

The Writer's Year 2018

Track Your Writing Goals,
Achievements and Time!

compiled by

Moira Allen, Editor

Writing-World.com

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Getting the Most from Your Planner

Time just seems to slip away... Time goes by so fast... Where does the time go? Do you find yourself saying this? Do you wonder where the day went? Do you wonder where the year went? Do you find yourself in the midst of November feeling as though it was surely only March a few weeks ago?

If so, you're not alone. In these hectic times, nearly everyone seems to feel that time is flashing by. Each year seems to pass more quickly, with less to show for it. Our tasks multiply, yet sometimes weeks go by that leave us shaking our heads, feeling as if we've been running a race, yet wondering, "What exactly did I *do*?"

For writers, our common lament is that we never seem to have time to take on the projects that are dearest to our hearts. Our dreams remain dreams; our goals seem no nearer to fulfillment than when we first wrote them down. Perhaps it's that novel that we yearn to begin—or to finish. Perhaps it's that nonfiction book or memoir. Perhaps it's the desire to go "full-time" as a freelancer, and earn a living wage doing what we love best. We read endless articles on how to "make time to write," yet that time seems more elusive than ever.

A Writer's Year can help. It's the only planner designed specifically for writers. It recognizes that a writer's "working day" doesn't start at nine and end at five. For many, it only *begins* at five, and may not end until well after midnight.

A Writer's Year is based on the recognition that "planning" and "creativity" aren't mutually exclusive. Our creative "right brain" and our organizational "left brain" aren't antagonists; they're partners. And without planning, we risk losing hours of potential creative time, simply because we're not in control of it and often don't even know "where it all goes."

My husband is fond of pointing out that "you can't manage what you can't measure." You can't manage your time until you know how it is spent. This planner can help you manage this most precious resource. And if, in your writing career, "time is money," it can help you become not only more productive but also more profitable.

Here are some ways to make this planner work for you, and help you recapture the time you need to achieve your writing goals:

1) Record your deadlines. Knowing what is coming up is the first step in scheduling your obligations. *A Writer's Year* enables you to note deadlines on the actual due-date, and also make a list of weekly and monthly deadlines at a glance.

External deadlines are relatively easy to keep track of. But what about projects that don't have "real" deadlines? Setting your own deadlines on projects you want to complete can help you schedule time for them amidst other, externally imposed requirements. Conversely, tracking your deadlines will help you avoid scheduling tasks that aren't so urgent in the same timeframe. For example, if it takes you a week to write an article and a week to write a chapter of your novel, then a month in which you have three article deadlines is not the best month to set a goal of writing four novel chapters! In short, knowing what you "have" to do helps alleviate the stress of feeling that you're not meeting your other goals.

2) Keep "to-do" lists. I'm a firm believer in the power of the "to-do" list, which is why I've set up a place for this at the beginning of each week. To-do lists aren't just useful for reminding you of what you actually need to accomplish in a given day or week. They are a wonderful way of helping you track what you *have* accomplished. That surge of satisfaction you get when you cross something off the list isn't the least bit silly; it's a visual reminder that you have, in fact, *achieved your objective*. Hence, your to-do list serves in its own way as your achievement list (something I've also provided a place for).

3) Track your achievements. Many of us go through the days and weeks at a frantic pace, but when the end of the day or week or month arrives, we look back and wonder, "what exactly did I accomplish?" We know we were working at top speed, yet it's hard to remember just what we did—often because we did so *many* things.

I've gotten in the habit of writing down my achievements at the end of each day, along with any other major activities that took a chunk of my time (like running errands or handling a phone call from a family member). It's not a "brag" list (though sometimes it may have a brag or two); rather, it's a reminder that all that "running in place" really *did* result in things getting done. Otherwise, it's easy to feel as if one is wasting time, simply because one can't recall just where all that time *went*.

4) Track project and billable hours. If you write for others—creating copy, business materials, technical writing, etc.—chances are that you need to track your billable hours. One of the most obvious uses of a planner like *A Writer's Year* is to note what you did when, and how long it took. But be specific: don't just note that you spent two hours working on "The Johnson Project." What, exactly, did you do? If you spent half an hour conducting an interview and another hour writing up your interview notes, put that down. This will also help you, in the future, to be able to make more accurate estimates of the time that will be required for future projects.

While many freelance projects don't involve billable hours, tracking your time is still useful when writing articles or other types of submissions. It's easy to look at what one is being paid for a piece without taking into account how long it takes to *produce* that piece. It's important to remember that a \$200 article that requires ten hours of work is no more lucrative than a \$20 article that requires only one—but we won't know which projects are the most profitable unless we actually *know* how long it takes to complete them. Tracking non-billable project hours is a great way to determine what types of work "pay off" and what types are simply time-wasters.

5) Track your submissions. I've included a submission tracker at the end of this book. It's

ideal for keeping a record of what you've sent out, where, and when; when you've followed up; what the response has been; and how much you have been paid.

6) Track everything else. The question we seem to ask most often is "where does the time go?" This doesn't *have* to be a rhetorical question; we can find out. If you're constantly feeling that the days are going by without getting you any closer to your writing goals; if you're constantly wondering why you've managed to be "busy" all day without getting done the things you *wanted* to get done; then, consider using *A Writer's Year* to track *exactly* what you do all day.

I mean this literally. Note when you get up. Note when you actually "start" your day (i.e., after showering, getting dressed, having breakfast, etc.). If you have a job, note when you leave the house and when you return home. If you don't have an outside "day job," track the other things that occupy your time: running errands, handling parenting issues, cooking meals, etc. Track time spent on phone calls, paying bills, watching television. Track it *all*.

