

A PEP TALK FOR YOUR FIRST STORY

Hey, you. Yes, you, the one staring at a blinking cursor and thinking “what on Earth have I gotten myself into?”

First things first: you’re amazing for even considering this contest. A thousand word short story in a week? For your first story? That’s pretty badass! Let’s talk through those nerves and turn them into something useful.

Here are some reminders to keep you steady, excited, and maybe even grinning while you write:

1 NAME THE FEELING

Say it out loud: “I’m nervous.” Once you name it, it loses its power. You’re owning your feelings and taking back control.

2 FLIP THE SCRIPT

That flutter in your chest? That’s excitement, baby. Your body is literally cheering you on with extra energy. Nervousness and excitement feel the same, and by telling ourselves “this is excitement I’m feeling” we can rewire our brains to believe it!

3

IT'S ANONYMOUS

Nobody knows it's you unless you decide later to spill the beans. You could literally write the wildest story imaginable, and no one will side-eye you at the supermarket.

4

YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUBLISH AT ALL

This contest is about experimenting, learning, and playing. If at the end you think, "Nope, not ready," then that's totally fine. There's no pressure to publish. There's not even pressure to write it... but you're here, you're choosing to be here, and you should be damn proud of yourself for taking that plunge.

5

EVERYONE'S A LITTLE SCARED

Even the people who've written for years. Blank pages don't care how experienced you are. So, welcome to the club! :D

6

FEEDBACK IS GROWTH

All comments will be kind, constructive, and anonymous. And remember - the feedback isn't personal, it's about your story. They don't know who you are - they'd just as easily be saying these things to an established writer!

7

1,000 WORDS IS SHORTER THAN YOU THINK

It's like... a couple of long ranting text messages. Or a blog post. Half an episode of your inner monologue. Totally doable, and not even essential to hit: the requirement is just that it's under 1,000 words.

8

THE BRAVEST PART IS ALREADY DONE

You signed up. You're showing up. That's the hardest step, and you've smashed it. The rest is just you playing with words, and (hopefully) having fun!

So, deep breath. Shoulders back. Wiggle your fingers over the keyboard. You're not alone. You're part of a group of brave, brilliant, slightly-nervous-but-mostly-excited writers. And I can't wait to see what you create.

Now go on. Make some magic!