NaNo Prep 101
A six-week workshop and resource guide

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Four Ways to Develop an Idea

1. Borrow a Plot

First, write a summary of 3 books or movies or stories you love. Include important characters, major plot turns, and setting. Here's an example:

Example: A teenage girl lives in a dystopian world where the USA has been divided into 13 Districts, and every year children are chosen from each district to fight to the death. The teenage girl volunteers to fight in place of her sister. She tries to survive while also protesting against the evil Capital and (maybe) falling in love. (Hunger Games).

Write 3 summaries:

Then, choose one of the summaries and start changing around different parts - characters, setting, plot turns, adjectives, verbs, anything else you like! See where those changes take you, and keep writing when you get inspired. Here's an example:

Example: A teenage girl lives in a future where the oceans have risen and everyone lives on small islands. The water is controlled by pirates who demand a sacrifice each year to keep the island safe. The girl is chosen, but in a storm, she's rescued by a different kind of pirate ship - one made up of former would-be sacrifices who act as pirates against the pirates. And…

Okay, so that idea isn't done yet, but I'm already super into it. Also, dibs on that idea. I'm writing it for NaNoWriMo because I liked it so much. You can look for it in hardback in a bookstore near you..

Change around the elements of one or all of your summaries:

2. Borrow a Character

Invent a history or future for someone. Maybe it's a friend you lost touch with after college, a teacher you had, a family member you've heard stories about, or just someone you've seen in photos or on the bus. I'd like to write a novel starring my great-grandmother someday, inspired by the pictures I've seen of her (I've never really heard anything about her!).

Who is the person that intrigues you? What was their childhood like? What did they dream of? What was their greatest desire? What obstacles did they face? What was their greatest triumph?

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Finally (since most novels aren't someone's entire life story), you have to find the story. What part of that imagined life has the most drama, the most ups and downs? A moment of adventure or possibility or danger, when things changed? Remember, you're INVENTING this person, so feel free to go wild.

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3. News You Can Use

Pick an event from the news. Imagine it from the perspective of different people involved with it. So a story about a river flooding might include the single mother driving her two kids on a camping trip, the park ranger called in to help, the farmer who lives down the road. Feel free to use the basics of the news story for inspiration, but make up your own details - change the place, the time, the specifics of the people involved (age, gender identity, personality).

What news stories have stuck with you?

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What kind of people might be involved? What are their lives like? How did they end up in that situation? What will they have to do to get out of it? What might have happened years before or what might happen years after?

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4. A Whole New World

Scroll through these photos until you find one (or more!) that sparks something for you, then pause and write your questions, wonderings, and ideas.
- [31 Haunting Images of Abandoned Places That Will Give You Goosebumps | Bored Panda](#)
- [20 Seriously Weird Places Around The World | Rough Guides](#)
- [59 Weirdest Places Across The World You Should Visit In 2023](#)

What kind of place is this? How did it get this way? Who might live or travel through it? How do they feel? What is it like for them there? What challenges do they face?

5. Have a Little Chat with a Robot

Okay, I know we said four ways, but now that we're living in the future, we thought we should mention AI as an idea generation tool. (Is AI good or bad? Should artists use AI in their art? How afraid should we be of an eventual AI takeover, and what kind of bribe should we prepare for our robot overlords? Alas, these questions are outside the scope of this Google doc!)

If you're interested in using AI to help you develop ideas, go right ahead! Maybe you already know more about it than us, but if not, here are a few links to get you started (NaNoWriMo isn't affiliated with any of the places linked below, we're just providing them as a jumping off point if you're curious. Here's our current [FAQ about AI and NaNoWriMo](#)):

- [Write with Laika](#) - text creator!
- [DALL-E 2](#) - image creator!