SIX MONTH NOVEL

URBAN WRITERS' RETREAT



HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL IN SIX MONTHS

SIXMONTHNOVEL.COM



PLOTTING

You wouldn't build a house or undertake any other huge project without a plan. Starting with a plot that works to guide your writing means you've made a lot of the creative decisions in advance and know going into it your first draft will make sense—it isn't a guarantee, but it gives you a solid foundation and means you are less likely to get stuck. This can be flexible as you write and should feel comfortable to you. Here's how to do it:

1. DEFINE THE BASICS	A story has to have characters and conflict. Who are your players, and what happens to them?
2. GET TO KNOW YOUR CHARACTERS	Play around with why your character exists. Are they a meek librarian in a dangerous world full of wild animals? How does that change who they are?
3. UNDERSTAND YOUR SETTING	Consider physical setting, but also culture, time period, politics. These impact everything from character to conflict to theme.
4. PLAY AROUND WITH VOICE AND POINT OF VIEW	The way you tell your story through voice and POV (and what you reveal to the reader when through this) affects the reading experience. Spend some time trying different options out, but know that these are things you tend to write your way into and that if it changes it can be changed in edits.
5. CREATE YOUR OUTLINE	Use existing plotting models (hero's journey, eight-point, three-act, etc.) or just take the most important points and start to build scenes into a plot arc, focusingon cause and effect, action and consequence.
6. DEVELOP SUBPLOT	Give major subplots their own proper story arcs (you can decide how much of it you need to show in the next step or after writing)
7. LAY IT ALL OUT	Write your scenes on note cards and make sure it all makes sense. Change the order or try different scenes and to see how it changes and what the best way to tell the story is.
8. FINALISE	The world is your oyster. Build yourself a really extensive spreadsheet bringing out setting, timeline, what needs to change and how the reader should feel for every scene. OR just write a simple bullet point list of scenes! This is the map you'll write from so it's up to you how detailed it is.

GOALS, HABITS, ACCOUNTABILITY

Three key things that will help you write your novel in six months are:

1. Setting clear targets
2. Finding some accountability
3. Develop habit or routines that work for you.

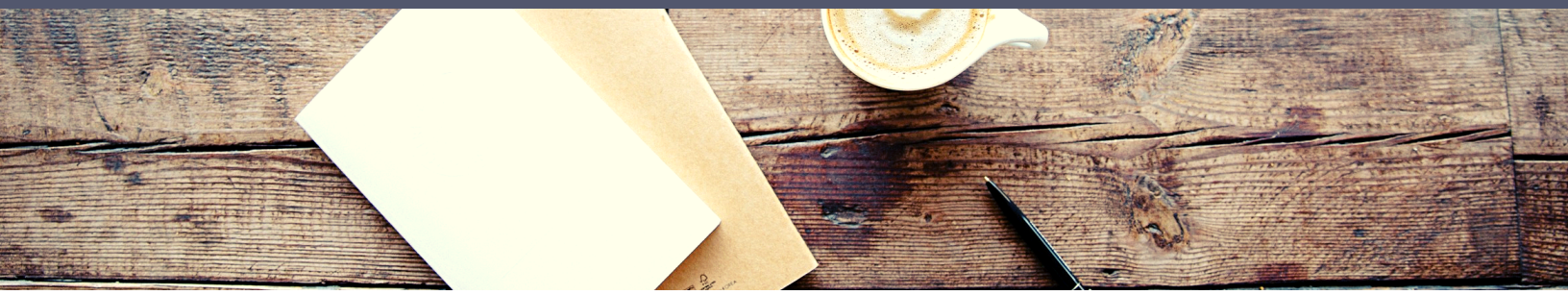
Break your major goal (write a novel) down into monthly sections then work your way smaller and smaller until things are manageable (example: approx. 5,000 words a week, three sessions a week, two scenes per session). Take into account real life and your diary commitments to work out what's realistic.

Find a way to hold yourself accountable. Work out what works for you, and if possible recruit someone else to report to so you really do stick to it!

Then play around to find writing routines that work for you. Try out different options (getting up early, going to a cafe on Wednesday evenings, putting set times in your calendar) to see what feels good and motivates you. You might need to revisit these as time goes on if you find yourself slipping, that's fine!

MONTH	DIARY NOTES	TARGET PLOT POINT	TARGET WORD COUNT
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
		OVERALL TARGET	

MONTHLY GOALS



Target:

WEEK	WEEKLY/DAILY TARGET
1	
2	
3	
4	

EDITING

1. First let your manuscript sit for a week or two (or longer). A little distance helps you switch into editor mode and see more clearly.

2. Read your novel and create a new outline (i.e. list the actual scenes you have and what happens). Put this up on a wall and use it to analyse your structure and test out major changes.

3. Start editing from the biggest job to the smallest. Make all structural changes first (adding/removing scenes, characters and storylines, ensuring the information flow makes sense).

4. Then start editing within the story, again starting with the biggest edits first (character issues, voice, consistency). If you try to catch everything at once chapter by chapter it's easy to lose track, so deal with one problem at a time.

5. Move on to working through the whole text on copy edits (word choice, grammar, etc.) only once you know your novel's substance is right.

6. Print your manuscript or send it to an e-reader for a different perspective and read it aloud to help you catch tiny errors and polish further.

