



2024 ANNUAL PLANNING WORKSHOP FOR WRITERS



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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.

Happy writing!
Charlie



2023 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_____. This year I'm going to_____

To do this I'm going to_____, then I'm going to_____.

Example:

- ✦ I want to write my business book to establish myself as an authority figure (and long-term get speaking gigs and articles). This year I'm going to research how to approach publishers/agents, possibly joining a course if I feel I need to learn more, then I'm going to write my chapter outline and proposal and find 10 targets to send it to, plus upgrade my social media to be more helpful and topic-based so that I look more professional at that point.
- ✦ I want to feel more like a writer by writing more and putting my work out there. I'd really love to write about love and the complexity of relationships. This year I'm going to write at least one short story a month based on those topics and write/find a list of competitions so that I can submit one story 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 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												

About Urban Writers' Retreat



You want to write, 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.

I run residential writing retreats in Devon. London one-day retreats are, at the time of writing this, on hiatus. I also run online courses including [Six Month Novel](#), where I help and support you as you turn that idea that's been floating around in your head for years into a complete first draft.

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