

The Writing Year

Do you want to make this year different?

Perhaps you want to write more.

Perhaps you want to finish your current WIP or get a story published in a magazine.

Maybe you just want to be less stressed about thinking about the fact that you should be writing and want to instead just be writing.

No matter what goals you have in mind to set for yourself there is truth in the saying “Life doesn’t get better by chance, it gets better by change.”

So are you ready to make a change?

This workbook is designed to help you make the most of the year to truly make this year one that defines your future. And the great thing is, the year can be started AT ANY TIME. No matter if it’s January 1st or July 15th, start your new writing year whenever you feel like it.

In the few pages that follow, you’ll learn how to create a plan for your writing that accurately defines your ideal vision. You’ll learn to develop annual and quarterly goals, as well as build a step-by-step weekly plan to help you turn your goals into reality.

However, this will only succeed if you put in the work. There is no magic software or solution or formula that will take the place of the energy you are willing to put in.

If you are still reading then grab a cup of coffee or tea and set aside about an hour today alone with yourself to work through the following pages.

This workbook is simple and will go step-by-step through setting goals and helping you build a schedule that will work to achieve them.

Let’s do it!

Step One: Define the WHY

*"Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision merely passes the time.
Vision with action can change the world."*

-Joel A. Barker

Let's focus on something that will help you get to the finish line: WHY.

Defining your personal why will make a difference in whether you succeed or fail. Writing might seem simple, I sit down and write, but it's not always easy. And soon, other distractions will pop up that will take you away from your passion for your reason to want to write.

Therefore, let's establish your WHY before going on to defining your plans.

I will make my goals a reality because _____

Step two: Commitment

"Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes...but no plans"

- Peter F. Drucker

This next step is mostly mental but it helps in building on our why that we established in step one.

There is a definite need to commit yourself to excellence.

The following might seem silly but it is vital in helping to set a mindset for success. Affirmations define for us a way forward. Therefore, we will use this page to define our commitment to achieving our goals.

A statement of commitment is simply a declaration to yourself and the world that you are going to make this year different. It is a pronouncement that you are willing to dedicate your time, energy, resources, and your mind toward a purpose.

Take a moment to fill out the Statement of Commitment below. If you need help, see the sample at the bottom of this page.

I, _____, hereby commit to _____

Sample: *I, Charles Dickens, hereby commit to making 20__ my best writing year ever. I am committed to investing time each and every day to reach my goals. I am committed to learning what I need to learn, avoiding distractions that pull me away from my goals, and making the necessary sacrifices to see my vision come true. I am committed to this because writing has been my dream since I can remember I want want to earn a living at it.*

Step Three: define your five-year vision

There is a great exchange in Alice in Wonderland that goes like this:

One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. 'Which road do I take' she asked. 'Where do you want to go?' was his response. 'I don't know,' Alice answered. 'Then,' said the cat, 'it doesn't matter.'

Just like Alice a lot of us wander through life unaware of where we want to go. Ironically we will never arrive to our goals if we haven't actually set them. This leads to feeling lost or unfulfilled in some way.

The third step is setting a vision of the years to come.

Some people suggest to look twenty years into the future and use this to direct your thinking of what you need to do to get there. How much did you change between 0-20? Probably a lot. Twenty years doesn't account for the change in who we are as individuals.

Others suggest only focusing on what you want to achieve in the next twelve months. Which is much more doable though somewhat short-sited.

Between twenty and one five years seems like a reasonable amount of time. It's long enough to give range to your vision but short enough to be attainable.

On the next page you'll define where you are at right now and define what you want your life to look like in five years. Don't be afraid to let yourself think big to truly identify what your life will look like.

This vision will help you determine the path you take on your writing journey.

	20__	20__
Total days written	_____	_____
Total pieces completed	_____	_____
Average hours / week of writing	_____	_____
Total pieces edited	_____	_____
Total pieces published	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____

**Pieces can be whatever you want to write. Poems, essays, novels, short stories, blogs etc. Be as specific as you want to be with how many of each type of work you want to complete. Use the back to define even more aspects you want to achieve in five years.*

Your Ideal Day:

Next, identify what your perfect, ideal day would look like. What time do you wake up? What are you doing for work? What are you doing for fun? Where are you? Who are you with? How much do you write? What are you writing? Are you publishing? Are you publishing through traditional publishing houses or self-publishing or blogging? If you need more room continue this on the back of this page:

Step Four: The One-Year goal

“The new year stands before us, like a chapter in a book, waiting to be written. We can help write that story by setting goals.”

