out of tune. They get forced off stage

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

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

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

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





Your turn!

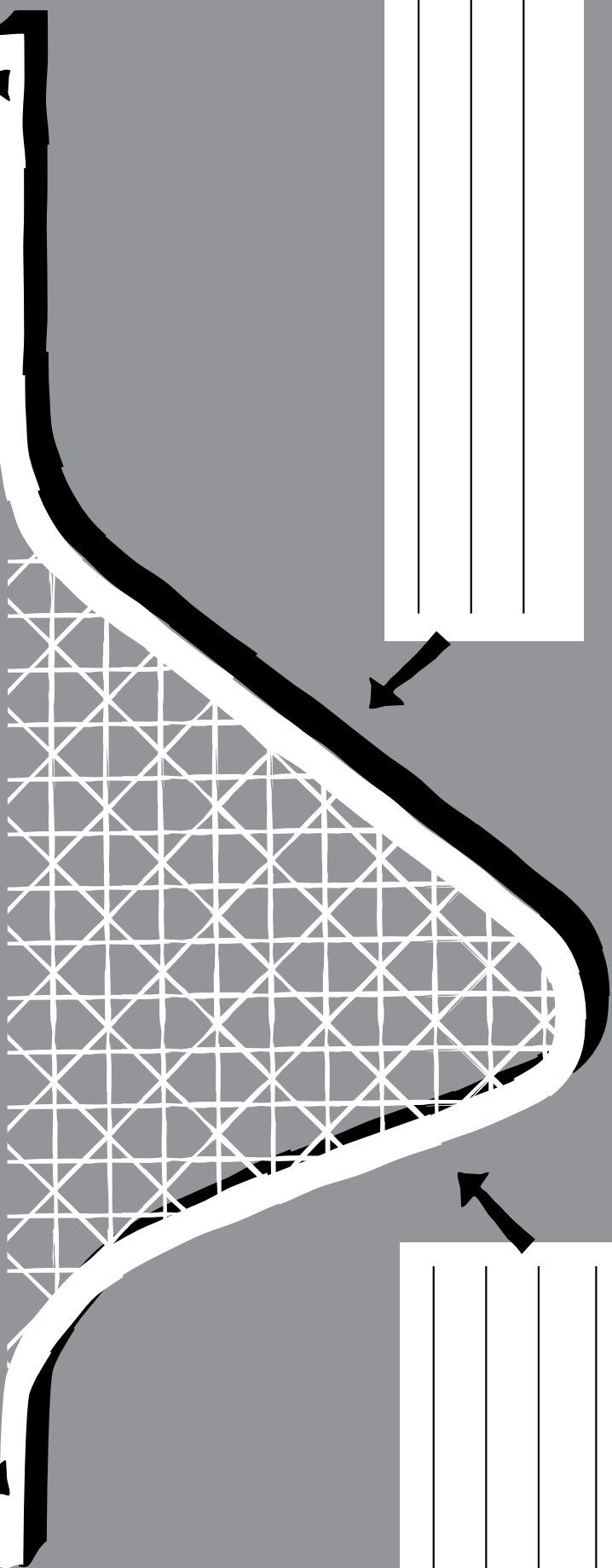
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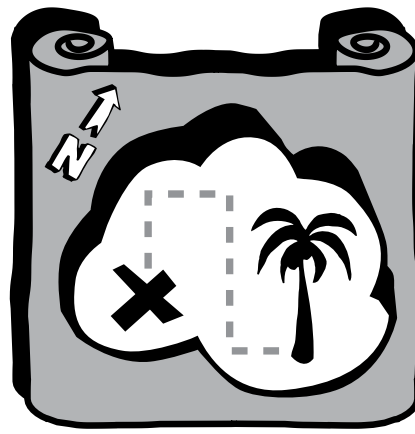
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Blank writing box with seven vertical lines.



