

**3 TOOLS TO KEEP  
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**POST-  
CONFERENCE  
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*Turn Inspiration  
into Action After  
the Event*

**10 TIPS FOR  
CHOOSING  
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**TAKE NOTE,  
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*Note-Taking  
Strategies for  
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**SETTING THE  
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**INDIE AUTHOR  
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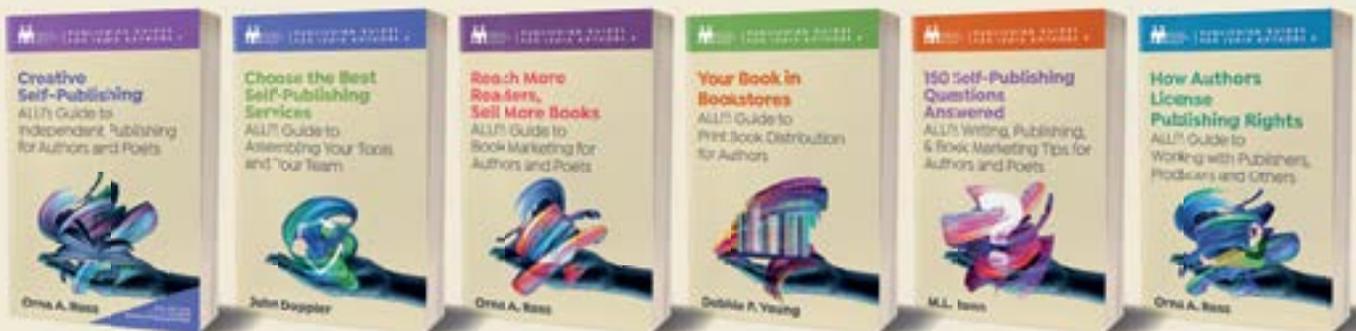
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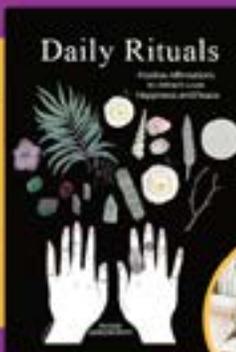
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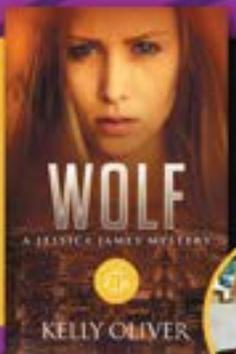
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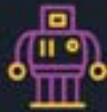
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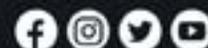
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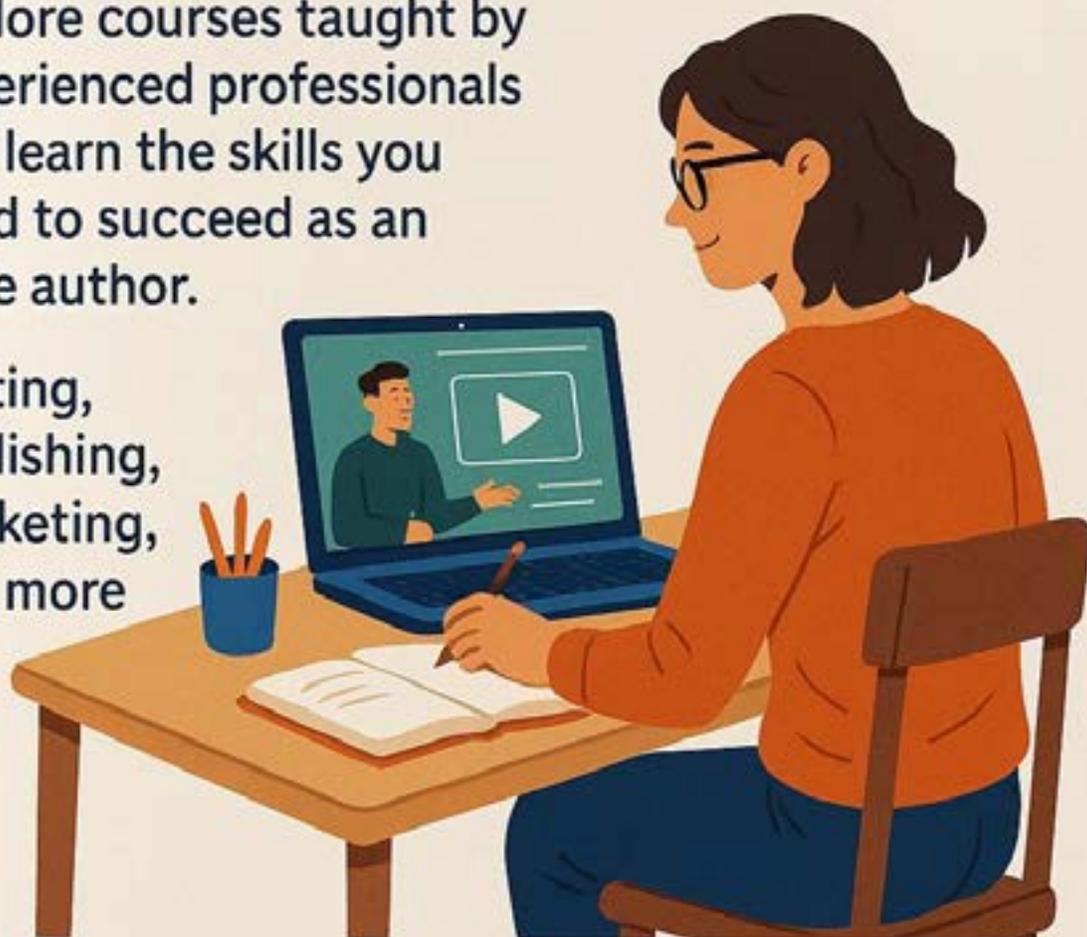
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Nicole Schroeder  
*Editor in Chief*

## *From the* EDITOR IN CHIEF

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“**Y**ou don’t know what you don’t know.”

We’ve all likely heard that phrase before and nodded along—it sounds fairly straightforward, if a little redundant. But every once in a while, there comes a point in life where it truly clicks. There is so much to learn, and there are so many questions you need answered, that you don’t even know where to start asking them.

That was how I felt when I started my author career. And I’d venture to bet that’s far from a unique experience.

Even once you’re an established author, the feeling doesn’t quite go away. We talk in the pages of this magazine about best practices around launch day, strategies for social media and marketing, the pros and cons of various distribution methods or plotting versus pantsing or various platforms in your technology toolkit. But the beauty and immense challenge of this industry is that those strategies and practices are all constantly shifting, and the benefit-drawback scales are forever rebalancing themselves.

At every stage of the process, we are all learning how to write, edit, publish, market, manage ... then we are learning how to do it better. We attend workshops or conference sessions, collaborate with other authors in writing groups, sign up for online courses, or, yes, even read trade publications focused on the industry. Even for the seven-figure titans among us, education is a must.

Our sister site, Indie Author Training, was built with exactly that purpose in mind: to create a library of author-tailored courses, workshops, webinars, and product tours that provide the guidance and support you need in your career, in any area and at any stage. This month, *Indie Author Magazine* is shining a spotlight on education as well. How do you know what classes, workshops, or sessions to take? How can you make sure you get the most out of them? How do you balance it all with the rest of your responsibilities?

The list of questions is endless, but the answers are out there—and we hope that you’ll find some of them, at least, in these pages.

*Nicole Schroeder*

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# ALLi Exclusive: Education a Cornerstone of Self-Publishing Success





**I**n self-publishing, education really is the key to success—and at the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi), we’re all about helping authors get the knowledge they need to build a thriving publishing business.

We all know that honing our writing craft is important. But it’s just as crucial to keep learning about the other parts of the publishing process—editing, design, production, distribution, marketing, promotion, and rights licensing. And the more you know about each, the more confidently you can run your author business.

Of course, there are many educational options out there. So how do you make sure you’re really getting the most out of what’s available? Here are some tips to help you make your learning count.

## Engage Actively

The more engaged you are, the more you’ll retain—and more importantly, actually use—what you’ve learned.

ALLi’s Editor-in-Chief and Ambassador Roz Morris puts it this way: “Find out if the webinar or class will be available for you to rewatch or if there’s a transcript. I always find it a struggle to listen at the same time as taking notes when I’m deluged with delicious new information. If I know there are comprehensive notes or a rewatch facility, that takes the pressure off and lets me engage fully in the moment.”

When you’re attending events in person, don’t underestimate the power of just talking to people. Making connections with fellow authors and industry professionals is a huge part of the learning process—and can lead to future collaborations and increased visibility.

“If you’re at an in-person event, don’t forget that part of the benefit is the other people there,” Morris says. “Writers tend to be shy, but in a conference or course situation, you all have the same interest and aim. That in itself is enough to break the ice. Strike up conversations about the learning you’ve just shared, or about the next sessions you’re planning to attend. Although online relationships are fantastic, it’s always more special if you’ve connected in reality.”

## Take Action

Learning is great, but it only makes a difference if you actually do something with it.

ALLi Ambassador, Nonfiction Advisor, and podcast host Anna Featherstone shares her strategy. “There are plenty of fantastic learning opportunities for authors out there, but sometimes we kid ourselves that turning up and listening actually changes our actions,” she says. “So for every session or seminar I attend, I highlight just one key thing I will do differently. That way, I actually have something solid and achievable to work on.”

So how can authors make the most of their educational opportunities based on the stage of their publishing business?

## For Beginning Authors: Build the Foundation

Get off on the right foot by laying the groundwork for your education.

### Set Clear Goals

Before you dive into all the great educational content out there, take a moment to figure out what you’re aiming for. Want to be a full-time author-publisher? Mix in some business know-how with your craft learning. Publishing a one-off book to support your business? Start with the craft basics.

## Be Picky About Where You Learn

There’s a lot of info out there—and not all of it is good. Choose sources that are reputable and aligned with your goals. You’ll save time, avoid mistakes, and move forward faster.

Not sure how to vet a source? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do their goals match yours? (There’s no point learning rapid-release strategies if you’re not planning to publish that way.)
- Does their experience or data back up their advice?
- Are they recommended by people you trust?

Tap into ALLi’s list of vetted Partner Members and Victoria Strauss’s *Writer Beware* blog to find the reputable sources and avoid the disreputable ones.

## For Emerging Authors: Tap into Your Trusted Sources

Once you've got a few books or projects under your belt, it's time to level up with more targeted learning.

### Pick a Focus and Rotate

It's easy to get overwhelmed when there's so much to learn. Instead, focus on one area at a time—maybe spend a month diving into marketing, then shift to promotion the next month. Your learning will be more meaningful if you're not jumping from topic to topic.

### Stick with Trusted Sources

As an emerging author, you have found trustworthy educational resources that resonate with you; now go for depth rather than breadth of study. Want to educate yourself on the best practices related to ISBNs? You could wade through endless information on this topic, but you'll save yourself time and headaches by going to a trusted source.

## For Experienced Authors: Be a Student and a Teacher

As an experienced author, you might be just as much a teacher in the industry as you are a student. This can open a range of additional opportunities for you and your business.

### Share What You Know

You've got experience—why not turn it into workshops, courses, or speaking gigs? Mentoring others not only builds your brand and authority but also creates new income streams.

ALLi members have done exactly that; check out how in our guide on “Creating Courses from Nonfiction Books” at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/creating-courses-from-nonfiction-books>.

### Pro Tip:

Wondering about this question yourself? Check out “The AskALLi Ultimate Guide to ISBNs for Authors” at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/isbns-for-authors>.

## Keep Learning

Just because you're teaching doesn't mean you're done learning. Keep up with the latest trends, connect with other experienced authors, and don't be afraid to revisit the basics—they just might spark new ideas for your own business.

## For All Authors

ALLi offers a range of educational resources to support indie authors at every stage. Many are open to everyone, like our Self-Publishing with ALLi podcast (<https://www.allianceindependentauthors.org/podcast>) and blog (<https://selfpublishingadvice.org/alli-blog>). Others, like our live monthly Q&As with advisors and replays from our annual SelfPubCon, are exclusive to ALLi members.

Wherever you are in your author journey, make education a priority. The more you learn, the better prepared you'll be to make smart decisions and grow the publishing business you want. ■

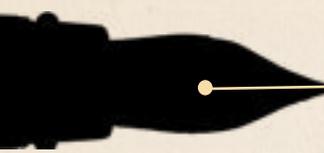


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Campaigns Manager

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# Author Inklings

## ... on Finding Your 'Why'

Welcome, fellow authors! It's been a month since I revealed my secret identity, and across the globe, it has been a crazy ride—not because of my big reveal but because of seismic world events wrecking our sanity.