- Melody Beattie

Now that we have a five year vision of where we want to be we can narrow our focus into smaller achievable pieces. To do this we’re going to establish a one-year goal that accurately lines up with your five-year vision.

To be on track with the vision you have of yourself in five years what do you need to accomplish this year to achieve that?

Since we are primarily focusing on writing goals in this workbook, consider what it would take to be on track with your writing.

Perhaps your goal is to write two books, ten short-stories, and publish one hundred and eighty blogs by 2027. You could simply say that you will write a book and four short stories a year along with publishing a blog a week. That’s an ambitious goal. However, you could set smaller goals with the thought that as you mature and grow as a writer you can be more productive. So maybe your goals are to write 12 short stories the first year and to write and publish twenty four blogs (or two a month).

Whatever you decide use the space below to set your one-year goal:

By the end of 20__, I will:_____

Remember that SMART goals contain five parts: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound. Does your goal meet those five attributes? If not, continue to refine until it does. “Write a book” is okay, but “outline and complete a manuscript in the fantasy genre of 100k words” is much better. Be specific.

Step Five: Set a Q1 goal

"The great thing about having a 12 Week Year is that the deadline is always near enough that you never lose sight of it. It provides a time horizon that is long enough to get things done, yet short enough to create a sense of urgency and a bias for action."

- Brian Moran, "The 12 Week Year"

Annual goals are great, but as the above quote points out it is easy to rest on your laurels and let goals hang out for most of the year and then try to cram them in at the end like studying for finals. Twelve months is a long time and setting daily / weekly goals based on the end of the year is difficult and often self-defeating.

Therefore, step five exists to help us establish goals for the first three months of the year (Q1). This way, our far-off goals no longer seem so distant, and it will be easier to establish our weekly process (see Step Six).

Based on what you have identified as your one-year goal in step four, **what do you need to accomplish in Q1 of this new year to be on track?**

By _____, I will: _____

Then, it would be a great idea to fill in the rest of the year quarter by quarter. You can always modify these quarters as you progress but it helps set the tone of how you want to proceed.

By _____, I will: _____

By _____, I will: _____

By _____, I will: _____

Step Six: Define Your Weekly Process

"The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers. You can do anything you decide to do. You can act to change and control your life; and the procedure, the process is its own reward."

-Amelia Earhart

Let's think about the idea of running a marathon.

Many people at the beginning of a new year get excited about losing weight or running a marathon. However, rarely do those goals get accomplished.

Why?

Because goals do not make a person successful. Hanging a photo on the wall of someone running isn't going to help you train for a marathon. What is truly going to help someone be prepared for the monumental task of running a marathon? A daily / weekly regime or *process* that includes running and nutritional requirements.

Success is found in the process, not the plan.

Does this mean all the planning we've discussed this far is worthless? Of course not! Without the plan, we wouldn't have the ability to define our process.

It's time to take our Q1 goal(s) and define the process by which we can achieve that goal(s).

What does this process actually look like? This is different for each person and might take some doing to get the formula just right.

Here are some examples:

- Wake up thirty minutes earlier every day to write before work
- Listen to writing themed podcasts on the way to / from work to get help on portions of your writing you struggle with.
- Attend a local meet-up of writers in your area
- Interact with the writing community on twitter to get input and advice
- Read writing related books thirty minutes before bed each night
- Do research for your book or create an outline of the next chapter or scene
- Watch youtube videos that breakdown writing techniques and analyze writing samples
- Join a writers workshop or take a class at a local college
- Take time on weekends to recharge creative juices by doing something you love like visiting a museum or walking in a park.

These are just a few examples of different processes you may incorporate into your life to help spark your creative flow and help motivate you to keep writing. Of course the process you take will be defined by your Q1 and annual goal, as well as, your five year vision.