## **FINAL NOTE ON PLOT!**

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



## Setting

### Settings that Reinforce Character

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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A superhero who has lost his or her powers

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A corrupt politician

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An old, lonely woman

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Your protagonist

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Your antagonist

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(supporting character's name)

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(supporting character's name)

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(supporting character's name)

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## Settings That Enhance Mood

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

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

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

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

**For each of the moods listed below, write some details about a setting that would be appropriate in creating that mood. Try to write two or three sentences for each mood.**

Stressful

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Romantic

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

Set-up

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Inciting incident

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The climax

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A selected scene in your falling action

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Resolution

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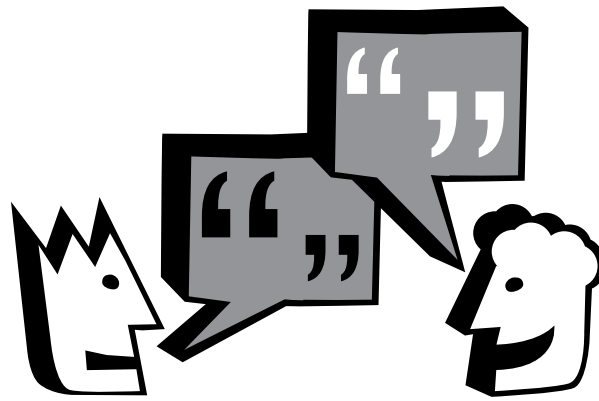
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Great, now you have settings that enhance the different moods that are in your novel-to-be. You may want to keep this page close at hand and use it as you write your novel next month.



## Writing Really Good Dialogue

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

*(Cue sounds of delicious munching.)*

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

### Here's some dialogue you might've heard today:

"Hey, dude. How are you?"

"I'm really good. Thanks for asking. And you?"

"Good, thanks."

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

"Why are you so sarcastic all the time?"

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

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

### **"Dude, totally!"**

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

### **Dialogue that moves the story forward**

The phone rang, and Jerry picked it up. "Hello?"

There was a moment of silence on the other end.

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

"Yeah. Who is this?"

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

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

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

"Not your whole family," Dave said.

Jerry hung up the phone.

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

### Dialogue that increases the tension

"Dave!" Jerry shouted. "We've got to get away from here! The building's gonna blow!"

"We've got to go back!" Dave screamed.

"Why?"

Dave pointed at the roof. "Susan's still up there!"

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

### Dialogue Tags Other Than "Said":

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

# Boring Dialogue Handout

hey  
there.



Hi,  
how are  
you?



I'm good.



That's  
good.



(...)



(...)



hey,  
didn't we  
call ebs-  
best?



Oh yeah?  
what's he  
up to?



Oh, you  
know. The  
same old  
thing.



Oh.  
That's  
cool.



Yeah.



Yeah.



## **Comic Book Exercise**

Writing good dialogue is like writing a comic strip. Comic artists only have so many boxes to fill before they run out of room. If they spend too much time on "Hey, dude, how are you?" pretty soon, they've run out of boxes. To help you understand how boring this kind of dialogue can be, we've put together a nifty example of a Boring Comic Strip. Check it out!