It's made me think about how some of you will choose to be very political in your writing. That's your brand, and if it is, your readers probably share your values. I am pretty politically outspoken in my private life, but I make a supreme effort to ensure those views do not filter into my work.

Why? Well, partly because it would mess with my author brand and partly because it could alienate a large proportion of my readership.

And I love my fans. I wouldn't want to do anything that would upset them.

Yes, it's sound business advice for anyone, but keeping my fans happy is the “why” in my publishing business. I could write for myself and not look to have anyone else read a single word I type, if I wrote purely for my own satisfaction. Conversely, if sharing my politics were the driving force behind my writing, then I would have a strong desire to voice my thoughts. But my motivation isn't to explore my inner musings, nor is it to preach, or inspire, or educate. It's to entertain. I read to escape all the politics. I write so that others can too.

Understanding your “why” is central to sustaining a viable writing career. For some of you, writing is a means to an end. Perhaps you want to have a side hustle that generates passive income and allows you to be creative, or you are looking for work you can do from home. Maybe you are a traveler and want to share your top tips for trekking with others, or you have years of business experience, a family grimoire full of spells that date back five centuries, or the best pie recipes.

Whatever is behind your desire to publish, own it! You will have a much clearer path for the future of your business to follow when you do.

Understanding your “why” will also help you set your personal goals. Not everyone wants or needs to be a *USA Today* best-selling author. There are many online groups and forums, books, and sometimes even this magazine to make you believe that the goal is always to rapid release, get that orange ribbon on Amazon, and be a six-figure earner.

But the ultimate goal is always whatever will answer your personal “why.”

I have realized in my time as an author that the most meaningful reward I can receive is a review that says someone enjoyed my book and can't wait for

Publishing can feel like a mystery you have to solve, but you don't have to do it on your own. Whether you have questions about the indie author world or just want to air your writing woes, send your thoughts to: [feedback@indieauthormagazine.com](mailto:feedback@indieauthormagazine.com) and include "Author Inklings" in the subject line. I'd love to hear from you!



the next one. When I am struggling to maintain my mojo, those are the positive messages I seek out to get me back in the mood.

Don't get me wrong, I love an Amazon orange ribbon as much as the next person. It makes for a lovely screenshot for my social media account. And the corresponding sales please my bank manager. However, those things do not motivate me to continue.

I ask myself all the time, "If I won the lottery, would I still want to write?" And after a few sniggers to myself that I would buy a tropical island first, book my favorite performer for a private concert, and hire a housekeeper, my answer is always a resounding "yes!" There would be less pressure to write every day, but I would be back at my desk before long.

What would you do if you won the lottery? There is no wrong answer.

If your "why" is to retire early, then, of course, you would be likely to quit writing. But that's good to know. In that case, think about how much you would have to win to do that, and set that figure as the goal for your books to achieve instead. Because let's face it: What are the chances you'll win the lottery?

Much better to know your "why," carve out a plan, and reach that goal on your own.

Happy writing,

Susan  
*X*



### Susan Odev

Susan Odev is the co-author of the Mike Atwell Cozy Mystery series and several other successful whodunnits involving vicars, Shakespeare, and suspicious cake. A lifelong list-maker, deadline-dodger, and one-woman writing retreat (complete with dog), she wrote her first best-selling nonfiction book in 2010. She lives in Kent, England, dreams of the Portuguese hills, occasionally tidies her desk, and is always five minutes late for her own ideas. Susan has written for numerous magazines, spoken at international conferences, and contributed to workshops on a range of personal development topics, and yet can still get lost in her own bathroom.



# 10 Tips for

## Choosing the Right Course

When indie publishing first became a reality, those authors trying to navigate the new landscape had to figure everything out on the fly. Fast forward to 2025, and there's such a plethora of courses, how-to books, and memberships, it can be overwhelming to understand what we need to learn against the backdrop of all the newest shiny objects on offer. With each course we buy, we set up our account, sure this is the one that'll move the needle for us in our business. But life happens, deadlines approach, and the course can languish unwatched, unread, and unstudied on our hard drive. Other times, we may find the class we eagerly awaited wasn't quite the right fit for where we are in our career.

Thankfully, there are a few steps you can take to make sure the course you choose is right for you to give yourself the best chance of finishing it. This month, we've compiled ten tips to help you break out of the cycle and get back to studying.

# 01

## Define Your Burning Need.

What specific problem are you looking to solve by taking a course? Are you facing marketing struggles? Is it a craft issue that's holding you back? Do you need to know how to build a platform? Be honest and clear about the precise area or areas in which you're lacking or want to improve with the courses you take, and list them in a logical learning order. Having a good understanding of your current knowledge level and the urgency with which you need to upskill can be helpful in determining where to start.

# 02

## Choose with Your Head, Not Your Heart.

Don't just choose courses based on hype, buzzwords, or the instructor's personality. Just as every author's business is different, so is the path of our educational journey. A finite discount offer in your email can add urgency to buying a course, especially if you think the material the instructor's teaching is something you'll want to learn in the future. But if it's an advanced course in an area where you haven't yet mastered the basics, a different course by a different instructor may be the better option. Check the courses you've already purchased but not completed—have you got that information covered with the resources you already own?

### Pro Tip:

Indie Author Training offers a “one-stop shop” for several author courses, listing options that cover a range of topics and skill levels so you can compare and contrast offerings from different instructors on the same topic.



# 03

## Read Reviews, and Be Skeptical.

Just as plenty of us have learned from our books, not all reviews are created equal. Remember that some course reviewers will be affiliates of the course you're considering, so cross-reference reviews and ratings where you can across individual websites, in author groups, and in any specific topic-related groups to find those that address a course's effectiveness and real-world application. Try to ascertain how accessible and helpful the support offered will be. Look into the credentials of the instructor. If they're promising they can teach you how to become a bestseller, you'll want to verify that they've had several best-selling titles in their career.

Conversely, if you can find few reviews on a specific course, or none at all, you may wish to be wary. There can be valid reasons for this—a new course may have yet to be proven, or the instructor may be less experienced. In that case, though, be certain their knowledge of the topic is advanced enough to satisfy your needs. If this is reflected in the price, it can be an attractive proposition, but you should make sure the materials on offer match up to your learning expectations.

# 04

## Take Advantage of Free Trials, Sample Modules, or Money-Back Guarantees.

If a course that interests you offers them, take advantage of free previews, mini versions, or a single-module trial to make sure it's a good fit. Remember that though any webinars relating to a course launch may be promotional content, they'll give you an overview of the instructor's method of teaching. This gives you immediate feedback on the instructor's style before you've fully committed.

With so many courses looking to hook your attention, it can be all too easy to line up so many "try before you buy" offerings that you become overwhelmed. Writing what you already know about each topic you're considering, and what a first step to mastering it might be, can help you set a clear priority for focused learning.

If the course offers a timed money-back guarantee, make sure you diarize to check the first few modules before that cut-off date to ensure you're happy with the content.

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

in millions, except per share amounts

	Year	Change vs. Prior Year	
Operating income	\$ 83,062	1%	\$ 82,400
Earnings from continuing operations	15,288	7%	14,300
Earnings from discontinued operations	11,707	4%	11,300
Net earnings attributable to Company	78	(23)%	100
Diluted net earnings per common share	11,643	3%	11,300
Diluted net earnings per share from continuing operations	4	4%	3
Core earnings per common share	3.96	5%	3.75

TOTAL COMPANY

OPERATING

	Change vs. Prior Year	Change vs. Prior Year
Operating income	+1%	+1%
Net sales	\$ 83,000	0%
Net earnings	\$ 11,600	+1%

HEALTH CARE

# 05

## Community Matters.

For the course you're interested in taking, is there an active online forum or support group where students can share tips and learn from one another? Does the instructor join in these or offer office hours? A vibrant community can boost learning, and having ongoing live access to the instructor can be extremely valuable. Seeing them help others to use the course materials in the real world can help you progress too, and it reinforces your own learning, so they can be a vote of confidence if you're on the fence about signing up for a class.

### Pro Tip:

Try everything that's offered as part of the course. You may not like quizzes or may think time participating in a community group would be better spent learning the subject matter, but these things are part of what you've paid for, and engaging with the course community could lead to unexpected benefits over and above mastering the course material. You may even find new critique partners, potential collaborations, or someone to sit next to at your next conference.

# 06

## Time Management Is Your Friend.

Once you've signed up for a course, schedule dedicated time slots for working through the materials and studying, just as you would for any other appointment. Treat this as sacrosanct time; after all, it is as essential to growing your business as any other administrative task you block into your calendar.

If you can, choose the same time every day and week to alert your brain that that time is for studying. If you can't keep an appointment, write in your calendar why you couldn't. You may discover patterns that are sabotaging you. If you find you're scheduling your studying for when you're too tired, or when you have other pressures, switching the time may help you keep on track.

# 07

## Understand What Kind of Learner You Are.

Do you learn best by reading? Is audio the shortest route to your brain? Do you need checklists to get tasks done? Do you respond well to gamifying your learning? Understanding how you're best going to get results can help you make real progress in your course.

If you're not sure what kind of learner you are, track your learning habits in a journal, and niche down with questions about why you remember specific information. Did a course with video-only learning motivate you, or did you choose to read the transcript? Taking online personality tests and swapping studying tips with other learners may also help. Try different ways to consolidate what you're currently learning, and pay attention to how your brain and body react to each.

No matter the type of learner you are, awarding yourself for reaching milestones can increase your chances of reaching the end—where the application of the materials and the boost to your business become their own rewards.

# 08

## Start Small to Build Confidence.

We check our phones so often in a day because we're seeking the dopamine hit that it gives us. Can you set up your learning this way? If you struggle to stay consistent in your coursework, start by swapping an episode of social media or news scrolling with watching a module or practicing one of the new skills you've discovered. Alternatively, set a timer for just twenty or thirty minutes, and find a reward to motivate yourself to focus for that time. Even focusing in short bursts will allow you to make some progress you wouldn't have made otherwise, though you may find it's easier to stay productive once you've started.

Is there an accountability thread attached to your course's learning group? Checking in with and encouraging other learners is another easy way to keep your own learning on track.

# 09

## Apply the Theory Immediately.

Courses are most effective when applied rather than just being passively consumed. Scheduling time within your learning timetable to use the information you've learned will help reinforce how well you've assimilated the information.

Take ten minutes at the end of each lesson to set out how the strategy will help your business, and to consider how you can apply it. Those sessions may just give you the impetus to get started.

### Pro Tip:

When you've completed a course, you can also use this blocked-out time to implement the skills and strategies you've just learned. This may mean setting up tools or processes, or adjusting your established practices to take into account your new knowledge. This revision and implementation will serve as its own springboard to studying when you're ready to look at a new course.

# 10

## Track Your Progress and Adjust.

We've all heard the maxim that what can be tracked can be improved. Keeping a journal of how much you learn, how well it helps you achieve specific goals, and any challenges or breakthroughs you uncovered during a course can help you understand which area you might benefit from studying next. Tracking how the material you've learned and acted upon has helped your business can also act as a great impetus to complete the next course you take.

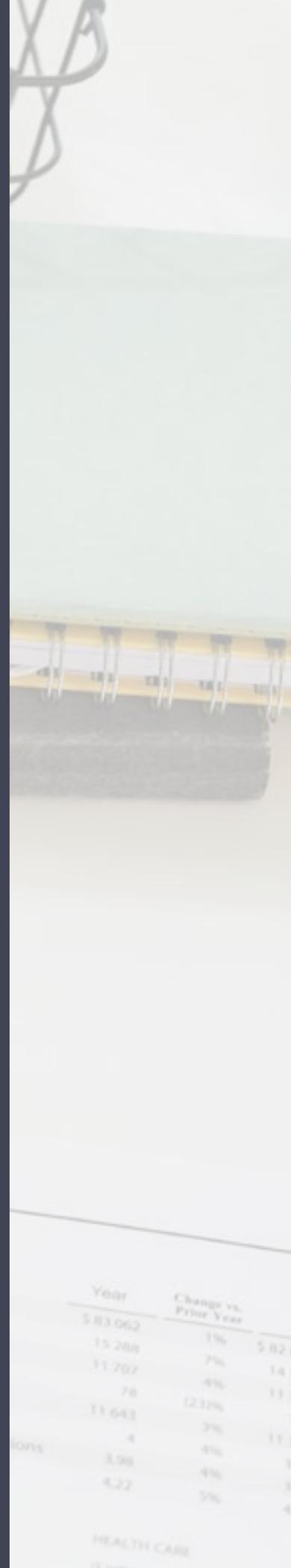
If you're looking to find a course that fits your business needs, a platform that isn't instructor-specific, such as Teachable or Thinkific, can be helpful by showing you alternative offerings on the same topic by different experts. Indie Author Training, the sister site to *Indie Author Magazine*, is also constantly expanding its dedicated course library and directory of instructors to include a diverse range of programs, covering everything from marketing strategy and craft to editing, design, and building a sustainable business in today's world. All courses come with a thirty-day money-back guarantee, and instructor-led discussion groups provide a platform for sharing insights and learning from others. Visit <https://indieauthortraining.com> to learn more.

