

With NaNoWriMo <https://nanowrimo.org/> winding down for the month, I've been reflecting on how much sprints have saved my life and my word count. I thought I would share a few sources and tips to make sprints work for you.

If you aren't familiar with sprints, here's what you do:

1. Set a timer for whatever timeframe you want. I've done anywhere from five minutes to an hour. In fact, there is a hashtag on Twitter that basically means you're writing 1,000 words in one hour (#1k1hr). There really isn't a right or wrong way to sprint. At the end of the day, it's whatever works best for you.
2. When the timer starts, you need to put aside everything else and just write. Your goal is to write as much as you can in that timeframe.

During NaNoWriMo, I have found it helpful to use an online sprint timer, and, if possible, sprint with others. You can totally sprint on your own, but as someone mentioned to me this year, sprinting with others means you need to be accountable to someone else. And who wants to report back that they didn't get a good number?

This year, my magic numbers have been the 25 or 30 minute increments. I also was introduced to a nifty little online timer called e.ggtimer.com. <https://e.ggtimer.com/> You can enter whatever timeframe that you want and it will run in a browser window. It's not flashy and gives off a little alarm when you're done. Especially if you are sprinting with others online (as I have been doing a lot this year), it's great because it is easy enough to read when sharing the screen on your Zoom call.

Another type of sprinting I learned about this year is the Pomodoro Method, which was created by Francesco Cirillo <https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique>. The basic idea is to set a timer for 25 minutes and focus only on your task at hand. When the timer goes off, you take a five-minute break and then start again. Your work product gets better and you write faster. This isn't exclusively a writing technique, but many writers use it to make the most use of their time.

When I said earlier that sprints had saved my word count and my life, I wasn't kidding. With COVID-19, trying to work full-time, making sure my son is getting his schoolwork done and a myriad of other tasks, I knew I couldn't be staring at a computer screen waiting for the words to hit me. If I wanted to win NaNoWriMo, I'd have to keep to a steady word count and be diligent about it.

Sprinting with others has given me the motivation and sometimes the competition I need to

turn off the internal editor and just write. Yes, I'll have a lot of clean up to do at the end, but I will have at least 50,000 words to show for it. The best part? I am writing so much faster too! My biggest surprise during all this was a sprint where I cranked out nearly 1,200 words in 30 minutes. The one caveat I have found is that my first sprint always produces the lowest work count, so don't let it get you down if you find out the same thing. And, thanks to sprints, I will likely have surpassed that elusive NaNoWriMo goal by the time you are reading this. (Feel free to check in with me to see if I did.)

I hope you will give a sprints a try whether you have a NaNoWriMo goal to reach or you want to keep your momentum going. If you're every looking for a sprint partner, I'm definitely game. Happy sprinting!



Bio:

Molly Maka (she/her/hers) is an avid history buff, combining her deep knowledge of World War II with her passion for writing. Her romantic fiction is embedded within the reality and deprivations of the Second World War, and are filled with strong women and men. When Molly isn't writing about happily ever afters on the battlefield, she can be found going on adventures with her husband and young son, sharing her love of vintage clothing and traditional wet sets, time traveling through historical reenactments, and singing up in the stratosphere.

Molly is a member of Romance Writers of America and Wisconsin Romance Writers of America. She would love to hear from you! Reach out at mollymaka.com.