

Writing Project Worksheet

Working Title		Deadline	
---------------	--	----------	--

1. Purpose – Why am I writing this project?

2. Audience – Who am I writing for, specifically?

3. Requirements – What are the requirements of this project?

4. Accountability – Who am I accountable to for this project and why?



Writing Project Instructions & Examples

Fear of the unknown stops most people from doing many of the things they would love to do or that are in their best interest.

People don't start a business because they think it is too hard and there is so much uncertainty about how it all works.

A person may never write that novel they always dreamed about because they don't know what to write. Heck, some people don't watch dramas because they are only familiar with action movies.

They feel safe and comfortable with what is familiar, because they know what to expect.

You and I both procrastinate because our brains learn that the stuff we do to procrastinate has a known payoff; writing, on the other hand, is frequently an exploration of unvisited regions of our subconscious and is therefore - to quote Shakespeare - freaky as balls.

When you throw in the fear that "my writing may not be any good", no wonder getting started and keeping the words flowing can be so gosh-darn hard.

If we can take some of the mystery out of *starting* to write, our brains get less antsy about the whole process and eventually let us enjoy it again.

I'm not advocating taking the mystery, spontaneity or serendipity that makes up so much great storytelling out of *all* your writing. I am saying, however, that to get started and to beat procrastination, give yourself and your terrified lizard brain a break, and work out what and why you are writing beforehand.

I have more to say about planning and executing a writing project than I can fit in this guide, but there are a few basic questions you can ask

yourself at the outset of a project that can really help clarify what it is you need to do.

These questions aren't unique and the answers don't need to be lyrical wonders full of beauty and the dandruff of angels; they are functional statements that make your purpose clear to *you*.

You may find you don't need to answer these questions in a huge amount of detail and that's fine, *if you are still writing*. It's no use saying "I like to be a free spirit and write what comes to me naturally" if you aren't writing a damn thing. Start with a functional process and work from there.

1. Purpose – Why are you writing this project?

Are you trying to create an emotion? Make a point? Make a sale? Amuse yourself? The purpose of the piece will inform your creative decisions. Knowing the purpose beforehand can make the process of sitting down and writing a great deal easier.

Example: "The purpose of this eBook is to provide value to readers of JacobCorcoran.com, introduce them to me and my methods and get them to take action to improve their writing experience."

2. Audience – Who are you writing for, specifically?

Who are you writing for?

Have a think about your intended audience and keep them in mind while planning your project. If you are engaged in commercial copywriting, this question is the most important one to answer and can be extremely detailed. As an example, you might have answer that sounds like:

“I’m writing for writers or people engaged in similar creative work that are having difficulty dealing with their tendency to procrastinate or suffer from writer’s block. They are self-aware and intelligent enough to know they can change this situation, and need to. They want a well-written, practical guide that explains why people procrastinate and how to control writer’s block so they can get back to what they really love, which is writing. They are visitors to JacobCorcoran.com and are therefore slightly more technically savvy than usual, but for both practical and aesthetic reasons would likely prefer a simple worksheet format and plain-language instructions.”

3. Requirements – What are the requirements of this project?

What are you writing?

A poem, a fiction short story, a non-fiction novel? You won’t necessarily need to write this down as it is usually obvious, but your answer will be something along the lines of:

“I’m writing a non-fiction ebook for JacobCorcoran.com that helps people beat procrastination. It must contain a worksheet outlining the four major PARA questions, as well as plainly written instructions”.

Where is it being published?

Is it going up on your own blog? Is it a letter to a friend? Is it a report for a paying client? Where it is being published lets your brain know, again, a little more about what to expect and what to work toward.

Example: “This project is being published online at a high-quality writing website, JacobCorcoran.com in PDF format.”

4. Accountability – Who and what are you accountable to for this project and why?

When is it due?

Deadlines are wonderful things. They can take a stalled side project that's stagnating in a pool of despair and self-loathing and turn it into a finished, published, story. Give yourself a end date, a daily word count or clear timeline to complete your project.