Choosing the right course for your independent writing career can feel daunting—the options are endless, and it's easy to get lost in a sea of marketing hype. But what truly matters is finding the support that helps you achieve your publishing goals and not just courses that add to your growing list of commitments. True progress in writing comes from investing in yourself and not just buying more things to do it with. ■

### Karen Guyler



Always being the new girl at nine schools on two continents was no fun at all so books became the only constant in Karen Guyler's life, even if they didn't help her get out of sports days. Now settled in Milton Keynes, England, Britain's best kept secret, she juggles reading with writing twisty thrilling stories, her children, husband and two grand-puppies – a much nicer mix! She also teaches Creative Writing for Adult Education with lots of laughter in amongst the word wrangling and discovery.





# From the Stacks

## Book Club Summary

### ***Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life***

**Héctor García and Francesc Miralles**

<https://indieauthortraining.com/courses/ikigai-by-hector-garcia-and-francesc-miralles>

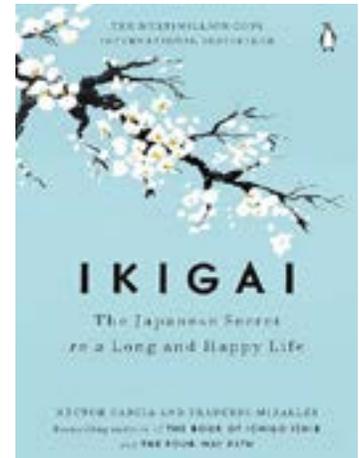
What's the secret behind the longevity of the people of Okinawa, where life expectancy is among the highest in the world? It's not just their diet or lifestyle—authors Francesc Miralles and Héctor García theorize it's their understanding of *ikigai*, or a reason for being that gives purpose and joy to everyday life. If you've ever felt like something is missing or wondered what your true purpose is, *ikigai* may offer a refreshing perspective. This Japanese philosophy teaches that the key to long life and happiness is living with intention. Whether you're an indie author, entrepreneur, or just someone looking for more meaning, it may give you tools to start living with purpose.

This month, Indie Author Training is bringing you a special deep dive audio discussion, so you can learn the key principles of *ikigai* and how you can apply them to your creative and personal journey.

Take a look at this book through Indie Author Training's Book Club Summaries to find

- an audio deep dive into the material,
- a synopsis geared toward indie authors,
- a discussion forum to connect with other readers, and
- questions to help you apply what you learn to your business.

Visit <https://indieauthortraining.com/course-category/book-club-summaries> to learn more and explore other titles.



## Tool

### **Sudowrite**

<https://indie-author-training-product-tours.heysummit.com/talks/sudowrite>

Tired of writer's block holding you hostage? In IAT's Product Tour for Sudowrite, see how an AI-powered writing companion can help you brainstorm ideas, craft captivating narratives, and help with targeted rewrites.

## Webinar

### **“From Local to Global: How to unlock NEW income streams with fast, high quality translations”**

<https://webinars.indieauthortraining.com/talks/from-local-to-global-how-to-unlock-new-income-streams-with-fast-high-quality-translations>

We all imagine turning our bestseller into a global phenomenon. That’s the power of international markets, but traditional translation can be out of the reach for many authors, a reality owed to its complexity and its cost. In this webinar, publishing pro Fred Freeman shows how Globescribe can take care of both of those concerns, offering fast, high-quality, AI-powered translations. If you’d never thought of foreign translations for your stories, Freeman makes a compelling case for why you might wish to consider it. Watch the webinar for a discount code on your first project.



## Podcast

<https://open.spotify.com/show/1MjZYaA5iCIRL2JMtEiY12>

The *Indie Author Magazine* podcast has been refined and focused for bite-size listening, giving you just what you need to know about some of the biggest topics in the industry. Here are the latest episodes you may have missed:

### **“Essential Branding Elements Every Indie Author Needs for Success”**

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1PsLE6bLlp2ECaX1ZlWs91>

One year ago, *IAM* staff writer Angela Archer discussed the importance of defining and refining your personal author brand in connecting with audiences. Today, we’re breaking down the specific steps you can take to make sure your brand is reflected in your business.

### **“How Collaboration, Cooperation, and Competition Fuel Indie Author Achievements”**

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/4RtDeRwoYj4XRlz9xTBkji>

Authorship is full of contradictions. Writing is largely a solo endeavor, but we also rely on the support of other authors to see our drafts through. When authors write for a similar niche of readers, we cheer them on rather than view them as rivals. Community is essential to an indie author’s success—explore how it happens through collaboration, cooperation, and competition. ■

### Karen Guyler



Always being the new girl at nine schools on two continents was no fun at all so books became the only constant in Karen Guyler’s life, even if they didn’t help her get out of sports days. Now settled in Milton Keynes, England, Britain’s best kept secret, she juggles reading with writing twisty thrilling stories, her children, husband and two grand-puppies - a much nicer mix! She also teaches Creative Writing for Adult Education with lots of laughter in amongst the word wrangling and discovery.



# Gothic Gardening

**Steff Green on Growing a Sustainable Author Business**



**U***SA Today* best-selling author Steff Green writes kooky, spooky Romance novels under her pen name Steffanie Holmes. The New Zealand-based author has been legally blind since birth, but, as she writes on her website, she's built an audience over the years of "thousands of readers across the world who never tell me I can't write because of my eyes." In fact, her ardent fan base helped her reach a multi-six-figure income. Her coaching business, *Rage Against the Manuscript*, has aided other independent authors in building successful writing careers, and the resources she develops continue to provide guidance for struggling authors.

Green has always been a writer, but that wasn't originally her intended career. "I wanted to be an archaeologist or a museum curator," she says. She studied history at the University of Auckland, where she worked in a conservation lab, participated in digs, and volunteered with museums. But when she tried to find a job, she faced "an overwhelming amount of discrimination" because of her eyesight. "I wasn't really given the chance, and it got very depressing and very upsetting," she says.

Coming home after a particularly bad experience, she spoke with her then boyfriend—now husband—about what to do. He suggested she could keep trying, but there might be a different path for her. "You've done

all these cool things, so what would be another job that you would absolutely love to have? What would be a thing that no one could tell you that you couldn't do?" he asked her.

Green had previously published through her university's magazine, and when she considered what she would enjoy doing professionally, "it just immediately came to me. I would be a writer," she says, "not just as a dream, like, 'I would love to have a book published,' but as a career. I want this to be it. My profession is to be a writer of stories."

## Planting Seeds

As a fan of heavy metal and Gothic aesthetics, she initially completed a vampire novel she'd already started, then wrote dark Science Fiction novels like the ones she enjoyed reading. Green spent ten years pitching her work to traditional publishers while working freelance, eventually scoring a deal that fell through.

"Sometimes the things that you like to read are not necessarily the things that you're meant to write," she says. Switching to Romance in 2013, "basically on a dare," Green says, she independently published a Dark Paranormal Romance series. She wrote the first book in three weeks and sold around a thousand copies in a week. "This book was the easiest thing I'd ever written. It just flew off my fingers. It was so much fun, and not only that, but the market seemed to resonate. The readers seemed to really resonate with my voice when I was doing this style of Romance."

According to Green, success came when she realized, "This is the kind of combination of things I



love to write about, and also things that readers want from me," she says. For two years, she wrote Dark Paranormal and Bully Romance novels as she explored her identity as a writer.

Although she enjoyed writing the darker stories, Green eventually realized that her voice leaned more toward the whimsical. In 2015, she changed direction again, independently publishing "really light, fun, quirky, kooky, spooky Paranormal Romance," and, she says, "that has basically been my bread and butter ever since." The new books were so popular that she was able to make writing a full-time profession in 2018, hit six figures in 2019, and had her first million-dollar year in 2024.

Although her author career was growing quickly, it wasn't always a steady climb. There were still a few rough patches along the way. Around 2019, she published one of her most popular Dark Romance series and immediately followed it with another Dark Romance series that she describes as "the biggest flop of my whole career." She blames the new series's failure on her decision to create a new world with all-new characters rather than using spinoff characters from the previous series or creating a second generation. The new series ended up being "too paranormal for Contemporary Romance readers and not paranormal enough for Paranormal readers," she says. In a panic, she looked for other sources of income and decided to develop an entirely new branch of her business: coaching.

**The truth is, in the indie world, there are very few decisions that are right and wrong. There are just different strategies, and different strategies work for different people.**

— Steff Green



## Encouraging Growth

As her career had blossomed, Green had started giving workshops at the annual Romance Writers of New Zealand conference, and “just realized how much I loved talking

about writing and kind of articulating the things that I was doing in a way which was inspiring to others,” she says. Since she’d already worked to ensure her talks provided actionable ideas, creating courses seemed like a reasonable next step. From there, she developed *Rage Against the Manuscript*, a website that includes a podcast, courses, books, events, and other resources for aspiring authors.

In 2020, she also started coaching writers one-on-one. “A lot of people really struggled to take the general concepts of a course and apply them to their specific situation,” she says. From 2020 to 2023, she worked coaching around her writing schedule. She says many of her clients ultimately faced one of three familiar problems: crowd-sourcing their business decisions, dealing with burnout, or trying to level up.

According to Green, many authors start by going to author groups and asking things like whether to go wide or stay in Kindle Unlim-

ited. “You post that on a Facebook group, and you’ll get fifty answers, and they’re all going to be different,” she says. “The answer is in the question. They already know what they want to do. They’re afraid that what they want to do might be wrong. And the truth is, in the indie world, there are very few decisions that are right and wrong. There are just different strategies, and different strategies work for different people.” As a coach, when a client asks this question, Green says, “It’s better to actually just start with, ‘Okay, well, we’re going wide.’ You set this up as an experiment. ‘I’m going to go wide for three months, and at the end of three months I’m going to assess what I have done. And then I’m going to make a decision after that, based on how things are going.’” She emphasizes that no decision has to be permanent.

This same thought process applies to the problem of burnout. Often, her clients who feel burned out have been trying to do everything at once and have discovered that they can’t continue that way. Green tells them they don’t have to.

They start by defining their goals. “For most people, it’s, ‘I want to make enough money from my books to be able to do that full time,’” she says. So she tells them to

# RATM

RAGE AGAINST THE MANUSCRIPT

list everything they've done that gets them closer to that goal and rank them by effectiveness. "And then we cross out everything except basically the top three things," she says. Usually, those are writing the book, sending a newsletter, and one form of social media. Green tells clients that avoiding burn-out is about "being strategic about the things that you choose to do and don't choose to do."

For authors who have built a sustainable business but want to level up, the advice may not be what they want to hear. Instead of experimenting like the clients facing the previous challenges, Green says, "Often the answer here is: Just keep going. Keep writing books, you know. Keep serving your audience."



# Enjoying the Harvest

Following her own advice, Green quit coaching in 2023 to focus on her writing, but even as she winds down her courses, she continues to participate in the author community. “I give a lot of advice in Facebook groups,” she says. “Or I’ll go and talk at conferences because that way I get the fun of figuring out how to impart some information in a way that’s exciting to people. I get to help more people than just a one-on-one situation.”

She says groups like that are a good way for authors to figure out whether someone would be a good coach for them. “I would look at the advice that they give to other people, and I would see if that advice aligns with the way that I would like to approach my business,” she says.

At the same time, authors looking to coach could practice and build a reputation by making themselves useful in the same groups. But first, she says, it’s important to be sure that coaching is something you want to do. “It is so rewarding. It is so much fun. I mean, writers are just the coolest people. It’s awesome, but it is going to take away from your time doing your writing,” she says.