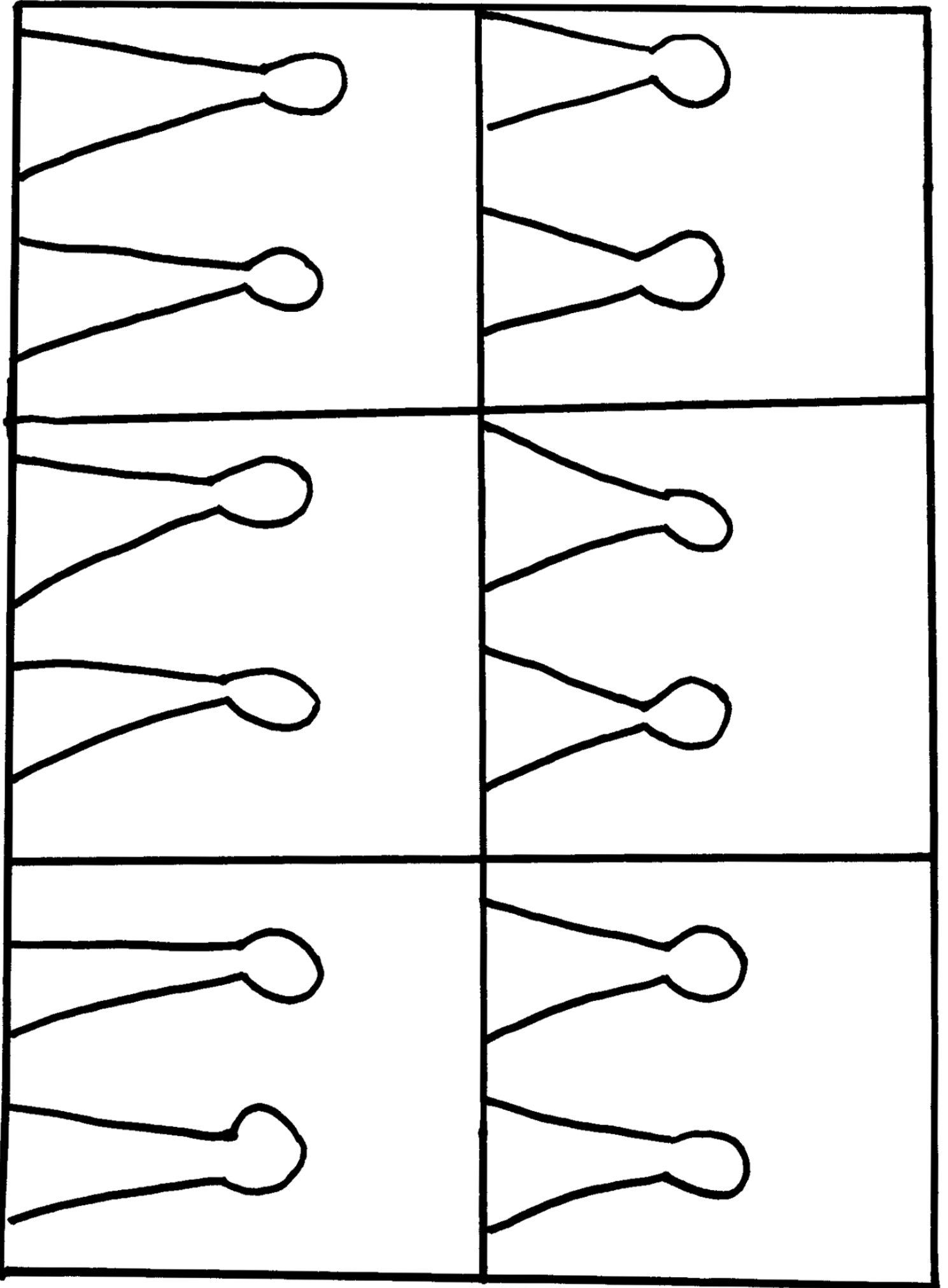
**Fill in the three Blank Comic Strips, using two of the characters you've created for your novel. Here are some suggestions to get you going:**

