

EPISODE 55

5 Mid-NaNoWriMo Catch-Up Tips

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Welcome back to the Author Revolution Podcast! I'm your host, international bestselling indie author, Carissa Andrews - and CEO of Author Revolution, your source for all things rapid releasing.

First, a word about our sponsor.

When I started writing, I was a total pantsier. As it turned out, writing wasn't a problem, but making sense of the story was. I wrote my first novel, Pendomus, in roughly two months. But without understanding my story's structure, I ended up floundering around with the story for three more years. Talk about time wasted. These days, I'm a planning convert. Not only do I write skeletal outlines, but detailed story arc outlines, and chapter by chapter outlines. How do I get it done? With Plottr, of course. Plottr is a unique program that allows you to spin out your story's outline faster than you thought possible. Even the really complicated ones, I might add. Not only that, but it gives you incredible templates to guide your story's creation, so you don't get lost along the way. It's an incredible tool and one I recommend to all my author friends. If you're ready to tighten up your writing time and get your books in the hands of your readers faster, head over to authorrevolution.org/plottr. That's authorrevolution.org, forward slash p. l. o. t. t. r

Well, I gotta say it... I am absolutely bombing NaNoWriMo.



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I had hoped to get a head start on Amends this month by taking on Nano, but here we are, the 17th of November at the time of this recording, and I haven't written a single word. Not one. Yeesh. It's kind of sad, when I think about it.

Are you in the same boat?

Maybe you are. Or maybe you've been writing, but not hitting the 1667 words per month. Wherever you are in your NaNo goals, know that there's always time to refocus.

Now, I could go into a long list of reasons why I haven't had the chance to start yet, but the truth of the matter is, I just haven't been clear on my story. I have a skeletal outline created, but I haven't put the time in to create a detailed outline - which is something I've found always increases my speed and motivates me to get my writing on. Do you feel the same way?

While I may not have started writing Amends, I know as soon as I do, things will jive and going forward with subsequent books in the Diana series will just get easier. I've been at this for a number of years and for whatever reason, it's just the way it works with me. I've just finished the Windhaven novels and I'm swapping to an entirely new series of books. My one saving grace is that I've written the first book and know the characters involved pretty dang well. Well, saving grace or perhaps my procrastination present. Who knows? HA!

If you're like me, still floundering around with NaNo, and thinking you'd better get a move on, I do have some tips to help you get focused and back on track.

Mid-NaNoWriMo Tips

1. Reassess the Situation - If I were to try to catch up with NaNoWriMo, starting right now, the first thing I would do is reassess my targets. Because it's the 17th already, in order to write 50K by December 1st, I would have to write 3,333 words every day between now and December. First of all, let me just say, that's totally doable in my eyes. But I've also been doing this a while. When I break down 3,333 words, to me, that's about a chapter and a half. So, if I plan for a chapter in the morning, and a part of a chapter in the afternoon - I could make that happen. However, like I said earlier, that's when I have a good plan in place.

2. Get Clear on Your Story. I know this one's a shocker, right? You can't write fast when you don't have a clear destination. At least, not accurately. Whether you're a pantsier or a plotter, the next thing you need to do when you know your daily target, is to spend time getting crystal clear on your story. Block of an afternoon. Two to four hours should be enough time to get clear enough to start making progress on the story itself. It doesn't matter if you do a quick, skeletal outline, get clear on your three-act structure, or just take the time to really figure out the plot point that's got you stuck. Whatever getting clear is for you, take the time and do it. You'll thank yourself later. For me, I've been using Plottr to map out the three separate plots running through Amends. What can I say, I can never do things the easy way. That's part of the reason I've been procrastinating on writing it. However, Plottr has been invaluable at allowing me to plan things in a visual way so I can see where the different plots intersect. It's absolutely brilliant. In the past, though, I will say that I have used Scrivener for planning my outline and diving into my world building. It's a crazy powerful tool, and if you're using it to write already, you can take advantage of it that way as well. If you're confused about who or what is going on in your story, you might want to consider Scapple. I've used Scapple to brain dump/mindmap out all of the people, places, and significant events in my main character's first book.

