



2021 WRITER'S PLANNING WORKSHOP



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Why plan?

The problem with New Year's resolutions is that they often focus on what's 'wrong' with us, on all those things we think we really should do or stop doing rather than what we really, truly want..

For us though, it's easy. What we really, truly want is to write.

Instead of just promising to do 'better', let's look at what has gone well, what hasn't and why. Then you can get clear about what you want in the coming year, how you want to feel about your writing and, importantly, how to get there.

How are you going to get an agent for your first book if it's sitting in the drawer? Maybe you have two published books, but the third won't magically write itself. Once you know what you want you can plan and set up routines and habits to give yourself the best chance of getting there. You're in charge of your writing habits, your creativity and managing your time and energy, and by committing to small steps you'll make it.

Because dreaming is great, but doesn't having a dream and a map sound better?

This is a choose-your-own adventure planner. It's what I use, but I like to plan; you can pick the parts that work for you and leave the rest. The full process will probably take you an hour or so, but there's a cheaty quick version you can do in 10 minutes at the back if you're the impatient type.

Happy writing!
Charlie



2020 review

Flick through your diary and files/notebooks and list every small thing you did in your writing life last year. Take a moment to celebrate your achievements. What did you enjoy or learn? What made you happy or proud? What worked for you? What do you want to do more of?

Is there anything you wanted to do but didn't? What was frustrating, disappointing or felt like a failure? Why? Where did you get stuck? What bad habits got in your way?

Your writing dreams

What is your biggest, most ridiculous writing dream? Really go all-out on this

Taking it back a step, where would you love to be with your writing in five years? Why? What does that goal mean to you? E.g. a particular lifestyle, money, respect/acclaim, feeling creative and free? What's your biggest driver?

What do you want to write? Check any notes you have and list stories you know about, half-formed ideas, subjects that interest you, things you want to say, genres. Focus on the things you'd really love to write, not the things you think you should. are the things (stories, ideas, subjects) that you want to write about, the things you want to say?

What would you like to do in your wider writing life that would help you achieve your dreams? E.g. go on poetry course, develop steady habit, build website, hire editor etc.

Set your goals

Pick between one and three goals for the year, (one is fine, you don't have to pick three!). Get clear on why you want them first, what they will give you, mean to you, take you closer to. They should be things you really want, that are within your control to make happen. What will you need to do to get there? Use this format or adapt it to make sense to you:

I want to_____. I'd really love to write about _____.

This year I'm going to write _____, then I'm going to_____.

Example:

- ✦ I want to be a children's author and bring joy to kids. I'd love to write a book (for 3-5 yrs) called Hush Now, Snorosaur. This year I'm going to plot and write the story, then I'm going to edit it and submit it to an agent.
- ✦ I want to learn to be a better writer by writing more. I'd really love to write about love and the complexity of relationships. In 2019, I'm going to write at least one short story a month to submit one a month to competitions.

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

Time machine

Now for the sneaky superpower trick. Imagine it's 31st December and you've achieved all of your goals. How did you actually do it? What daily/weekly habits got you there? How did you recover when things went badly and you lost confidence? What did you have to change from the way you acted and thought last year? Brainstorm, then list things you stopped doing and the things you did that made most difference.

Break it down – quarterly goals

Breaking goals into quarterly chunks makes them more manageable while allowing you to see the overall picture. Work forward in quarters or backward from the end result and remember you can stagger goals through the year or adjust them if they look unrealistic.

Q1 target (Jan-Mar)	Q2 target (Apr-Jun)	Q3 target (Jul-Sep)	Q4 target (Oct-Dec)
Goal 1:			
Goal 2:			
Goal 3:			

Monthly planner by week

Month	Goal 1 target:	Goal 2 target	Goal 3 target
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			
Week 5			

Word-count tracker

If planning by word-count is more your thing and seeing the numbers mount up gives you a thrill, this one's for you.

	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
Week	Target	Actual	Cumulative	Target	Actual	Cumulative	Target	Actual	Cumulative	Target	Actual	Cumulative
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												
13												
Q Total												

Your year at a glance

Want to be able to see what you've got on? Use this for an overview of deadlines, targets, events and life events.

January	February	March	April
May	June	July	August
September	October	November	December

The quick & dirty version

Pick one to three goals for the year (and yes, can have just one). Make them the thing/s you want more than anything else, starting from what you want and why. Use this format or make up something similar that works for you.

I want to_____. I'd really love to write about _____.

This year, I'm going to write _____, then I'm going to_____.

Example: I want to be a children's author and bring joy to kids. I'd love to write a book (for 3-5 yrs) called Hush Now, Snorosaur. This year I'm going to plot and write the story, then I'm going to edit it and submit it to an agent.

Goal/s:

What are you going to do or change to make it happen? Come up with three habits/actions that will help get you there.

About Urban Writers' Retreat

You want to write, really you do, but sometimes life gets in the way.

I'm Charlie, writer and procrastinator extraordinaire. Since 2008 I've been running writing retreats giving distraction-free time and space dedicated to your writing that can super-charge your productivity and creativity.

In normal times, one-day retreats take place in a little haven in the heart of London while residential writing breaks in Devon are made up of days on end of blissful writing time interrupted only by country walks and cake breaks.

At the start of 2020, [all writing retreats are online](#). Come and try one; writers of all kinds and experience are welcome!

I also run online courses: [Writer's Block Detox](#) helps stalled writers to get going again, [Six Month Novel](#) will help you to turn that idea that's been floating around in your head for years into a complete first draft, and [This is Not a Course About Writing](#) helps you deal with the internal junk that for most of us is the real problem behind not writing and find a new path of self-compassion and prioritising your creativity.



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