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

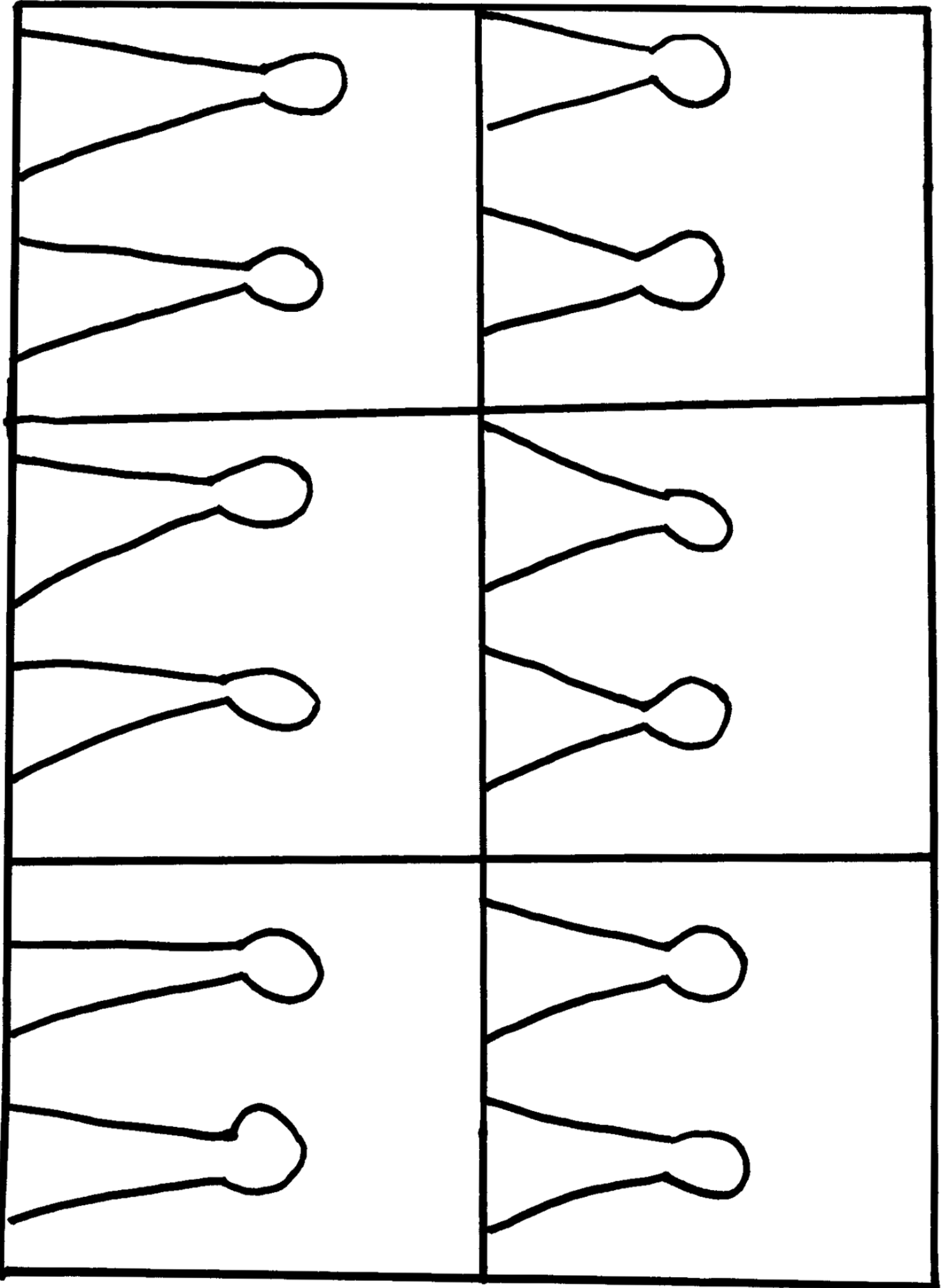
Remember that you've only got six boxes to use in each strip. It's a challenge, but we know you're up to it. Later, if you like what you've written, you can plop this dialogue right into your novel.