Because of her now extensive backlist, Green no longer panics if a new series doesn’t do well. She has learned “not to discount a series just because it doesn’t do so great out the gate,” she says. Everything connects back to the world she’s been building and becomes new content for fans of the older books. She doesn’t have to depend on the income spike of rapid releases and can instead spend time nurturing her backlist and producing special editions to help make up for lower-than-expected sales on new releases.

Green describes her writing style as gardening, something closer to pantsing than plotting, but she builds around a skeleton draft rather than writing into the dark. “When I start a series, I have a kind of vague sort of picture of it in my head. I like to give myself a lot of space to change my mind,” she says. Most of her series start as something that will fit into three or four books, but she leaves room for them to grow if there is reader interest.

# Planning for Next Season

Green’s Nevermore Bookshop series has grown to ten books and two spinoff series. Her next releases will expand her audience again. *Fangs for Nothing* is the first in a new spinoff series of the Nevermore world that will be published in a three-book deal with a traditional publisher.

The deal came about unexpectedly at a time when she was evaluating her annual goals. “The first thing I wrote down was: Pursue traditional publishing,” she says. “But then literally the same week that I wrote that down, I had an email from Atria Books, which is an imprint of Simon & Schuster, the editor basically saying, ‘Look, I’ve been reading your Nevermore series, and I love your work. And I would love to talk about collaboration.’” Although she didn’t write the book with the intention of querying it, she “very specifically designed it to be slightly more mainstream than my books. So it’s still my voice, just trying to appeal to a slightly wider audience.”

Green is approaching her new hybrid-author status by following the advice she’s given her clients about testing new things. “We’re just going to see,” she says. Meanwhile, she’s continuing to work on indie projects and setting up a Kickstarter for a Halloween special edition of her first traditionally published novel. She’s come a long way and changed paths a few times, but Green’s author journey is far from over. Going into this next season, she continues to choose projects she loves, following the rules for life listed on her website: “If you’re not having a blast, what are you even doing? Life’s an adventure. It will all work out okay in the end, and if it doesn’t—you’re not at the end.” ■



## Jenn Lessmann

Jenn Lessmann is the author of *Unmagical: a Witchy Mystery* and three stories on Kindle Vella. A former barista, stage manager, and high school English teacher with advanced degrees from impressive colleges, she continues to drink excessive amounts of caffeine, stay up later than is absolutely necessary, and read three or four books at a time. Jenn is currently studying witchcraft and the craft of writing, and giggling internally whenever they intersect. She writes snarky paranormal fantasy for new adults whenever her dog will allow it.

# Setting the Right Course for Your Indie Author Journey

**Author-Focused  
Courses that Help You  
Write, Publish, and  
Grow Your Audience**



If you've ever felt like you're doing everything to prepare to write except actually writing, you're not alone.

One of my recent coaching clients came to me after a multi-year deep dive into story structure, writing craft, and productivity systems. He'd taken dozens of courses, downloaded every worksheet he could find, and could talk circles around most writing professors. But when it came time to start his novel, he was stuck—too many frameworks, too many voices in his head, and no clear path forward.

I recognized the pattern because I'd lived it. During the pandemic, after my editorial job at Nickelodeon was cut, I found myself with loads of time and an inbox full of “free” writing courses. I took them all. From Zoom at breakfast to webinars after dinner, I soaked up information like a sponge. But when I finally sat down to write, I couldn't. My creativity had been drowned in expert advice.

If this sounds familiar, here's the truth: Free isn't free. You pay with your time, your attention, and sometimes your momentum. Not every class is the right one for your season—and choosing the courses that serve specific needs within your specific writing journey is the key to moving forward without the brain freeze.



# The Benefits of Courses and Masterminds

Courses, workshops, and masterminds offer something blog posts and social media threads usually don't: structure, guidance, and support. When you follow a clear framework from someone with experience, it saves time and helps you focus. You stop second-guessing every step or jumping from one system to another. And you start making progress. Some offer office hours, one-on-one feedback, or peer forums so you're not doing it all in a silo. For a lot of writers, the right course at the right time becomes a turning point, and it can help them stop spinning out and start moving forward.



## Choosing a Course: What to Consider

Before signing up for any course, take a moment to define what you need right now. Your current stage in your indie author journey will guide what kind of support makes the most sense, whether that be in drafting, revising, building your author brand, learning how to sell your books, or expanding into new formats or platforms.

Here are a few additional factors to consider before signing on as a student:

- How do you learn best? Some writers need live interaction and deadlines to stay motivated. Others prefer self-paced lessons they can work through on their own time. Make sure the course you choose matches your learning style.
- Be realistic about your budget and availability. Short workshops can offer quick wins, but longer or higher-priced programs often include more support, feedback, or coaching.
- Check that a course has clear outcomes. Know what you'll be able to do or understand by the end—and how that connects to your goals.
- Look for signs of quality. Reliable courses include testimonials, outline the full curriculum, and are upfront about cost. Be cautious if a course leads with hype, lacks detail, or seems built mainly to sell you into the next tier.
- Do a little background check. Search for the course or instructor in author Facebook groups, check for reviews on Reddit or Medium, or see if the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi) has weighed in. A quick scan can reveal whether a course delivers what it promises—or not.

# The List

There's no one-size-fits-all for writing courses, and there are trusted options that span several formats, budgets, and stages in your author journey. This list of vetted opportunities, however, provides a solid starting point, whether you want focused self-study, live workshops, or a full degree.

Although this list focuses on online courses and programs, don't overlook the value of live events, either. Conferences, in-person workshops, and local writing groups can offer a different kind of energy and connection. Sometimes the right spark happens when you step away from the screen.

**Indie Author Training** offers a library of courses created for independent and self-published authors, but it also hosts several self-paced, author-focused trainings that cover craft, publishing basics, marketing, author-focused applications and platforms, and ads. Courses like Storycraft, Ad Savvy, and Backlist Builder help indie writers develop key skills and stay accountable.

Note: Indie Author Training is a sister site to *Indie Author Magazine*.

- Platform: IndieAuthorTraining.com
- Duration: Varies by course
- Cost: Varies by course
- Best for: Indie authors seeking accessible, focused self-study

**Writers.com** offers live and asynchronous workshops in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and children's writing. Courses run four to ten weeks with instructor feedback and peer exchange. Writers.com also offers one- and two-day webinars on shorter topics. A blend of structure and flexibility makes these ideal for writers refining their craft.

- Platform: Writers.com
- Duration: Four to ten weeks (live); one-day webinars
- Cost: \$345 to \$645 per workshop; \$115 to \$195 per webinar
- Best for: Writers wanting structured teaching plus community

## What Sort of Class Suits You Best?

Format	Best for	What to Expect
Live cohort	Accountability seekers	Scheduled deadlines, peer feedback
Asynchronous	Busy or introverted writers	Flexible, self-paced learning
Hybrid	Academic deep-divers	High-level content without formal enrollment
Degree programs	Career or literary aspirations	Accredited validation, mentorship, and community
Coaching programs	Personalized feedback	High-cost, long-term coaching

**Reedsy Learning** offers free, email-based mini courses taught by publishing professionals. Topics range from plotting and character to email marketing and paid ads. Short, digestible, and practical, these lessons are ideal to jump-start indie author education without time or money investment. Each course is structured as a series of clear, five- to ten-minute lessons delivered straight to your inbox. There's no interactive component, but most include prompts or step-by-step suggestions you can try on your own, along with occasional templates or tool links to put the ideas into practice.

- Platform: Email delivery via Reedsy
- Duration: Varies; each course is around ten to fifteen emails
- Cost: Free
- Best for: Authors wanting no-cost intros to publishing skills

**Ninja Writers**, founded by Shaunta Grimes, combines daily prompts, write-ins, and small-group workshops with community support. Three membership tiers offer structure and motivation for writers building habits and finishing projects.

- Platform: NinjaWriters.org
- Duration: Ongoing membership
- Cost: For Club membership, \$25 per month; for Guild membership, \$29 per month or \$290 per year; for Academy membership, around \$300 per year
- Best for: Writers seeking consistency and peer accountability

**UCLA Extension Writers' Program** provides structured, ten-week online and in-person courses in fiction, nonfiction, and screenwriting, as well as a certificate program. Although this is not a degree program, the university-style instruction with peer critique and instructor feedback can make it a serious option for authors looking for craft development.

- Platform: UCLA Extension online/in person
- Duration: Ten weeks per class; certificate takes around twenty-one units
- Cost: \$600 to \$1,600 per class; around \$5,040 total for certificate
- Best for: Writers desiring university-level craft study without a full degree

**MIT OpenCourseWare** is a set of free archived writing and humanities courses complete with syllabi, readings, lecture notes, and assignments. Although these are not specific to indie publishing, they offer rigorous academic content for self-motivated writers. Optional paid MITx certificates are available.

- Platform: OpenCourseWare (archive); MITx for certificates
- Duration: Self-paced
- Cost: Free to audit; certificates \$200 to \$1,000
- Best for: Writers seeking in-depth academic writing study for free

**Gotham Writers Workshop** is a veteran writing school offering online and in-person classes in fiction, nonfiction, screenwriting, poetry, and more. Classes typically last ten weeks, with instructor feedback and community interaction.

- Platform: WritingClasses.com
- Duration: Around ten weeks per class
- Cost: Around \$400 per course; intensives and coaching cost extra
- Best for: Writers looking for personalized feedback and group support

**Self Publishing Formula (SPF)** is led by Mark Dawson's team and offers courses on email automation, Amazon and Facebook ads, and author platforms, with a focus on business growth and scaling.

- Platform: SelfPublishingFormula.com
- Duration: Varies by program
- Cost: \$997 to \$1,997 per flagship course
- Best for: Indie authors ready to expand paid marketing and automation

**University of Houston—Victoria Online MFA** is a nationally ranked, fully online MFA in creative writing. The program offers tracks in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry and combines writing workshops with literary craft seminars and thesis work, all online.

- Platform: University of Houston—Victoria online MFA
- Duration: Thirty-six credits (typically two to three years)
- Cost: Around \$14,040 in-state (higher for out-of-state students)
- Best for: Writers seeking an affordable, accredited online MFA

**The University of Iowa—Iowa Writers' Workshop** is the gold standard in graduate writing programs. With an emphasis on literary fiction and poetry, it offers an immersive, selective, two-year MFA with in-person instruction from leading authors. Although the workshop is only held in person, its reputation and influence stand out as an option for authors to consider.

- Platform: University of Iowa (on-campus only)
- Duration: Two years (full-time MFA)
- Cost: Around \$11,000 per year in-state; around \$30,000 per year for out-of-state students
- Best for: Writers seeking elite, literary MFA experience with in-person mentorship

**The Western Colorado University MA in Creative Writing, Publishing Concentration**, is a fourteen-month, low-residency MA (not an MFA) that blends online coursework with two required one-week summer residencies. Students work closely with faculty like Kevin J. Anderson, produce two books during the program, and gain hands-on experience in editing, production, and indie and traditional publishing. It focuses on craft, community building, and real-world publishing skills.

- Platform: Canvas plus Zoom plus two one-week campus residencies
- Duration: Fourteen months (thirty credits total)
- Cost: Approximately \$749.60 per credit plus fees (summer residency fee \$600 per session); total around \$51,230
- Best for: Authors or aspiring small-press publishers seeking immersive, hands-on training in creative writing and the business of publishing

## Ready, Set ... Learn!

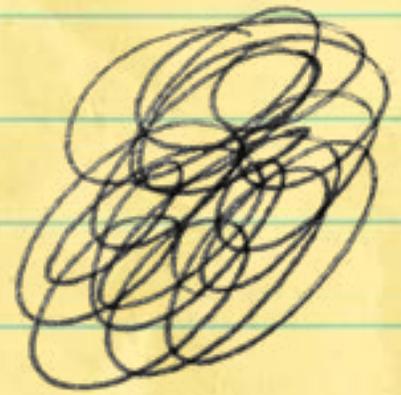
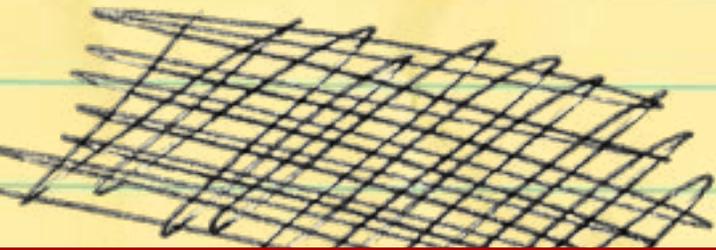
Publishing is an ever-changing industry, and learning its ins and outs is its own journey. You won't master it all at once, nor should you try. Instead, pick a course that fits where you are right now in your career, and stick with it. Bookmark this article to revisit it when your goals change. No need to worry about your grades; in this class, moving forward is what matters most. ■



Cara J. Stevens

Cara J. Stevens is an author, editor and book coach. She's written more than 85 books for young readers. She has two grown-ish children and lives in Los Angeles with her husband and a small, fluffy dog named Oliver. Her book *Write, Teach, Spark: A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing a Book that Matters* is due out in March, 2025. Learn more at [www.writeteachspark.com](http://www.writeteachspark.com).





