Setting
WRITING Quotas

WORKSHEET WCHP

1   Know what you're aiming for

Before setting a quota, you will need goals and targets for what the quotas are for.

You will also need to analyse yourself towards your capabilities – there's no point setting a large target of say, 5000 words a day, if you only have half an hour free to write in.

1. Choose your project(s) and work out word-count total expectations (certain genres have certain expected average word-counts)
2. Work out your time availability
3. Set milestones and deadlines on yourself.
4. Break the total word-count for your project out into the days up to your deadline.

2   Set SMART Quotas

Daily word count quotas should be SMART – a specific number which is achievable although a challenge.

- **James Scott Bell** does something he calls the *Nifty 350* – he always starts the day with 350 words, before anything else. He then goes on to 500 word sessions, knowing that after 500 he will need a break. He also sets Tuesdays aside purely for writing, and challenges himself to beat all his quotas on that day.
- Other writers set targets of 500 words, 750 words (see 750words.com), 1000 words, or 2000 words a day.
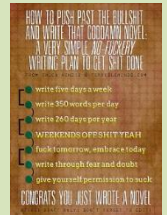
1000 Words A Day Challenge

Examples

1   Chuck Wendig's "The Big 350"

There are two simple rules -
1. Write 5 days out of the week.
2. On each day you write, complete 350 words.

At the end of the year (260 days), you will have 91,000 words in a first draft – ample for most fiction genres.

Chuck explains this on his blog post (warning – there is some swearing involved in most of Chuck's posts, including this one).

2   NaNoWriMo

The **NaNoWriMo marathon** which runs every November has an end goal for participants to have written a 50,000 first draft within the month.
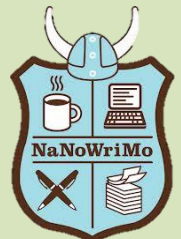
Calculated out, that means you must write 1667 words daily to reach the end target. There are word count widgets and measures on site to help with this daily quota.

3   Million Word Challenge

Million Word Challenge challenges 2013 participants to write a minimum of 2,740 words a day for the entire year.

If this is doable for somebody, at the end of this year they will have written one million words, enough for many many novels.

4   NaNoEdMo

March has the annual writer's challenge, **National Novel Editing Month**, based on the NaNoWriMo efforts previously.

But with editing, you can't set down a word count quota.

Instead, this challenge requires participants to log 50 hours of editing over the month, roughly 1 hour, 40 minutes of editing a day.

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3 Go Public (if you wish) with your Quotas

Use writing challenges, your blog, writing forums or other websites, or your writing groups to go public with your quotas, if you wish.

4 Keep Motivated with your Quota Habit and Challenge Yourself

Once you can reach your daily quota of so many words easily, set a higher goal to challenge yourself. If you can manage 500 words, try for 750. Next 1000…

- If you feel yourself flagging, look at challenges to provide support and motivation.
- Play games with yourself – do something like "**Don't break the chain**" and cross off calendar dates. (See H for Habits for more on this).
- Consider **writing marathons** for a real challenge – NaNoWriMo or the many similar marathons that set word targets per day.
- Give yourself a **10K Day** challenge – this is a personal challenge to write 10,000 words on a day.
  - I wrote about my own 10K Challenge on this post, giving a bunch of links to other websites which offer help.

Examples

1 Daily Words

Debbie Ridpath Ohi (Inkygirl) runs a constant word count challenge – DailyWords, and offers some wordcount badges you can put onto your blog if you want to go public with this.

There is also a Facebook support group for the challenge. The webpage for Inkygirl's challenge also provides links for wordcount badges.

2

I also wrote a post up about Wordcount challenges which includes many more badges and widgets for blogs, and also some iPad apps which register your daily quotas and wordcounts in a log.
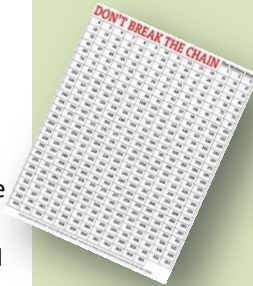
After **Rachel Aaron** had a popular post up last June – How I Went from Writing 2,000 Words a Day to 10,000 Words a Day, she then produced a book on the subject, '2k to 10k: Writing Faster, Writing Better, and Writing More of What You Love' and maintains 10K days of writing regularly.
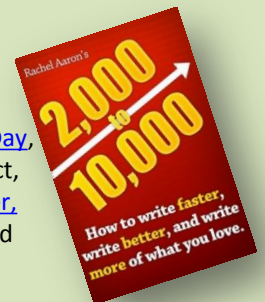
Quotas can be either –
- a process quota ie. Time-based – you do the process for a certain time
- A product quota ie. Word-count based, or complete this task or work package.

5 If you miss your Quota, Make it Up

Many authors suggest that quotas must be met, else momentum is lost.

6 Log Your Progress

James Scott Bell keeps a log – "I set this up on my spreadsheet program. In my log I record the number of words I write on my projects. The spreadsheet automatically tallies my daily and weekly production."

In J for Journal I also mention one type of journal – the **Writing Progress Journal**, which is exactly where a log of your quotas, and wordcounts (plus hours spent) should go.

This can be, and is normally something like a spreadsheet. Such documentation is also helpful for future use – in the calculation of time and effort you will need in writing your next project or book.

7 Assess and Adjust your Quotas

Use the writing log to assess your quotas regularly, say monthly.

If there is a significant discrepancy in meeting your quotas, adjust both your time management and other support systems, and adjust your quotas up or down.

Quote

" If something comes up on one day that prevents you from writing your quota, you just make it up later in the week. "

James Scott Bell
'*The Art of War for Writers'*

8 Reward Yourself

Having writing quotas is a discipline that all successful writers share. Most traditionally published authors have deadlines set on them by publishers, and without quotas, many would be pushed to reach them.

But there remains an artistic mindset – even in the self-disciplined writer – that working to a quota – either time or word count / product – can be a little "mechanical".

Many of us want to have the time and opportunity to just play with our writing, to "mull it over" and to drift with it creatively.

So: make that free time one reward for finishing something, and reward yourself with small things also, for meeting your quotas on a daily or weekly basis.