

Steps for Preparing a NaNoWriMo Novel

Gleaned from several books, three websites, one writer's conference and personal experience.

For the planning types:

1. Write a 25-word or less "what if" statement for the novel. (A.K.A. a pitch line.)
2. Expand the sentence to a full paragraph describing the story setup, major conflicts or complications and ending. Think five-act play: setting the time bomb, three complications and a denouement. (Like a back-cover copy plus the punch-line.)
3. For each major character, write a one-paragraph summary or simple chart that includes:
 - character's name
 - character's motivation (what they want)
 - character's conflict (why they don't have it already)
 - character's fatal flaw (added complication)
 - character's epiphany (if they have one)
 - one sentence description of character's plotline if different than the "what if" statement
4. Expand each sentence of the summary into a full paragraph. (A.K.A. proposal synopsis.)
5. Write a one-page description of each major character and a half-page description of the other important characters or do complete character charts detailing everything there is to know about each character.
6. Expand the one-page plot synopsis of the novel to a five-page review. (Each paragraph becomes a page.)
7. Chart the scenes required to flesh out the five-page plot outline. Plan backwards (i.e. from the end) to avoid plot holes. Include character advancement, the action, the conflict and the complication that makes the bomb's timer advance one.
8. November 1 at 12:01 am, start the real first draft of the novel.

For the "fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants" types:

1. Write five pages without stopping to think. This isn't cheating if you stop at five pages in the middle of a sentence and limit yourself to the scene that is motivating you to write the story.
2. Analyze what you have written. In a chart, identify the following:
 - lead character(s)
 - main conflict or physical action
 - fatal flaw/complication/reason conflict can't be resolved easily
 - ticking time bomb
3. Now repeat the steps described for the planning types, only backwards.
 - Reduce each page to one paragraph.
 - Reduce each paragraph to one sentence.
 - Write the "what if" statement or answer the question, "What's the point?"
4. November 1 at 12:01 am, start the real first draft of the novel. This way you won't get stuck at 30,000 words wondering where the heck the story is going because you already know the point. It is your job to simply get there.