Every writer has her own process and tools that help them, I’m going to share a list of tools and resources I use here, partly for my own future reference and partly to help others.

Along the way, not surprisingly, I’m going to be talking a little bit about my writing process.

I’ve completed a few technical publications, but now four fictional books. Let me tell you, because fiction, especially science fiction, requires keeping track of a lot of items, I find writing novels about three times harder than writing about a topic in IT that I’ve been working on for years.

Planning out

I like to plan out stories to ‘just enough’ level. I really like creating a word document which has a number of tiles of the big items for a novel. These are the ‘key scenes’ I’m working on which might be ‘friends wedding’, ‘finding a body in the garden’, ‘confronting the Governor’. Sometimes, but not always, I’ll match these to particular characters and play around a little to see the basic frame of my novel.

I’ll also go into a note taking frenzy. I use Google Docs, and have little breakdowns on character bios, and world events and just naming to help me keep track. For instance on book four, I needed to remember the Governor’s last name – well, my notes helps me.

This notes reminds me of the little world notes you’d get in the back of books like The Wheel Of Time, Dune, The Sage Of The Exiles to help you keep track of who’s who. Only now it’s to help me keep track as the author.

The First Draft

I have a mentality about writing the first draft that ‘it’s okay to be messy’. I really do find that ‘perfection is the enemy of done’, especially for writers.

Putting together a 300 page novel is hard enough. Folks like me for whom this is not a full-time job, you are stitching together an hour here and there of work, and it becomes like slowly assembling a jigsaw puzzle.

I find if I over focus on quality at this stage, I get bogged down in the weeds. This is what works for me.

I have friends such as Johanna Rothman and Lily Seagrove who are passionate about ‘writing clean’, and that works for them. You find this a lot in the writing community, the only method that matters is the one which works for you!