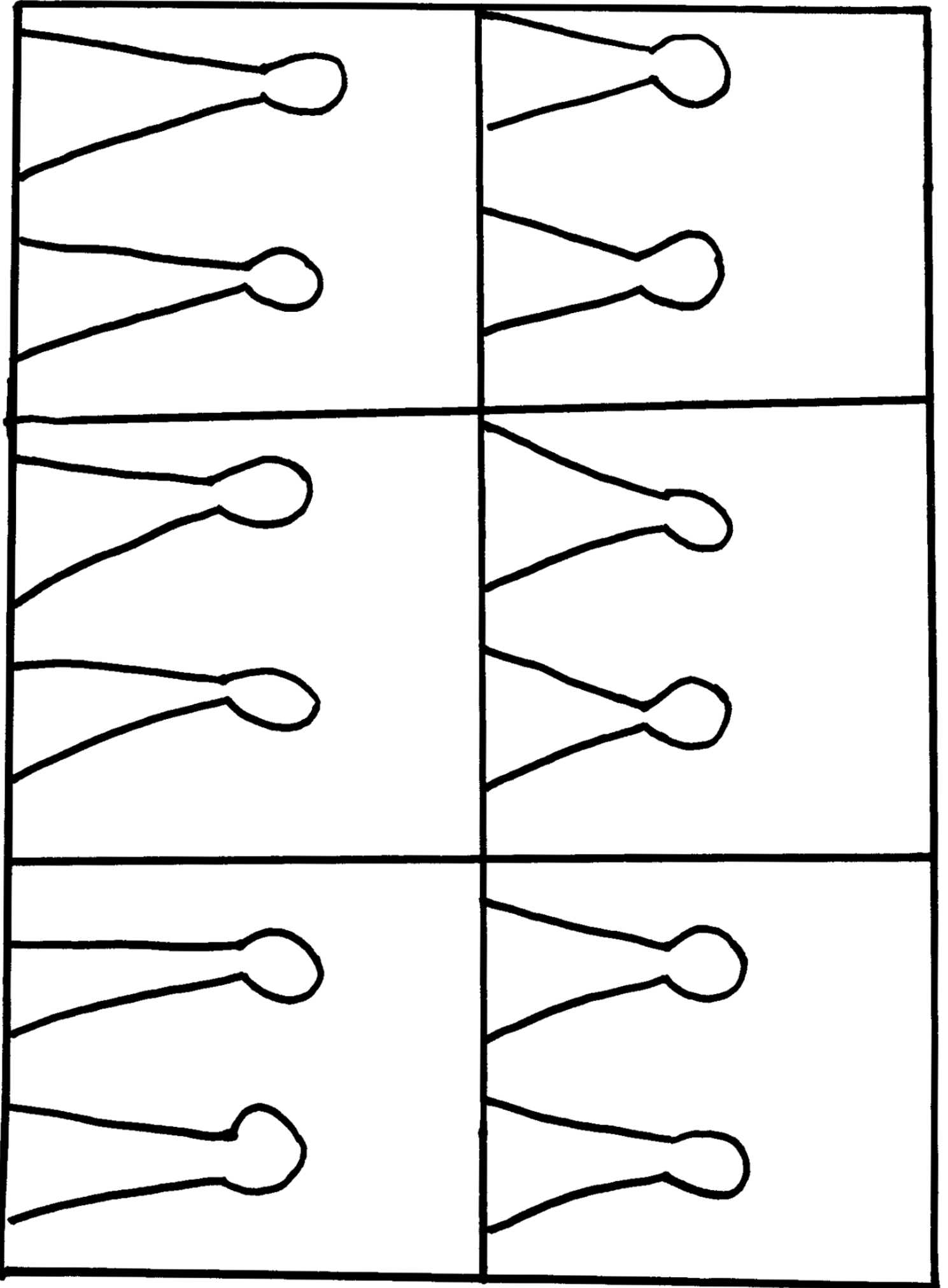
Comic Strip Worksheet



Comic Strip Worksheet



Comic Strip Worksheet



# **Getting Ready for NaNoWriMo**

# NaNoWriMo Survival Tips

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

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

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

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

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

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

## You can do it.

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

# National Novel Writing Month Contract

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

## NATIONAL NOVEL WRITING MONTH



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

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

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

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

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TEACHER/PARENT'S/RELIABLE FRIENDS' SIGNATURE

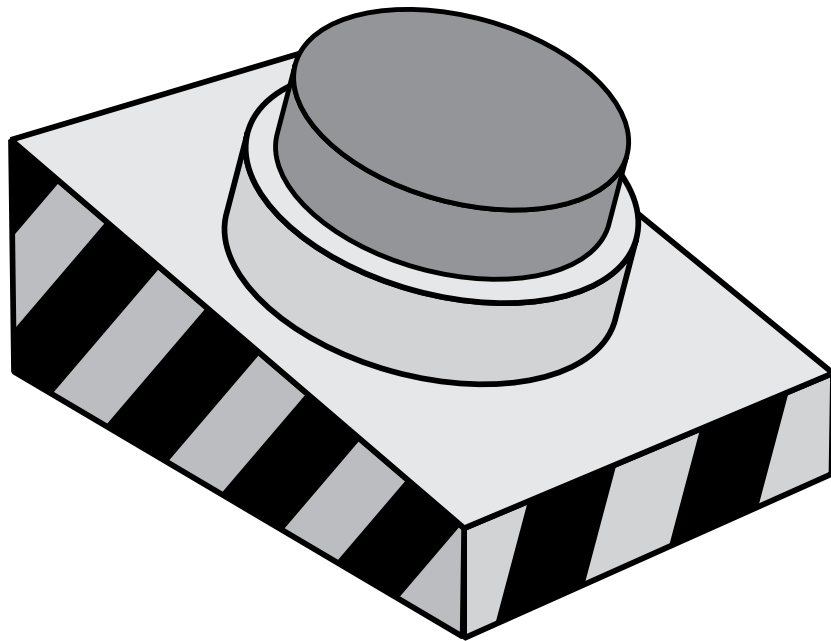
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DATE

# Inner Editor Containment Button

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

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

**Warning: Pushing the button will vacuum your inner editor right out of your head for the next 30 days. He'll be transported from your brain into a NaNoWriMo Inner Editor Containment Cell, where we'll put him to use proofreading our Young Writers Program school curriculum for 2009. We have lots for him to do! And we promise that after 30 days we'll give him back to you (so you'll have him around to help out with your novel rewrites).**



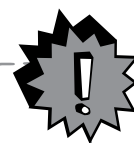
Congratulations. Your Inner Editor has been successfully contained. It's time to move on.