# Take Note, Writers

## Note-Taking Strategies to Get the Most out of Writing Classes and Conferences

One of the most important aspects of attending writing conferences, seminars, and classes is the opportunity to learn from the speakers who come to share their experiences and knowledge. And whether you're attending a three-day, multi-track event like Author Nation in Las Vegas or attending one of Jonathan Maberry's live online classes, you'll want to be prepared to take notes.

In the digital age, we often rely on the idea of easily accessible recordings, but replays aren't always available, and tech hiccups happen. Even when replays are available, how often do you honestly go back and really absorb those recordings? Aside from your odds of actually watching the replay, numerous studies sug-

gest that it's more beneficial to actively take notes than to passively review information later. Research from the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching shows that students who took notes and reviewed those notes at any point retained more information, demonstrated better short- and long-term recall, and analyzed the lecture points more effectively than those who didn't.

How you take notes matters, too. But where do you start if you haven't taken notes since school? Different note-taking methods work best for different people, and the strategy or tools you use may change depending on what you want to take away from a class.

# Hardware

There is contention across academia regarding whether analog or digital note-taking is superior. In alignment with many studies preceding and many following, researchers Elizabeth Stacy and Jeff Cain from the University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy found in 2015 that those who handwrite notes perform better in all areas of comprehension, recall, and analysis. Another study, published in 2022 in the *Journal of Educational Evaluation for Health Professions*, found little difference between handwriting, tablet, and laptop use for note-taking, except to note that tablet users included visual note-taking more often than any other group—drawing tables, graphs, and diagrams in their notes—and were less vulnerable to distractions than laptop users.

Although laptop users achieve more words per fifteen-minute time block than any other group, they are also far more likely to record the lecture almost verbatim, reducing critical information processing and comprehension of the information.—not to mention those with laptops were often more distracted by the temptation to multitask, often resulting in fewer notes overall and lower performance than other groups in all areas.

The takeaway here is to carefully consider what technology you use to take notes.

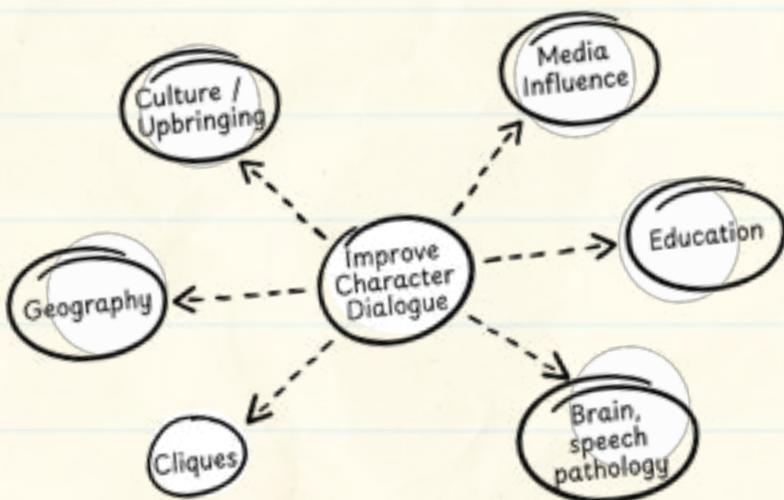
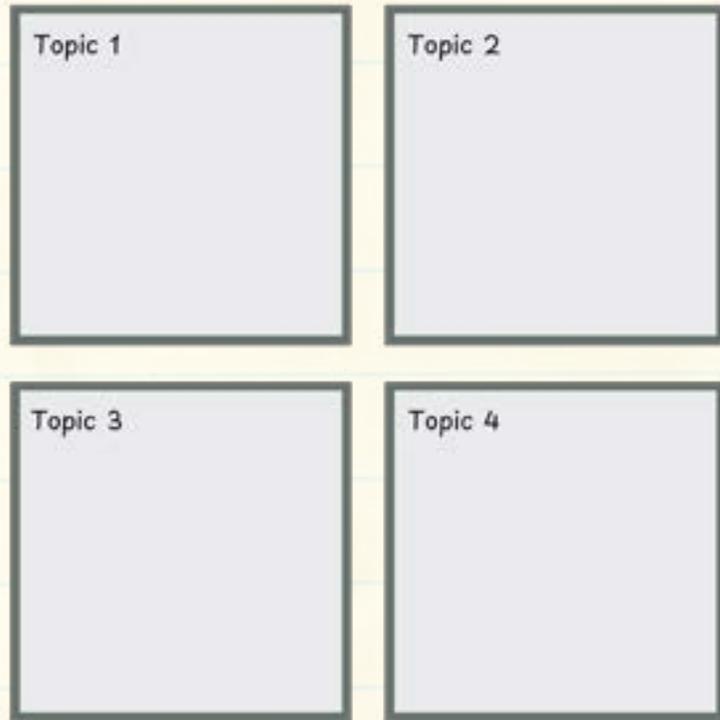
- If you enjoy handwriting and are physically able to take notes without experiencing pain or discomfort, there is an abundance of research suggesting this is the most effective form of note-taking.
- Are you a visual learner? Consider using a tablet so you can have the best of both worlds: handwriting and drawing in a digital format that allows you the most expansive creativity.
- Laptops should be reserved for those who are not easily tempted to multitask and who can slow down and take the time to process the information they're hearing rather than simply try to record the entire presentation. This is also ideal for people who experience pain or difficulty when using other methods to take notes.
- Would you like to keep tech small without resorting to handwriting? Consider using your smartphone to take notes. Like a tablet, it's easier to stay away from distractions, and many note-taking mobile apps are available. Additionally, you can pair your phone with a Bluetooth keyboard to make note-taking easier.

Whether you choose analog or digital, what's most important is to consider your own needs. If you find writing by hand painful or struggle to decipher your notes after the fact, take full advantage of the technology available to help you. Bridge the gap between analog and digital methods by mindfully taking time to listen, process the information, and write it in your own words to analyze and synthesize the content.



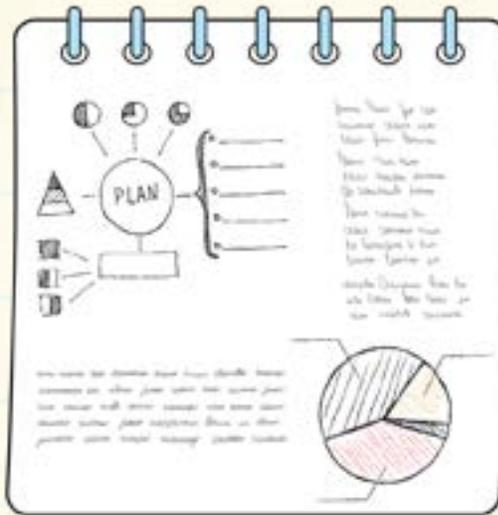
# The Box Method

The magic of this method is in its name: As you write, you'll use boxes to group the notes together on the page by topic. Although this isn't impossible to do on paper, it can be much easier to do this on a "whiteboard" in Canva or similar apps—that way, the boxes expand to the precise length you need to fit your content.



# Mind-Mapping

As creative writers, many of us are already familiar with mind mapping to organize plot points or create character maps. But you can also apply it to note-taking at conferences and workshops. If your brain is already attuned to mind-mapping, this method could make note-taking much more fun and effective, providing a visual representation of how thoughts and ideas connect with one another.



## Sketch-Noting

If you are a visual learner or love to draw, then sketch-noting could be your Goldilocks note-taking method. Whether you use a pencil and sketchbook or a stylus and tablet, this method is all about drawing, doodling, and making your notes more visual. Aside from doodles, most learners benefit from drawing graphs, charts, diagrams, pictures, and more to better interpret the information provided.

## The Cornell Method

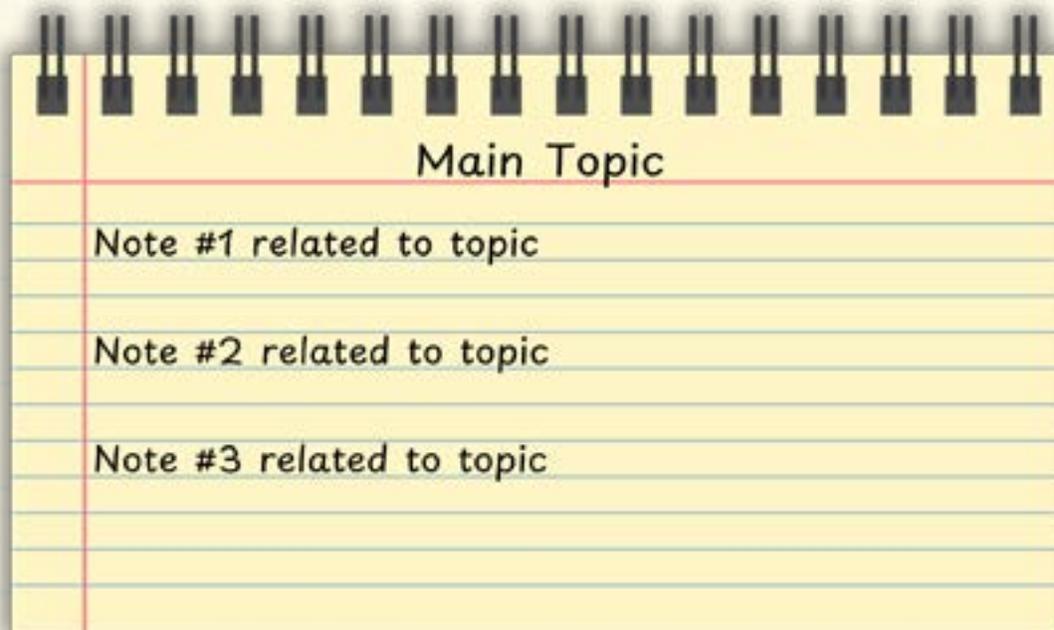
Like the split-page method, the Cornell Method first asks you to split your page into sections—in this case, the top portion of the page is split into two sections by a vertical line, and the third section is denoted by a horizontal line across the bottom third of the page. The sections refer to keywords, on the left side; notes, on the right side; and a summary of the lesson that's written later at the bottom of the page.

Although it can seem a little daunting at first, many learners swear by this method, and it does emphasize information analysis and processing, which numerous studies over decades of research have demonstrated is the crux of effective note-taking and learner success. This method is probably best accomplished on paper, on a tablet—free form drawing and writing—or on a “whiteboard” in Canva or a similar program.



## Zettelkasten-Inspired Method

A Zettelkasten, a “note box” in German, is the inspiration for this method. It can be as simple or as complex as you desire; each card focuses on a single topic or idea, making it easy to consolidate your notes, reuse the cards, and interlink each card in an interconnected system. This has traditionally been accomplished with physical index cards, but this would also work very well in Scrivener’s corkboard layout, in note-taking apps such as Notion or Evernote, or in Asana. Although the latter option is not meant to be a note-taking program, consider using its “assign” function with dates and reminders attached to cards you want to follow up on after your class or event.





# Final Recommendations

Notes are not meant to be written duplicates of the information presented, whether that information is spoken or listed on slides. Note-taking is most effective when you're actively listening and processing the information.

As writers, think of how you can apply the presented information to your writing or your writing business. Don't write everything down; instead, focus on what is immediately relevant to you at your current business stage or writing level. Before you write something down, listen actively to the information, think about it for a few seconds, then write it in your own words. Interpret what you're hearing or reading through the lens of your needs, current situation, and short-term goals—up to twelve months.

Use a shorthand if possible to increase your note-taking speed and efficiency, but above all, be sure to organize your notes, implement clean and simple file hierarchies, and uniformly name and date your files.

## Pro Tip:

When organizing your notes, try to follow the three-click rule: Ensure you can reach any information you need in three clicks or fewer.