What we so often find is that we sit down to "quickly" check e-mail—and blink to find that the entire morning is gone. Or, we'll just "check a few Facebook pages"—ditto. The only way to begin reallocating your time to the tasks you *want* to accomplish is to find out where it's *actually* going first. As I said above, we can't manage what we can't measure—so if we start to feel that somehow we're losing control of our time management, the only way to get it back is to begin by "measuring."

Regardless of how you use *A Writer's Year*, I hope you'll find it a useful tool to help you achieve *your* writing goals, whatever those may be! I wish you every success in the year to come—and hope that, when next autumn rolls around, you'll be able to look back on your writing year as time well spent!

—Maira Allen, Editor
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April 2018

Saturday, April 28, 2018

Sunday, April 29, 2018

Saturday, April 28, 2018		Sunday, April 29, 2018		Notes and Ideas
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Achievements/Tasks Completed		Achievements/Tasks Completed		

“Before I start a project, I always ask myself the following question. Why is this book worth a year of my life? There needs to be something about the theme, the technique, or the research that makes the time spent on it worthwhile.”
— David Morrell

May 2018

Saturday, May 26, 2018

Sunday, May 27, 2018

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Achievements/Tasks Completed

Achievements/Tasks Completed

“If you have knowledge, let
others light their candles at
it.”
– Margaret Fuller

June 2018

Saturday, June 02, 2018

Sunday, June 03, 2018

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“The act of writing is an act of optimism. You would not take the trouble to do it if you felt that it didn’t matter.”
 – Edward Albee

June 2018

Saturday, June 23, 2018

Sunday, June 24, 2018

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Achievements/Tasks Completed		Achievements/Tasks Completed		

“I conceive that a knowledge of books is the basis on which all other knowledge rests.”
– George Washington

December 2018

Saturday, December 22, 2018

Sunday, December 23, 2018

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Achievements/Tasks Completed		Achievements/Tasks Completed		

“Writing starts with living.”
— L.L. Barkat

Events Relating to Books, Authors & Writing

Agatha Christie Week (UK)	September-3rd Week
Audiobook Month.....	June
Banned Books Week (ALA)	September-4th Week
Blog Posting Month, National (International).....	November
Bloomsday (Dublin, Ireland & elsewhere - <i>celebrates writer James Joyce</i>)	June 16
Book and Copyright Day, World (UN)	April 23
Book Day, World (UK).....	March 6
Book Lover's Day, National.....	August 9, November 2
Book Month (NZ)	March
Book Night, World	April 23
Bookmobile Day, National (ALA).....	April-Wednesday of National Library Week
Celebrate Teen Literature Day (ALA)	April-Thursday of National Library Week
Children's Book Day, International (UN)	April 2
Children's Day/Book Day (ALA - <i>English/Spanish</i>)	April 30
Creative Beginnings Month (<i>celebrates creativity</i>).....	May
Dictionary Day (<i>Noah Webster's Birthday</i>).....	October 16
Dr. Seuss Day	March 2 or 3
Drop-Everything-and-Read Day (DEAR), National (ALA)	April 12
Edible Book Festival/Edible Book Day (International)	April 1
Family Literacy Day (Canada).....	January 27
Family Literacy Day, National.....	November 1
Flash Fiction Day, National (UK, International)	June 22
Free Comic Book Day	May-1st Saturday
Free Speech Week	October-3rd Full Week
Friends of Libraries Week, National (ALA).....	October-4th Week
Get Caught Reading Month.....	May
Hobbit Day	September 22
I Love to Write Day	November 15
Ideas Week, International	May-3rd Week
Imprisoned Writer, Day of the (International)	November 15
Intellectual Property Day, World (UN/WIPO).....	April 26
Jewish Book Month	November
Journalists Killed in the Line of Duty, Remembrance Day of (Russia).....	December 15
Latino Books Month.....	May
Library Card Sign-up Month (ALA).....	September
Library Legislative Day, National (ALA).....	May 5-6
Library Lovers Month (ALA)	February
Library Week, National (ALA).....	April-2nd Full Week
Limerick Day, National (<i>celebrates the birthday of Edward Lear</i>)	May 12
Literacy Day, International (UN/UNESCO).....	September 8
Literacy Month, National	September
Mother Goose Day	May 1

Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), National.....	November
Picture Book Month	November
Poetry Day, National (UK).....	October 3
Poetry Day, World (UN/UNESCO)	March 21
Poetry Month, National (US, Canada)	April
[Book] Preservation Week (ALA)	April-4th Week
Press Freedom Day, World (UN)	May 3
Punctuation Day, National (US, Canada).....	September 24
Read a Book Day, National.....	September 6
Read a New Book Month	December
Read Across America Day/Dr. Seuss Day	March 2 or 3
Reading Day, National	January 23
Reading Group Month, National	October
Reading Month, National.....	March
Roald Dahl Day (International).....	September 13
School Library Month, International	October
School Library Media Month, National	April
Share a Story Month, National (UK)	May
Storytelling Day, World (northern hemisphere).....	March 20 (equinox)
Storytelling Day, World (southern hemisphere)	September 22 (equinox)
Storytelling Week, National (UK)	February-1st Week
Teen Read Week (ALA).....	October-3rd Week
Tell-a-Story Day (England, Scotland).....	October 25
Tolkien Reading Day, International	March 25
Tolkien Week	September-Week containing 22nd (Hobbit Day)
Towel Day (International - <i>based on Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i>).....	May 25
Young Poets Week (Canada)	April-2nd Week (part of National Poetry Month)