# NaNoWriMo Calendar

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

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

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





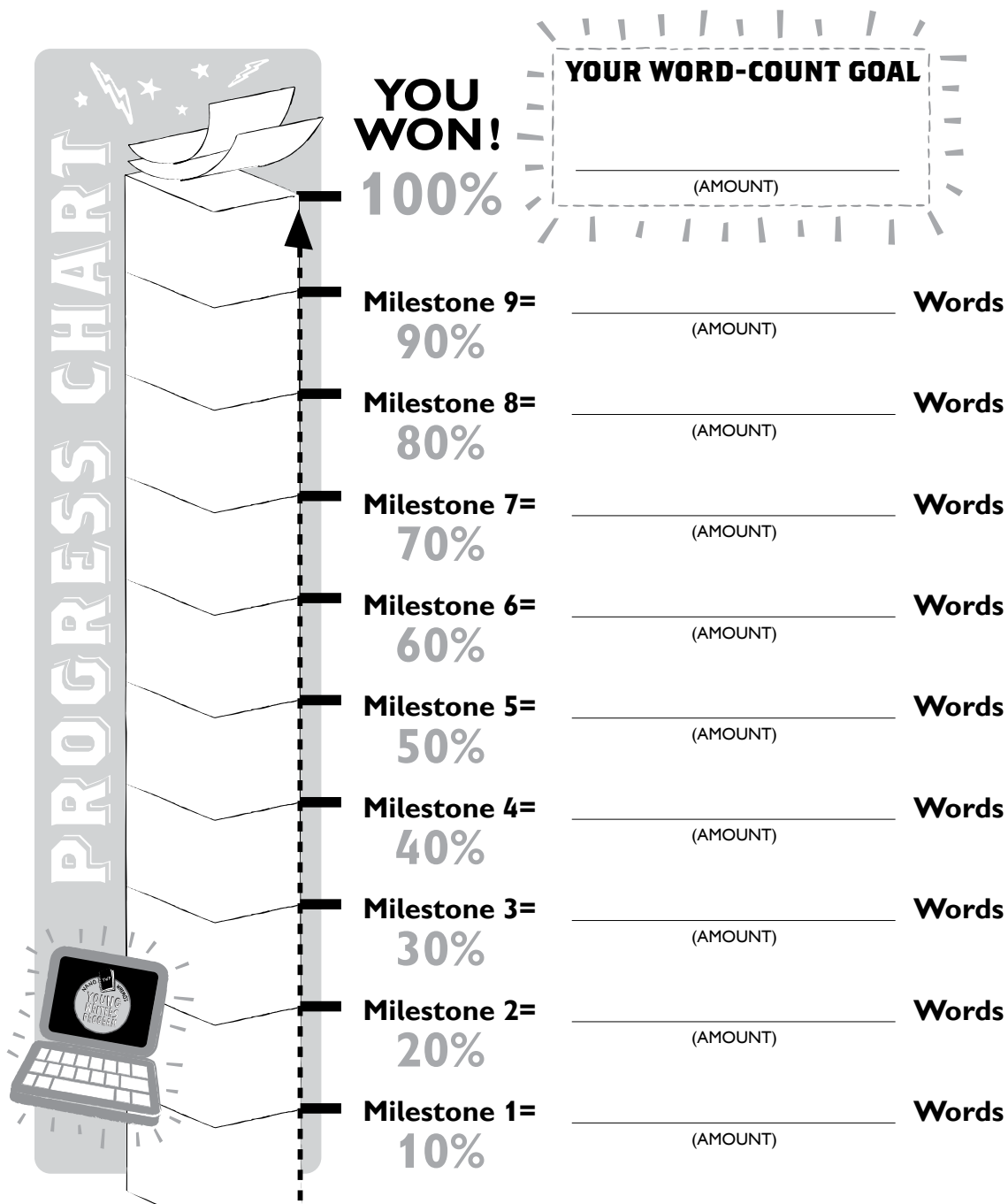


**Ready, Set,  
Write . . .  
And Keep Writing!**

# NaNoWriMo's Personal Chart of Noveling Progress

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

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



# Beginnings

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

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



## **YOU CAN:**

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

## **Start at the beginning**

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

Leaving was all Marrison could think about.