Note-taking can be one of the most important learning tools to leverage when leveling up your writing and your publishing business. Keep an

open mind, embrace the role of student as you learn from speakers and instructors, and achieve growth through education. Finally, don't forget to have a post-event plan in place to review your notes and actively apply the knowledge you've gained. ■



## Audrey Hughey

Audrey Hughey designs planners, writes fiction, and works diligently to help her fellow authors. Although she currently writes horror and thrillers, she's as eclectic in her writing tastes as in her reading. When she's not submerged in the worlds of fiction and nonfiction, she's caring for her family, enjoying nature, or finding more ways to bring a little more light into the world.





# Post-Conference Power Moves

## How Indie Authors Can Turn Inspiration into Action After the Event

**Y**ou've decorated your badge, filled up your tote bag, and maybe even made a few new besties. The conference delivered loads of inspiration—but once you're back to reality, your to-do list reminds you it never got the out-of-office memo. With all the responsibility of day-to-day author life, it can be easy to lose the momentum you gained at the author event once you return to your regularly scheduled writing routine.

When it comes to making your time and money worth it, simply attending a conference can't be the final stop. The real magic happens after the event—when you turn energy into action and implement the strategies and tools that sparked your interest. Thankfully, there are a few post-conference power moves you can make that will help you implement what you've learned, nurture new connections, and keep your momentum going long after the panels have ended.

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### Start with Intention—Before and After

Making the most of a conference starts well before the opening keynote—and it doesn't end when you leave the venue. To fully maximize your investment, you need clarity on both ends: what you're walking in for and what you're walking away with.

Before you attend, take time to identify your goals. What are you hoping to learn or solve? Who do you want to connect with? What areas of your creative or business life need fresh ideas, energy, or direction? This kind of intention setting can guide which sessions you prioritize, who you strike up conversations with and how you engage during the event.

Setting a goal to connect with three to five

new people a day or preparing a few talking points that highlight what you do and who you serve can make your networking feel natural instead of forced. If you're attending solo, this prep can be your confidence boost.

But clarity isn't just for the front end. After the conference, come back to your goals and ask yourself: Did I accomplish what I came for? What surprised me? Where did I find unexpected value or a new direction? Revisit what you learned through the lens of your original intention—and if your goals shifted along the way, that's useful information too.

The point is to treat your conference experience like a feedback loop: Prepare with focus, then reflect with intention.

# Create Space for a Processing Power Hour

Conferences are fast-paced, energy-packed environments. You're bouncing from sessions to side conversations, absorbing tons of ideas, and trying to be present for every moment. That's why it's essential to build in time to process—not just when you get home but while you're still in the thick of it.

The most powerful thing you can do at any event is set aside one focused hour—no distractions, no multitasking—to mentally unpack everything you absorbed throughout the day. Ideally, this “processing power hour” should happen at the end of each day of the conference, though if prior commitments prevent this from happening, aim to do this within forty-eight to seventy-two hours after the conference ends.

If you're the type who signs up for every session, RSVPs for every after-hours author hang-out, and fills your schedule to the brim to make the most of the experience—you're not alone. Just don't forget that real growth often happens in the quiet moments. Give yourself permission to block out time for recovery and reflection, even if it means skipping a mixer or leaving an event a bit early. One intentional hour can help you retain more information, connect dots faster, and walk away with clarity instead of burnout.

During that hour, revisit your notes, review voice memos, and jot down key takeaways. It helps to make two simple lists: one for what inspired you and another for your action steps. Next, go through the business cards or contact info you collected and write a quick note on each person—something that reminds you why the connection matters. This step is essential for two reasons: It helps prevent overwhelm later, and it gives you a clear next chapter instead of a hard stop. Lastly, file your notes in a digital folder or app such as Notion, Trello, or Google Docs—whatever fits your workflow. If you took physical notes or collected business cards, an organization trick is to snap a photo of each one with a note in your phone's gallery, or store them in a digital folder titled “[Conference Name, Year].” This makes your reflections and connections searchable and synced.



Once you're back home and away from the conference buzz, revisit those notes with fresh eyes. This gives you an opportunity to spot new connections or ideas that didn't fully click while you were in the moment. This brain-unpacking session, just like your suitcase, is better sorted through now rather than weeks later, when everything's wrinkled and half-forgotten.

# Don't Just Follow up; Follow Through

We've all gotten those dry, "Just following up from the conference ..." emails. Please don't be that person. Reaching out doesn't have to feel awkward or transactional. If you saw enough value in a connection to reach out, there's a chance the other person did too.

The key is to lead with value over need. So before you ask for time, a favor, or feedback from someone you met, ask yourself, "Have I offered something first?" Helpful feedback, a resource, or a proposed collaboration sets the tone for authentic, lasting connections.

Thoughtful follow-through shows you're invested in building a real relationship and not just checking a box.

## Here's an example you can adapt:

Hey [Name],

*I loved chatting with you at [event name] after the panel on [topic]. I really appreciated what you shared about [specific insight]. I thought you might enjoy this [resource/link], and I'd love to keep the conversation going if you're open to it. Let's stay connected!*

## Turn Clarity into Action

After the connections are made and your notes are organized, it's time to translate your biggest lightbulb moments into next steps. Keep in mind that you won't need to use everything you learned. Instead, identify three to five takeaways that align with your current goals. Maybe you found a new marketing tactic, heard a brilliant panel on newsletter growth, or got clarity on what's been interfering with your writing consistency.

For each one, ask yourself: Is this actionable right now? How does this help me move forward this quarter? And what's one small step I can take this week?

For example, instead of writing "launch an author newsletter," break it down to "research platforms and draft a welcome email." Instead of "build community," your next step might be to "engage with three new authors on social media this week."

Add these tasks to your existing workflow, planner, or project board so they don't get stuck in isolation.

Implementation doesn't have to be massive to be meaningful.



# Keep the Momentum

If you're prone to post-event paralysis, you're not alone. Creating a simple follow-up timeline can keep you on track without adding pressure. A practical flow to guide your post-conference productivity can look like this:

**Within three days:** Block your processing session. Sort your contacts. Send quick thank-you or follow-through messages.

**Within one week:** Reconnect with your “super group” contacts—those who are most equipped to help you with achieving your priority goals. Share one actionable takeaway from the event on social media or in your newsletter. Begin implementing your first strategy or task.

**Within two weeks:** Schedule collaboration calls, pitch your idea, or test a new platform or resource. Revisit your takeaways to track progress.

**By the one-month mark:** Reflect on what stuck, what shifted, and what support you still need. Circle back to any connections that fell off your radar. Evaluate which actions moved the needle.

You don't have to hustle through every item—but a timeline keeps your ideas organized, actionable, and timely.

## Anchor the Experience in Your Real Life

The best conferences aren't just brain-fillers; they're identity shapers. They remind you of who you are, who you're becoming, and what's possible. But for that to last, you have to embed the key takeaways in your routine.

Start a journal or voice memo series to talk through what you're learning as you implement. Host a recap Zoom or go live on Instagram to

share insights with your community. Partner with someone you met to hold each other accountable for the next thirty days. Or simply post about your post-conference journey—wins, roadblocks, and all.

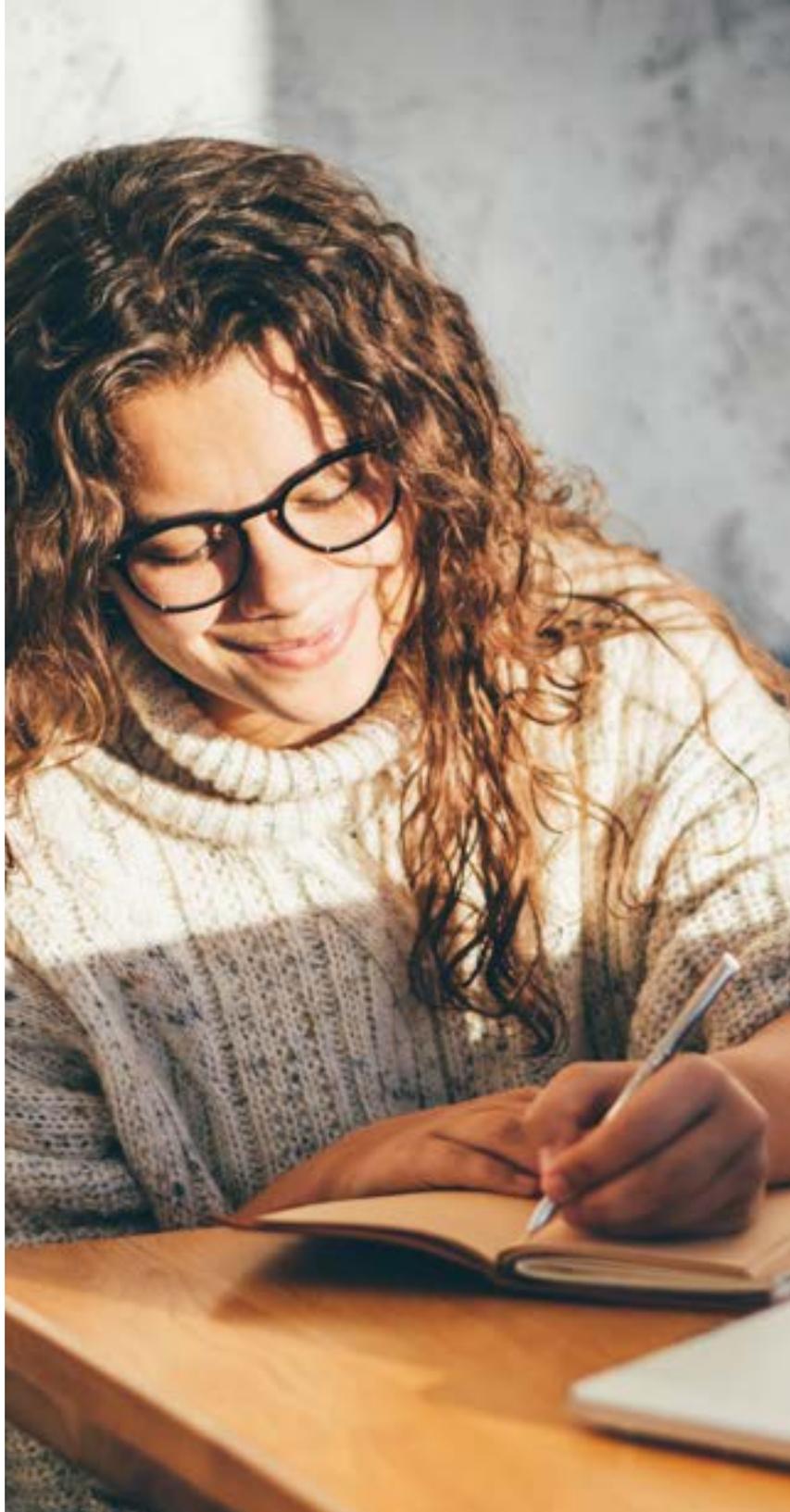
Integration is about honoring what matters most and letting that shape how you show up daily, create regularly, and grow intentionally.

## The Next Chapter

The conference may be over, but your next chapter is just getting started. Whether you made meaningful connections or filled a notebook with great ideas, your success lies in what you do with the experience afterward.

Be intentional, proactive, and generous in how you show up for others—and consistent in how you show up for yourself.

The energy you felt at that conference can be recreated, extended, and used to build a lasting new path for you. All it takes is a strategic plan and the willingness to improve. ■



Eryka Parker

Eryka Parker is a book coach, an award-winning developmental editor, and writing instructor. As a women's contemporary author under the pen name Zariah L. Banks, she creates emotional intimacy novels that prove that everyone deserves to feel seen, appreciated, and loved. She lives in Northeast Ohio with her husband and two children and is currently working on her third novel.

# Your Best Practice: Goals that Grow with You

## Megan Haskell, Author Wheel Co-Founder, Celebrates How Process-Focused Goals Help Authors Achieve More at Every Stage

*More than halfway through the year, many people have long since left behind the goals they set on January 1. But in the final installment of Megan Haskell's guest series, the Author Wheel co-founder reminds authors that goal setting can—and should—happen at every step in your author career. "You can't control the world, only how you show up in it," she reminds us in this month's article. Setting process goals based on factors you control, and adjusting them regularly to reflect your business's growth, is the final step toward making indie authorship sustainable, successful, and achievable for anyone.*

**A**s indie authors, we wear a lot of hats. Writing, product design, advertising, and marketing are all our responsibility. With so many competing priorities, it's all too easy to lose sight of the big picture. That's why goal setting isn't just a New Year's ritual—it's a professional necessity.