Pro Tip: *Ship at your deadline whenever possible*, even if you aren't happy with what you have. You will rapidly start to treat your own deadlines seriously if you force yourself to publish a blank blog post, or submit to a competition nothing but an outline you jotted down on a napkin (you have my permission to do the latter anonymously - you're trying to teach yourself a lesson, not burn any bridges...). On the flip-side, you may very well discover that you are far too hard on yourself, and that the days and weeks of nitpicking don't add anything to the finished product.

Planning your project.

After you have answered the questions above, it really helps reduce resistance if you can plan out your project in detail. It may not always be possible, but planning out makes things much easier. I want to keep this ebook focused on killing procrastination, but I have a stack of stuff on project planning that I'll share if anyone is interested. If you ever find yourself thinking about what to write during your dedicated writing time, it means you need to plan better.

It can also be useful during the planning stages to see if there are logical "chunks" your project can be broken down into. A novel has

chapters and scenes, this ebook has chapters and sub-points, and so on. Depending on size, each “chunk” can make a fantastic daily goal. It also helps to make things feel way less intimidating if you’ve sliced things up into manageable pieces. For example, “writing a novel” is an intimidating goal for most, but it becomes less so when you break it down into its constituent ingredients:

60,000 word novel / 10 chapters = 6,000 word chapters

6,000 word chapter / 6 scenes = 1,000 word scenes

One 1,000 word scene a day X 60 days = one 60,000 word novel!

Thinking in 1,000-words-a-day chunks is far less intimidating than thinking in entire novel I-think-I-might-faint boulders. And if 1000 words a day is too much, pick an amount that seems more manageable (but ideally just a little more than you think you can comfortably handle) and *stick to it*.

Now, I’m not saying that length is the sole (or any) indicator of quality, or that *any* fiction piece you write will fit into a series of neat 1,000 word scenes, but breaking it down like this makes things way less scary.

Examples:

“I will write one chapter per day of this 6 chapter ebook”.

“This blog post must be submitted by March 3rd”

“I will write 600 words of my YA fantasy novel each weekday”.

Even a bullet-point list of topics, plot points or rough structure will make things a lot easier on you when it comes time to write.

Bonus Tip for fiction writers: a great place to start is to pick a short-story competition and prepare an entry. It's a more manageable project size than a novel to start, you have a "what", "who" and "when" laid out for you, and the deadline is externally enforced.

Who am I accountable to and *who is helping me?*

It's critical to have a trusted 3rd party to be accountable to for delivering on your deadlines. Someone to whom you commit, and will encourage or whip-crack as necessary.

Last week (as of this writing) I managed several professional writers to prepare and deliver numerous pieces *directly* to an audience of 100,000 or so, on deadline and with critical revenue targets. They were accountable to me and I helped them deliver on time.

Why am I telling you this? Because even as someone who (mostly) has their shit together on the content creation front, even I have my own coach for *this very eBook*. (His name's Gavin and he recently helped an author get their book to the top end of the New York Times Bestseller list – I'm very fortunate to be working with him and you'll probably learn more about him in future emails)

Professional writers have editors and publishers that they work closely with, often crediting them with not only assisting with novels but making them possible at all. They usually have entire teams of people helping them. So if you're stuck, partly you need to make sure you are accountable to complete, but partly you need to make sure you have the help you need!

What's next?

You should have a much clearer understanding of how to proceed with your writing. This deceptively simple worksheet should help unlock and unblock your writing and really help you to get back into joys of creating... but it's just the start! Over the coming weeks and months, I'll be emailing you hints, tips and tricks around planning, motivation, writing templates and tools - plus a whole host of other interesting and useful material.

If you want to take your writing to the next level and explore the idea of having a trusted writing coach be your accountability partner, please get in touch with me to book a time for a free 30 minute Skype call. We'll discuss your needs, goals and situation. On the call, I'll provide advice to suit your circumstances, obligation and cost free.

Go [here](#) to submit your application for a free session, and I'll be in touch!

Happy writing!

Jake Corcoran

Writing Coach