

I'm caught a little off guard as I sit down to write today. I've been a jumble of nerves for a few days now, and I can't quite put my finger on why. It happens now and again, be it from excitement or something else, I'm never sure. It was magnified when I sat down to write this, and noticed that while I had the rest of November mapped out with what I was going to share here, I'd failed to decide what I was sharing this week.

And so I did what most writers do when they aren't sure what to write. I delayed starting. I commented on the weather. Made sure dinner was defrosting. I checked in on some friends, and saved some quotes that made my heart sing, and then I set up a tea station in the kitchen. Crazy, I know. You may drink tea or coffee year round, but I'm afraid I never drink coffee, and am pretty rare on the tea front, too. But, the Scoffer has been on a tea kick of late and I stocked up on some of his favorite loose leaf teas. And then I realized due to the awkward location of tea in the pantry, some of the precious gold had been spilled. So, I set up a tea station. I even included my new china cup, as if I'm going to frequent the station often.

When, at last, there was nothing left to do but face the immediate problem of being unprepared for how I'd fill this small space. I sat down and glanced through some old notebooks, a few old stories, and then sighed. Nothing seemed quite right. Which led me to staring out the window for a few minutes, before I realized that was another form of procrastination, and I should get on with the job.

By the time you read these words, it should be the 4th of November, which is still not too late to sign up for [NaNoWriMo](#) if you've been on the fence about it. Even if you're wildly unprepared, but want to give it a run. Point in case: I'm still not as prepared for Nano as I'd like to be, and it's the very last day of October.

I've spent a good deal of time filling out character profile sheets and assigning personalities to my characters. Some were easier to peg than others based on the end goal of my story. Others I juggled with a bit, and at the last minute changed things. And who knows, perhaps they will change again as I write their lives down and their true personalities emerge.

I've also spent some time answering [50 questions](#) about my novel. This is something I spotted on my internet wanderings a few weeks ago. I didn't answer all the questions, as

some didn't apply to the genre I write, and others would be difficult to answer until after you're finished and reflect on what you've written. Still, it was fun to sit with my story idea and answer the questions that applied to what I was working on. It helped me formulate an idea and turn it into something bigger.

Next I set up my scene cards in [Scrivener](#). This takes about twenty seconds, but then you have to zone in on the serious work. I like to jot down a few simple things about what that scene or chapter will be about. This year, I'm using the label function in [Scrivener](#) so I know who is in the scene and where it takes place at a glance. I also added a keyword or phrase I want to include in the scene. Then I spent a while hashing out each chapter. This is nothing fancy. I include thoughts, things I might want my characters to say or do. It might be very detailed, or a few simple words that will remind me of the over-all aim of the piece I'm writing.

Sometimes I include fragments of ideas, other times they are complete. I may refer myself back to the [50 questions](#) or the "sort of" outline I wrote for two of my characters. This may include dialogue, rough or otherwise, so that when I sit down to hash out the scene in a more thorough manner, I won't panic when I glance at the blank screen.

I've even printed the notes I've put tother for each scene and put them in my writing notebook, so I don't have to work with a split screen when I'm at writing meetings. Even if I feel unprepared, it all gives me a sense of preparedness. While I haven't finished all my chapter cards, even having some completed will allow me to jump into things feeling a little less frazzled. Which means I better get back to those scene cards!



Author's Note:

Can I share a secret with you? You can wake up any day in November and still decide to join [NaNoWriMo](#). There's nothing stopping you. I suppose that's not a real secret. Just like you can start a goal at any point in the year, you can join NaNoWriMo anytime during November and still aim to hit the fifty thousand word goal.

There were years where I joined with a half-baked idea and still met the goal. There were years where I had a beautiful, detailed, well laid out plan, and somewhere along the way just stopped. Why? I don't know. Even reflecting on it, I can't answer that question.

There are plenty of virtual badges to "win" when you join Nano and start writing, and some include being a rebel. That might mean starting late, having already started working on a project before the first of the month, or anything you deem rebellious. Some people aim to collect all the badges, and some are far more focused on reaching their writing goal. I confess I've been on both sides of that line, and this year as I hear local writers share their daily trials, I've offered suggestions like, "Hey, go claim the self-care badge. You earned it!"

Scrivener is also offering a [free extended trial of their program](#). If you're curious now is a great time to try it out, and if you meet the [NaNoWriMo](#) goal of fifty thousand words, you'll end up with a coupon to purchase [Scrivener](#) at a heavily discounted price.

If writing isn't your thing, or the idea of writing fifty thousand words seems overwhelming. There's no shame in that. You can cheer others along, and when they discuss the idea of giving up, you can drag them along the path and encourage them not to quit.

The Reluctant Author