But not all goals are created equal.

In a creative industry filled with variables we can't control—algorithm changes, reader trends, the economy—chasing outcomes can feel like chasing smoke. That's why process goals, not outcome goals, are the unsung heroes of a sustainable author career.



A spiral-bound notebook with a gold-colored metal spiral binding is open on a calendar page. The calendar shows dates from 3 to 14, with the word "Friday" visible at the top right. A black and gold pen lies diagonally across the calendar page. A pair of black-rimmed glasses is partially visible on the right side. The notebook's pages are white with a light gray grid pattern. The overall scene is brightly lit, creating soft shadows.

## The Power of Process

The difference between an outcome goal and a process goal is subtle, but it creates a powerful mindset shift. An outcome goal might be, “Hit the *USA Today* bestseller list,” or, “Earn six figures on Amazon.” These are exciting milestones, but they hinge on factors beyond our influence. You could write a brilliant book, run ads with perfect targeting, and still fall short if the timing is off or the competition fierce.

Process goals shift the focus back to what you can control. Instead of “Sell ten thousand copies,” a process goal might be, “Write one thousand words a day,” or, “Publish three books this year.” These goals are specific, measurable, and achievable entirely by you.

You can’t control the world, only how you show up in it. Process goals keep you anchored in that truth. They empower you to define success by effort, not approval.



# The System Behind the Strategy

It's not uncommon to set goals in the new year and then promptly forget about them. It's easy to become overwhelmed by day-to-day life and find ourselves completely off-track. Worse, we might pursue a goal that seemed reasonable in January but is no longer relevant in June.

Setting goals is only half the battle. Staying engaged with those goals is equally important.

Each year, I set aside time to evaluate my long-term goals at the one-, three-, and ten-year mark. These are often outcome goals that encapsulate a big dream. Once I have a vision of my future in place, I am better able to create process goals that align with and move toward that desired outcome.

Here's a simplified example: If my three-year outcome goal is to earn six figures from my writing, I need to write more books. My one-year process goal might then be to publish four books this year, one book each quarter. To achieve that goal, I might set smaller process goals to spend the first month of the quarter writing the draft, the second month editing, and the third month launching that book. And within that, my goals might be to write fifteen thousand words a week to reach a

sixty-thousand-word draft by the end of the first month.

But strategy without tracking is like a map without a compass. Are those goals reasonable? Do they fit into your lifestyle and workflow? Even if they did at the beginning of the year, they might not by the end.

## A Living Document

Goals aren't carved in stone. They're reflections of your evolving career and creative identity. As time flows, your goals may need to be revised. A new series could take off and encourage you to write more books than planned in that world—or it might not, which could help you decide to pivot to something new. Maybe life throws you a curveball, and you end up simply trying to stay in the game. That's okay.

Like the indie publishing landscape itself, your path will shift. That's not failure—it's growth. Just make sure your goals grow with you.

I recommend monitoring progress at least monthly, if not weekly. Choose your top three priorities and focus on those tasks each week or month. Celebrate your achievements, and write them down! Remind yourself not only of your next goal but also how far you've come.

This practice keeps you focused, motivated, and flexible—three qualities every indie author needs.

# Full Circle

You've chosen to pursue indie publishing and a creative writing career, but the road is long and winding, with many routes to choose from.

If you've been following along on this series with me, you know there's opportunity everywhere. You've examined your purpose in writing, assessed your author personality, and developed an author mission statement.

Goal setting brings it all together.

Industry awareness informs your strategy. Your purpose connects you to readers. Your personality guides your choices. Your mission keeps you grounded. And your goals? They're the bridge between intention and action.

So don't wait for January. Don't let the calendar dictate your dreams. Start now. Define your big dream. Set process goals that keep you moving. Track your progress. Celebrate your wins.

Because the real secret to success isn't pure hustle or luck.

It's consistency. ■





## Megan Haskell

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Megan Haskell pens tales of myth, magic, and mayhem featuring strong female heroines and monsters of every size. She's the award-winning author of *The Sanyare Chronicles* fantasy adventure and *The Rise of Lilith* contemporary fantasy series, and co-founder of *The Author Wheel Podcast* and courses for writers. With more than fifteen years of writing and publishing experience, her goal is to help you Clarify, Simplify, and Implement your own best path to an author career. Find out more at [www.MeganHaskell.com](http://www.MeganHaskell.com) or [www.AuthorWheel.com](http://www.AuthorWheel.com).

# Ask a Book Coach: Looking Inward

*Authors who imagine a story visually thrive when it comes to describing setting or conveying action in a scene. The book is a movie in their heads that they're putting down on paper. But these authors can sometimes struggle with putting readers inside a story rather than simply showing it happening from a distance. Adding interiority, book coach Rona Gofstein writes, is the key to showing readers not just what happens but why it matters to your characters—and to letting your readers live through those emotions alongside them.*

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For some writers, the process of writing a book is almost like transcribing the story they are seeing in their heads. They picture the scenes and turning points and put that on the page. However, this often leads to stories where readers can see the action but aren't drawn to the characters emotionally. As a coach, one thing that often brings writers to me is when they get feedback that their draft is too cinematic and/or that it lacks interiority. And then I hear the questions, "What does this mean? How do I add interiority? And do I need to rewrite everything?"





If you receive this feedback, don't panic. You're not alone, and your draft isn't doomed. What your reader, editor, or critique partner is telling you is that you've written a story that allows the reader to experience the action but that they don't feel connected enough to the characters. Movies get music, lighting, and dramatic camera angles and cuts. Writers? We only have words. What you need to do on the next draft is add the emotional heartbeat of your story—the thoughts, reactions, and (frequently unsaid) truths that live beneath the surface of your point-of-view character.

If you're being told your writing is cinematic, this usually means the story is heavy on external beats—what the character sees, hears, says, and does—but light on the internal world. It's all visuals, actions, and sharp dialogue, with little access to what the character is thinking or feeling. That makes the draft feel flat or emotionally distant, even if the plot is solid.

Interiority changes this. It's what turns a scene from something your reader observes into something that draws them into the thick of things. To create this, you don't have to scrap your draft. Instead, you need to go a layer deeper. Interiority is the inner world of your character. It is you choosing to show the reader some of the thoughts running through their head and the feelings they're experiencing, including:

- their reactions and emotional responses (especially interpretations of events) to what is happening;
- their fears, desires, judgments, memories, associations, and hopes; and
- how a scene is affecting the goal, motivation, conflict, or stakes you've set out for them.

Does a character's friend arriving late bring up old abandonment issues? Is their boss's criticism reminding them of how they could never please their father? Do they wait to see what everyone else is ordering so that they fit in? These moments are an opportunity for the reader to learn what the action means to the character. Ultimately, this helps them connect on a deeper, emotional level—and keeps them turning pages.

So how do you add interiority when you're editing? I recommend thinking about the emotional journey you want to put your character on. You've decided how they will go through the motions, the quest, or the romance of the book, but their story is more than what they do. Consider how those moments affect and change the POV character, and try one or more of the following to bring readers into your character's mind: slowing down key moments, using micro-thoughts, grounding action in emotion, or letting your character's body do the talking.





# 1. Slow Down

## Key Moments

Choose turning points, reveals, or emotionally charged scenes, and zoom in. Ask yourself:

- What does this moment feel like to the character?
- What are they hoping for—or afraid of—right now?
- What do they want to say but won't or can't?

# 2. Use Micro-Thoughts

Micro-thoughts are brief flashes of a character's inner monologue or gut reaction to something, showing a reader why an action has meaning to a character. By incorporating micro-thoughts, a simple action, such as, "He reached for her hand," can show a character's emotions, thoughts, and beliefs with just a few words.

### **Example 1:**

He reached for her hand.  
*Don't pull away. Not this time.*

### **Example 2:**

He reached for her hand. When she didn't pull away, the tightness in his chest loosened.

# 3. Ground Action in Emotion

Before or after a bit of action or dialogue, add a thought or emotional beat. It doesn't have to be long—just enough to help us understand what's driving a character's behavior.

### **Example:**

She attempted a smile. "I'm fine."  
It wasn't true. But she wasn't ready to share, even with friends, why her heart felt like glass.



## 4. Let the Body Speak

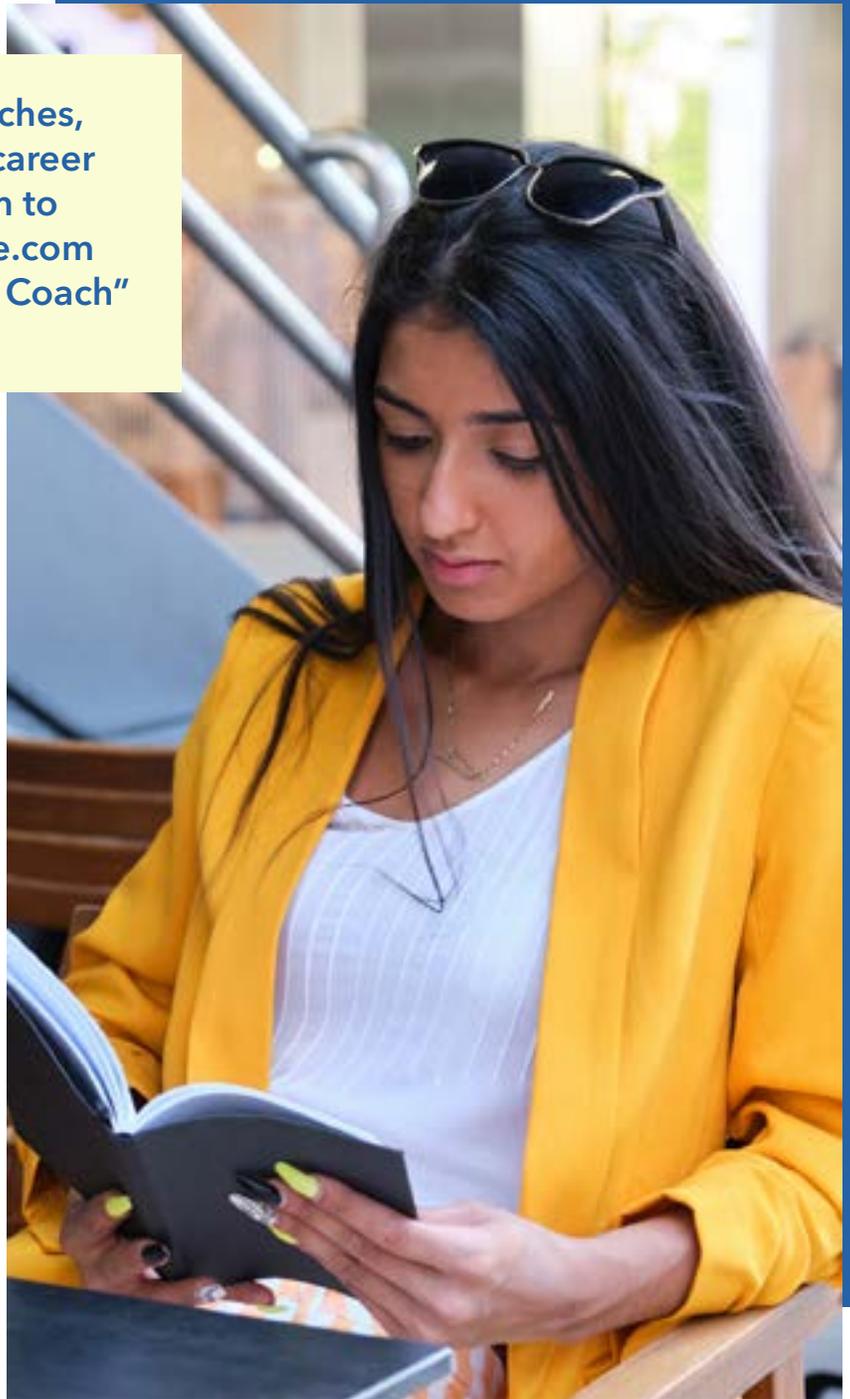
Physical sensations often carry emotional weight. A clenched jaw, fluttering stomach, or the way someone grips a coffee cup can all signal a character's internal struggle. This might be a place for quirks to come up—maybe your character twists her hair, taps his pen, or picks a cuticle. These are actions that reveal something is going on. Showing reaction through action can show a range of emotions.



Have questions about book coaches, craft, or balancing your writing career with everything else? Send them to [feedback@indieauthormagazine.com](mailto:feedback@indieauthormagazine.com) with the subject "Asking a Book Coach" for a chance to be featured.

