

10 Things NOT to do now that you've finished NaNoWriMo (or TRYmo) by Deb Courtney

At Pikes Peak Writers, our Top 10 lists are typically written in the positive sense...things to do or try. Here's a slightly different tactic, which we hope will help you as you rejoice in your accomplishments post NaNoWriMo or NaNoTRYmo.

10. Don't...Stop Writing Because You've Earned a Break.

Yeah, 50,000 words is a lot to accomplish in 30 days, but you proved you can do it, or come close to it. What do writers do? Write. So use the discipline it took to get through NaNo, and keep going. Set a new goal and knock that one down too.

9. Don't...Take up that other hobby you've been putting off.

Creative people often feel pulled in several directions with regards to expressing themselves. Coming off the high of writing 50,000 words in one month, now is NOT the time to bead that bracelet, or to start that watercolor class...unless you can manage those AND keep up the writing.

8. Don't...Give into family demands to spend more time with them -- well, not entirely.

Writing takes some solitude, and chances are you managed to carve some out of your schedule in order to meet the demands of knocking down that hefty NaNoWriMo word count. And it might be that your family 'wants you back.' Well, to be a successful writer, you need to continue to carve that time out of your life -- and maybe out of theirs. This is not always easy, but is definitely worth it. If this is difficult for you on an ongoing basis because of other commitments, consider what kind of writer you are, and how to meet that need. For some, a few pages every day suffices; for others, several hours in a large chunk are better. Ask your family to support your goals as a writer, even though it may mean some sacrifices for everyone.

7. Don't...Start a new writing project.

So, you have ideas. Lots of them. So many that you're afraid you'll never have time to write them all. Writers Block? Meh. However, do not get sucked into an entirely new writing project now. This is not the time. A bad habit many would-be novelists have is to start a project, then careen on to the next project, and what they end up with is a stack of partially completed projects. You can't get published if you never complete a manuscript. So, stick with this one until you are done. Even if it doesn't get published, you will know what 'finishing' feels like. This is a good thing. On the other hand....

6. Don't...Keep yourself from writing notes for future projects.

As a writer, you do not want to be the written equivalent of a 'one-hit wonder'. Making notes for future projects is part of the business of writing -- it is your product

development phase. So, while you don't want to distract yourself from completing your current manuscript, do make the time to write notes and capture your ideas for future projects. A "future" file is an important part of being a working author.

5. Don't...Lose momentum.

An object in motion tends to remain in motion unless acted upon by an outside influence. This is a paraphrase of the Law of Inertia, and it is applicable in many areas of our lives, in a figurative sense as well as a literal, physical one. You spent the entire month of November gaining momentum (even if you are not aware that's what you did); do not let an outside force keep you from maintaining that momentum. Writers write...so keep doing it.

4. Don't...Stop refining your craft/learning new things.

So, one manuscript drafted. Feel good about it. But you are far from an industry professional -- now might be a good time for some refreshers on editing, or story arc, or on anything which you know gave you trouble as you were finishing your draft. Anything which will help you in the editing/rewriting/refining process will be a good use of your time right now, as long as you are willing to put what you learn to work on this project.

3. Don't...Think you are done.

Writing a novel is hard work and it takes a long time, and there are several phases between first draft and final version. However, by achieving first draft you have managed something few would-be writers ever will. Celebrate, but be prepared for the rest of the work.

2. Don't...Underestimate the value of letting your work steep.

Notwithstanding that this article encourages you to keep going so as not to lose momentum, some writers need some time away from their work in order to be able to approach the editing process with new eyes. In other words, if you are so close to your own words that you can't bear to part with any of them, it might be time to put the manuscript in a figurative drawer for a few weeks and approach it when you are in a more critical frame of mind. However, beyond making notes for future projects, don't get completely pulled away from this one. Stay with it until you're done.

1. Don't...Send your NaNo project to an agent or editor

You. Are. Not. Done. Yes, you finished NaNoWriMo. You have a manuscript. But the unfortunate fact is: you are not finished writing. For one thing, a typical novel has about 80,000 words, not 50,000. But more than just adding words, you need to edit and refine until you have a tight, gorgeously crafted story. Until you have that, do not send it to an agent or editor. You will likely just get it back, and you may burn your 'in' with that publishing industry professional in the process. I have it firsthand that some industry

professionals wish December would be designated as NaNoEdMo (National Novel Editing Month), which would help them avoid a desk full of partially completed manuscripts of 51,267 words, and would highlight this important part of the novel writing process.

Originally appeared in The Pikes Peak Writer, Volume IX, Issue 1, January 2010.