This way, I have a quick visual, which helps me not only with plot generation, but in not forgetting someone or something that's happened to her. Speaking of plot generation, I have one final resource to look into – and that's Reedsy's Plot Generator. It's a fun way to generate random plots and it even allows you to pick the genre you're writing in. Super simple and fun to do.

3. Dig into the Resources. Look, you are NEVER alone in this. If you're feeling stuck, maybe you need to dig into some writing resources. Whether that be binging older episodes of this podcast, or by heading over to NaNoWriMo's website and going through their NaNo Prep 101 Resources page. There's a wealth of information just waiting for you to dig into it and get inspired. If you're planning on using one of the programs I listed above, you can get some incredible tips from their sites, as well. Both Plottr and Scrivener have video tutorials and resources to make your novel shine and get you excited for writing again.

4. Get a Prompt Book. In order to poke my creative bear, I have a number of writing prompt books I'll refer to. They're a springboard for switching my focus from left brain task management to right brain creativity mode. For Amends, I just purchased the book 500 Fantasy Writing Prompts by Erica Blumenthal. It was perfect for stoking my imagination and coming up with some unique situations for Amends. If you're an urban fantasy author, I'll make sure to link to it in the show notes. In addition to the plot generator, Reedsy also does weekly writing prompts. You can sift through some great ones on their site, or you can get them emailed directly to you. It's a pretty sweet deal!

5. Talk with a Writerly Friend. If you're still feeling stuck or unmotivated to keep going, consider a brainstorm session with another writerly friend. Sometimes we get blocked because we're trapped in our typical pattern of thinking. When you tap into someone else's thought process, it can spur on new ideas and invigorate your story.

I can't tell you how many times I've turned to my husband Colin and asked him what he would do if xyz... For those of you who may have missed our origin story, yes, in addition to being a builder extraordinaire and book trailer maker, he's also an author. The point here is, he has a totally different way to come at problems and solutions than I do and when we get to talking shop, what comes out is almost always a stronger storyline. So, get on a zoom call with a friend and get to chatting!

BONUS TIP: Reassess Your Due Date. Look, at the end of the day, NaNo is meant to be a fun way to increase your speed, get words on the page, and get out of your own way. If for some reason you aren't able to make the 50K goal by the end of the month, what matters is you made progress on your novel. I don't care what that progress looks like. One word is still one word less to think about. If you reach the end of November and find you missed your target, just reassess your due date and keep hammering at it.

Amends is due to the editor on January 1st. So, my time for procrastination is coming to an end. Not only do I have her hanging on my manuscript, come January. But I also have a blog tour scheduled for its release. So, failure isn't an option. Here's what I promise to you - I will get the rest of my outline nailed down and start writing this week. But more than that, I promise to write the first two chapters, minimum. That's roughly 4K words in my world. While it might not seem like a ton just yet, I have to be realistic with myself, too.

I don't know who else needs to hear this, but here, all of the schools have closed down and gone to distance learning. That means even the kindergartener is home. And let me tell you, that's been a cluster of epic proportions. They're trying to get him on a Google Chat call three times a day for an hour a piece. It's torture for him and torture for me. Needless to say, it's slowing down my progress on pretty much EVERYTHING as we get used to this new norm.



Goodness only knows how long this will be going, too. It's not like there's an end in sight.

So, the key here for you and for me is to repeat the mantra - progress, not perfection. That might be a bitter pill to swallow for those of us who are overachievers. And if you're listening to this podcast, I can pretty much guarantee you are one.

But it's still the truth of the matter. We can stress over the small stuff and it drives us crazy, or we roll with the punches and keep making those forward strides.

As always, I will make sure all of the links to the products and sites we talked about are listed in today's show notes. So, if you're looking for them, head over to authorrevolution.org/55.

If you like this episode of the Author Revolution Podcast, I would love it if you'd head over to your favorite podcast platform and leave me a review. Not only does it make me feel good, but it helps other listeners know you've found value in the episodes.

Just a reminder, today's episode was sponsored by Plotter. If you've reached the midway point of NaNoWriMo, Plottr could be just the tool you need to get moving on your story again. Get a 30-day free trial by heading over to authorrevolution.org/plotter. That's authorrevolution.org, forward slash p. l. o. t. t. r

Alright my writerly friend, I'm off to get that outline nailed down so I can start writing...

Whatever your plans are for the rest of the week, go forth and start your author revolution.



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