Fallbrook would drive any teenage girl crazy. It was the kind of place where nothing ever really happened and, certainly, nothing ever changed.

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

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**Start with the inciting incident**

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

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

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

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**Start in *media res***

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

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

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

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**Start at the end**

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

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

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

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

# Sub-plotting

*The More Plots, the Merrier*

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

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

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

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

But he/she is afraid of:

And his/her greatest weakness is:



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

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

1. Who is the protagonist?



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Details, Details, Details

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



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



1. Taste



2. Touch



3. Smell



4. Sight



5. Hearing

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

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

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

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

He was right, but as their captain I had to keep trying until the bitter end. = 117 words

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

**The first day of school**

What does it feel like to be back at school?

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What does it smell like?

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What do the halls look like?

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What sounds stand out?

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**Word Bank for  
“Nice”**

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

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What does your lunch taste like?

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**A rock concert**  
What does it feel like?

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What does it smell like?

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**Word Bank for  
“Interesting”**



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

What do you see?

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What does it sound like?

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**An abandoned house**

How does it make you feel?

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What does it smell like?

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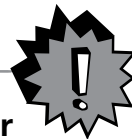
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**Word Bank for  
“Funny”**

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



**Word Bank for  
“Bad”**

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

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What do you see inside?

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What do you hear?

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**Bonus Exercise: The NaNoWriMo Description Challenge**

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

**A blank white wall**

Taste:

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Touch:

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Smell:

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Sight:

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Sound:

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**Word Bank for  
“Good”**

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

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**Embarrassment**

Taste:

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Touch:

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Smell:

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**Word Bank for  
“Evil”**

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



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Sight:

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Sound:

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**Word Bank for  
“Fun”**

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

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**Happiness**

Taste:

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Touch:

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Smell:

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Sight:

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Sound:

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**Word Bank for  
“Awesome”**

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

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**Waking up from a bad dream**

Taste:

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Touch:

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Smell:

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Sight:

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**Word Bank for  
“Stupid”**

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

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Sound:

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**The universe!**

Taste:

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Touch:

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Smell:

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Sight:

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Sound:

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

**Your hurting brain**

Taste:

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Touch:

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Smell:

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Sight:

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Sound:

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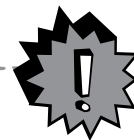
Stupendous job! If you ever feel like your word count is waning, be sure to use your senses and add a lot of concrete details.

# Lists, Lists, and Lists of Lists

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



## **Lists of Lists**

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

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## **Bonus Exercise**

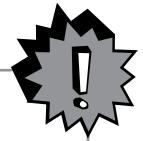
**If you like lists and you finish with these, come up with your own list of lists. Anytime you get stuck during NaNoWriMo, take out your list of lists and get writing. A list prompt like “Things my protagonist wants to eat this very moment” may help you get out of a rut and get your story moving again.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

# Your Inner Editor's Revision Checklist

NaNoWriMo is over, but that does not mean you have to stop working on your novel. The hard part is over. You won that staring contest with the blank page and now you have a beautifully flawed first draft. I bet, as you reread your novel for the first time, you'll be surprised at how not-so-horrible your book actually is. If you like the novel you wrote last month, and you want to make it even better, you'll have to revise it.

Before you start revising your novel, though, you'll need to invite your Inner Editor back into your life. I know you may not want to, but in order to make that novel you just wrote a superb, page-turning novel that is free of spelling and grammar mistakes, you're going to need its help. Just know that you can put him or her away anytime you need to open your imagination again and write creatively.

**Below is a checklist that will come in really handy as you revise. Make sure all of the following are true in your final draft:**



## Inner Editor Revision Check List

**Make sure, as you revise that all of the following is true:**

- The beginning of my novel draws the reader in.
- My plot is well thought out and includes a beginning, inciting incident, climax, and resolution
- My characters are well-developed, believable, and original.
- My setting, characters, and plot work well together.
- My story has multiple subplots.
- My dialogue is effective. It defines characters and their relationships with one another and it helps move the plot along.
- I include a lot of concrete details.
- I use punctuation correctly.
- I spell all my words correctly.

After you check off all of the following, and you feel confident about your manuscript, check out the "I Wrote a Novel! Now What?" page on both the NaNoWriMo main site (<http://www.nanowrimo.org>) and YWP site (<http://ywp.nanowrimo.org>) to see if there are any contests you can send your novel to!