It is now time to determine your plan - your process. Take a few minutes and

decide - what is *really* going to make a difference for you and help you achieve your Q1 goal(s)?

During Q1, my weekly / daily process is _____

Step Seven: Plan Your Week

"When defeat comes, accept it as a signal that your plans are not sound, rebuild those plans, and set sail once more toward your coveted goal."

- Napoleon Hill

Finally, we arrive at the point that will make or break our goals: action. Without the hard work and determination that every goal requires, you'll never achieve the life you are setting to build.

Plan Your Week

There are two types of people: those who live reactively and those who live *Proactively*. Which are you? Chose to set a path and follow it.

If you are looking to live more proactively this year, it begins by taming not the shrew but the week. This is done by, once a week, sitting down with a calendar and notebook (digital or paper) and deciding what your week will look like.

Define right now when and where you'll sit down each week to plan your day.

I will hold my weekly planning time each _____ (day of week) at _____ (time of day).

This weekly planning session is one of the most important things you can do each week because without it you'll simply be pulled into everyone else's agenda. And how do you make sure this doesn't happen? By Time Blocking.

We lead busy lives and have husbands or wives or children or animals or jobs or Netflix or any one of a million other things vying for our attention and time. Time blocking helps you see obstacles ahead in the week, keep on track, and aim to be as consistent as possible.

Time Blocking

There is no magic formula to creating action, but time blocking is a valuable tool to help plan out our intentions.

Time blocking is the practice of routinely scheduling your most important tasks on your calendar. You already determined what your process should look like - now its time to put that process to paper and put it on your schedule. Make an appointment with yourself and hold to it like its the key to your long-term success. Treat yourself like the CEO of your life, which you are. Even connecting on twitter should be in your calendar, to keep you on track so it doesn't take up more time than it should.

Take a look at your schedule for the coming week - weather its an online calendar (nice for sharing with a spouse so they know when to not bug you about doing the dishes) or a physical one and block our your time.

Seriously, just do it right now. Move on to step Eight when your calendar is booked up with time for your process along with the rest of your life.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Step Eight: Execute daily

"Ideas are easy. It's the execution of ideas that really separates the sheep from the goats."
-Sue Grafton

Up until this point you've committed to success, laid out a vision for your future, defined your goals, boiled your goals down into weekly steps and now you are ready to tackle your goals, head-on.

But how do you maintain enthusiasm for your goal? If you are anything like me, it's easy to get excited about a goal but soon that excitement wears off and turns to just "work".

Therefore, to keep moving forward, and to ensure we are always on the right track, it's important to track your goals on a weekly and daily basis. It's a lot like "time blocking" but in reverse. Rather than recording what you are *going to do*, you record *what you actually did*.

To do this, use the forms on the following page, and feel free to print off as many copies as you need to accomplish your goals. The chart focuses you on the top three processes you think will help you write more consistently each week until you reach your goals for this quarter. This gives us a daily pep to show that we are moving closure to the vision we have.

Daily Process Tracker - Two Week Period

Week of _____

Day of week	Process 1	Process 2	Process 3
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

Week of _____

Day of week	Process 1	Process 2	Process 3
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

Conclusion

"He, who every morning plans the transactions of the day, and follows that plan, carries a thread that will guide him through a labyrinth of the most busy life."

-Victor Hugo

At this point you have everything you need to reach your big goals this year. The only thing left to do is take action. And, of course, remember that plans are meant to change. As you work through your plan to accomplish the writing life you want, pay attention to make sure your plan is actually getting you where you want to go.

Final thoughts:

- Take a moment each day to assess your progress and make tweaks as you go.
- Consider starting an accountability mastermind group with several other writers.
- Remind yourself often or daily what your current quarter goal is and what you are going to do to achieve it.
- If you miss a day of writing or don't make one of your goals its ok. Use the materials in this packet to get back on track. Love yourself, but also know when you need to push.
- Build in some down time. Everyone needs to rest once in a while.
- Finally, remember, a plan is just a plan unless you add action. Then it becomes something with a life of its own. So go out there and start working your processes, and watch your goals turn into reality.

With that, the rest is up to you.

To your success!