

One of the most common questions asked of a writer is: *What do you use to write with?* And then the floor is opened for discussion. I've seen the conversation get quite heated at times amongst people who have strong opinions on what program(s) they prefer.

I'm pretty simple though. I either use pencil and paper, or I use [Scrivener](#). Years upon years ago before [Scrivener](#) existed I used to fill five subject notebooks with writing, and then type them out on my old electric typewriter. My kids are completely fascinated by the idea that I typed an entire story on such a device with no backspace key.

Eventually I leveled up to a computer with a dot matrix printer. I even have the first manuscript length story I wrote laying around. It was originally typed up on that old blue typewriter, and printed on the dot matrix printer for a competition I entered it in.

The year I did my very first [NaNoWriMo](#) back in 2009, I won. Just barely. I'd written most of the story and was very ahead in my word count. I hit a bit of a wall and knew how I wanted the story to end, but life with two little ones and a mother-in-law who needed help paused progress. I wasn't bothered considering I was ahead anyway. Then November 30th at 11:40 pm I was scrambling to scrawl in my final words to get that magical 50,000 words needed to be considered a winner. Part of the winning prizes that year was a fifty percent off coupon for this magical writing program, making it a whooping \$20, if memory serves.

I purchased the program and felt incredibly overwhelmed, which resulted in closing the program and forgetting about it until the following November. Still being in over my head because I'd not bothered to read the [User's Manual](#) or find any [tutorials](#). I didn't actually use [Scrivener](#) that year. It wasn't until after finishing my Nano 2010 project that it occurred to me to learn how to use the crazy program.

I barely scratched the surface of the "how-tos". Mostly I just made use of the auto word counter it had, and its ability to scramble my entire story before I uploaded it. Uploaded it? Why yes, Dear Reader, because back in the early days of [NaNoWriMo](#) you had to actually upload your entire written project for it to be counted by the robot. Then it would update your words *officially* for you. People worried about copyright infringements and story theft created a buzz of excitement amongst people who came up with clever ways of scrambling what you

wrote.

These days [NaNoWriMo](#) no longer requires you to upload anything for your word count, instead relying on the good old fashioned honor system. And why not since your only competition is yourself. As for Scrivener, it also changed over the years. So did I, because I finally sat down and taught myself how to get the most out of the program. In fact, I write all these fun little stories and articles up in [Scrivener](#) before I post them here.

Admittedly, there's a strong love hate relationship with the program amongst writers. The biggest complaint amongst those who are part of the strong dislike team feel that it's just too complicated and they can't make it work. I'm in the love category, but I'll also admit that I took the time to learn how to make the program work for me.

Years ago, when I sat down with [Scrivener](#) and decided it was the year to figure out all the bells and whistles, I turned to YouTube, and watched a video or two a day. While many of the tutorials I watched initially spoke of the things I already knew how to do, I found that each one had a hidden gem in it that taught me something new. It became my personal mission to find videos about [Scrivener](#) that could teach me one new trick.

Eventually I felt I exhausted most of what was available. In 2019 I spent a lot of time setting up [Scrivener](#) prior to the start of November to put all those fun tips and tricks to use. And for once I didn't lose any of my research, accidentally delete half a chapter, or misplace my outline. I could easily navigate between scenes, write from the middle if the urge hit me, or jot down notes about any particular chapter and know exactly where to find them later. I was so giddy about how well this new tool worked that I started sharing how I use it in a small writing group.

I was nervous at first, remembering the love hate relationship thing many people have with [Scrivener](#). However, the small group of women I shared it with were really excited. Many had been on the fence about [Scrivener](#), having heard the same likes/dislikes I had, but this was the first time they saw it in use. Perhaps my over organization skills had finally paid off, because all my neat and tidy screenshots encouraged a lot of discussion amongst us.

I like to color code my writing files. This allows me to know the process of each scene I'm working on. Have I written it? Great, it becomes red. Have I started it, but not finished it? It should be yellow. And if I just need to buckle down to business it's green. But imagine my delight at learning I could take my color coding to a whole new level recently!

I'm talking pure excitement, and scribbling notes as fast as possible, so that when it was over I could put the tool to work. I hear you, I know what you're thinking. "Aren't you going a little overboard?" Not really, not for the project I'm working on at least. See, it takes place in a few different locations, and with different viewpoints. The extra color coding helps me see at a glance what location I'm in, who's view point I'm writing from, and where I've dropped little bread crumbs for my readers.

Five years later I'm still using [Scrivener](#) for all my writing projects. I still share about it in a couple of writing groups. I'm a regular participant in the [webinars](#) that [Oliver Evenson](#) puts on throughout the year. And I still find that no matter how much I've learned about [Scrivener](#) it seems I always find something new in every [webinar](#) or video I watch.

You've probably noticed that what I don't use are any of the grammar writing apps that are available. I've tried many of them, only to find that they all create the same problem for me: stress. I recently used [ProWriting Aid](#), and discovered it did the same weird thing [Grammarly](#) does. It insists I have an error, I 'correct' said error, and then it tells me that their correction is wrong and to put it back the way I had it in the first place. That's a level of stress I just don't have time for. I've also tried out [Hemmingway](#), and while it can be a useful tool on occasion, again I find that it leaves very little room for creativity.



Author's Note:

Dear Readers,

I'd be remiss if I didn't admit that I do use [Google Docs](#) on occasion. That occasion would be when I'm linking Beta Readers to my work. While [Google Docs](#) is not my favorite writing tool,

it is one I enjoy taking advantage of when I'm at the correct stage of any given project.

I can restrict who can have access to my documents and what they can do when looking at, or reading, it. [Google Docs](#) also allows the reader to add comments, feedback, and corrections as they desire. Making it a simple tool to connect me with my Beta Readers.

At other times I may run a piece I've written through [Google Docs](#) to make sure I don't have any grammatical mistakes, it's the one program that doesn't make my spin head for a grammar check.

If you're a fellow writer who's on the fence about Scrivener, you can currently try out an [extended trial](#) thanks to [Camp Nano](#). If you win, which equates to meeting whatever word goal you set, then you'll end up with a coupon to purchase [Scrivener](#) at a discounted price.

The Reluctant Author