Adding interiority doesn't mean pausing every five seconds to explain what's going on inside your character's mind. That will not only be distracting, but it is likely to ruin the pacing of your book. Instead, find ways to take readers from watching the scene to living it the way your character is. Look for the moments when you want your reader to be close to the character, to experience what the character is experiencing. To take it a step further, think about where and when you want to reveal emotion and feeling to the reader.

Wherever you are in your process—first draft, messy middle, or deep into revision—adding interiority can be as simple as deepening a few key moments to pull the reader closer. When you show who the character is at a given moment, the reader will experience their change and growth. You don't need to rewrite your book. You just need to let us in. ■



### Rona Gofstein

Rona Gofstein is a published romance author, developmental editor, and an Author Accelerator certified fiction book coach who loves working with writers who need support to make their book writing dreams a reality. She describes her style as intensive feedback combined with compassionate enthusiasm because she knows that on this journey, writers need clarity, support and encouragement. She has spoken on writing craft and business across the country and is the past president of the New Hampshire RWA chapter and Broad Universe. A Jersey girl at heart, she lives in Massachusetts and is always up for getting coffee, finding a great new pair of shoes, or deciding where to go out for dinner.

# The Dreaded Info Dump

## Tips to Avoid an Exposition Dump but Still Bring Life to Your Story

Your story has been brewing in your head with the juiciest of details that span one thousand years. The world as it was is not how it is now. People have changed, as have politics and the food ... and the reader needs to know it.

But how do you give the reader what they need to know in a way that isn't pages of overwhelming prose? How do you build out a world without ripping the reader out of the story? In this article, we'll offer a few trips and tricks to identify whether what you've written is necessary explanation or just an exposition dump—and how you can avoid the information overload in the future.

### Is This Really Necessary?

Identifying necessary versus unnecessary exposition should be top priority when tightening up a story, and it starts by asking the following:

- Without this passage, does the story make sense?
- Does the plot still move forward?
- Is the passage interesting enough that the reader will keep reading it?

Exposition should add to the story rather than take away from the flow of the narrative by adding unnecessary detail. Characters with strong motivations should drive the plot forward for you based on who they are and what they do. Giving the details the ax isn't always the solution—sometimes the details are just in the wrong place and can be moved or utilized elsewhere in the story to help the flow and maintain relevance.

Once you've determined whether your backstory or piece of lore is relevant to the plot—and will matter to the

reader—there are a few methods for working it into the story without disrupting the momentum you've built. These can be subtle, such as subplots designed to introduce characters to key details, or more obvious, such as a knowledgeable character who is there to explain relevant background information. But they can help maintain the pace you've set without bogging things down with details.

## Side Quest

If you've determined that the reader is lacking significant information they need to feel vested in the story, introducing a side quest just to deliver the necessary details is a way to skirt around the info dump. Characters are free to discuss, act, discover, create, and destroy in your world, and it's up to you to make the explanatory information around it a part of the story—one that builds your characters out.

Consider creating a side quest in which your characters fail but where lessons are learned, painful memories (that the reader needs to know about) resurface, or an old villain emerges from the shadows. Maybe that villain just happens to know your character's secrets—the ones that have been a mystery to the reader until now. A side quest is action, tension, and an opportunity to build your characters and world without dragging the reader through pages of backstory.

## A Necessary Evil

Sometimes, there's nothing that can be done—the exposition your story needs can't be delivered any other way. In this case, rely on the fact that every reader has become accustomed to the occasional information dump—and if you do it sparingly, they'll understand that it's more important to pay attention when you do. Make these passages count by using tight prose and weaving the information into the story; let characters move or speak between details so the narrative continues to progress.

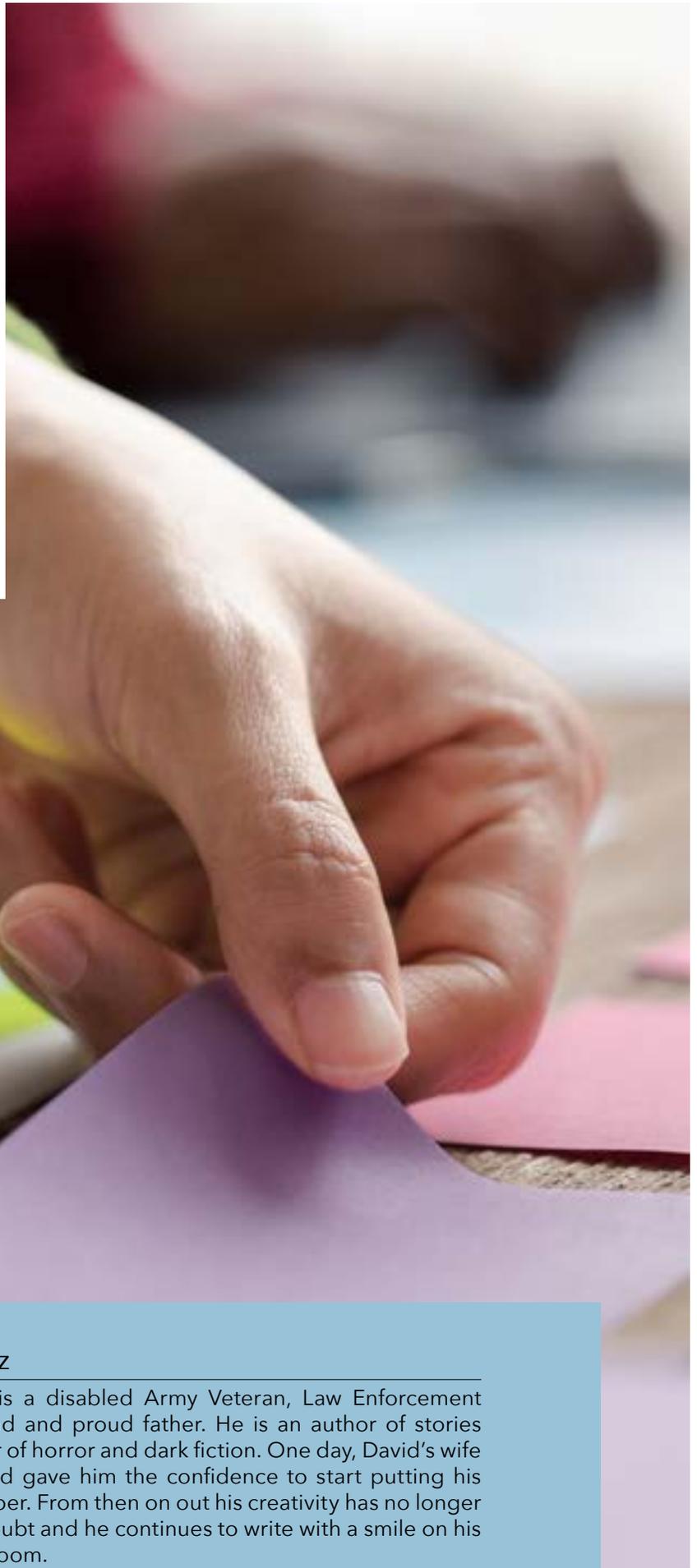
## Watson

In Sherlock Holmes, Dr. John Watson is more than Sherlock's confidant; he's also there to represent the audience, or the everyman. Since Watson isn't privy to or doesn't understand Holmes's deductions, Holmes explains them to Watson, and thus explains them to the reader. Through Watson, the reader understands Holmes, the crimes they're solving, the world they live in, and the emotional and moral weight of it all. To further immerse the reader, Watson narrates and writes stories within the story universe, justifying the storytelling voice the character has and filtering Holmes's genius through someone more relatable to the reader. Watson delivers information the reader needs in a way that's engaging and believable, without bogging the reader down.

Include a Watson, an everyman, or a character who joins the narrative with a similar understanding of how things work to deliver details to your reader. The everyman can voice the questions readers have without interrupting the story or filling a page with unnecessary text. With certain stories, the narrator can even be the everyman, breaking the fourth wall and speaking directly to the reader in a cheeky, off-the-cuff, comedic bit. This type of narration becomes a clever tool to add comedic relief, ease tension, or explain things the reader needs to know.

# Moving Forward

Although readers are accustomed to the occasional information overload, it's not fair to them to rely on that trust to deliver pages of exposition to build out a world. That's just lazy writing, and you're too clever for that. This list isn't all-encompassing, but it should get you started on crafting your story to be as lean as possible. After all, the most important part of your story shouldn't be what happened before page 1; it should be what happens next. ■



David Viergutz

David Viergutz is a disabled Army Veteran, Law Enforcement Veteran, husband and proud father. He is an author of stories from every flavor of horror and dark fiction. One day, David's wife sat him down and gave him the confidence to start putting his imagination on paper. From then on out his creativity has no longer been stifled by self-doubt and he continues to write with a smile on his face in a dark, candle-lit room.



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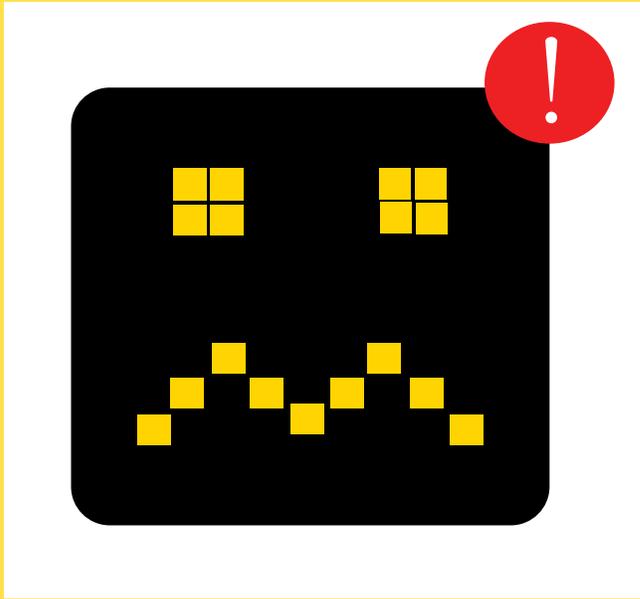
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# Defeat the Doomscroll

## Three Tools to Keep Online Distractions at Bay as an Author

In the current state of our world, doomscrolling, explained by Harvard Health Publishing as a constant urge to scroll through distressing online news headlines, is becoming an increasingly popular pastime—despite what many of us would prefer. And for authors, it can be a productivity killer, draining time and mental energy before you’ve even typed your first sentence.

For some who are prone to the anxious scrolling sessions, the best option to protect their mental health is to avoid social media altogether, and

therefore avoid the content that’s feeding their stress or anger. But many authors rely on social media for marketing or to connect with readers; stepping away from sites entirely isn’t always an option.

Thankfully, there are plenty of tools available to help authors block distractions, set boundaries, and focus on producing words without falling into a social media spiral. Some can help block out distractions during writing sessions, and others restrict specific apps and websites, so you can access them only in the blocks of time that you set.



## Opal

<https://www.opal.so>

With a user base of approximately four million people, Opal is a go-to app for iPhone and Mac owners wanting to track their screen time, block distractions, encourage others to reduce their scrolling, and reward themselves for reaching focus milestones. The app allows you to select which apps and websites you’d like to block at scheduled times of the day. With four different blocking modes—Brick Mode, Work Hours, Crunch Time, and GODMODE Focus—you can mix and match modes as needed to carve out your own custom blend of focus and protect your most productive time.

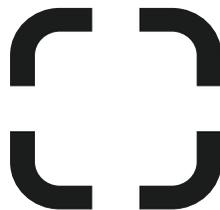
Opal offers multiple pricing options that range from free with limited access to more feature-robust plans, which include \$19.99 per month, \$99.99 per year, or \$399 for lifetime access.

# OmmWriter

<https://www.ommwriter.com>

Designed to stimulate concentration, OmmWriter is a word processor and Zen-like immersive writing experience, using nature-inspired backgrounds, soothing sound tracks, and subtle typing sounds to help you block out distraction during a writing sprint.

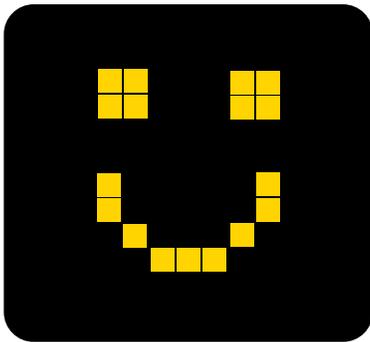
Downloads are available for PC and Mac starting at a price of \$9.93 per license. Users are invited to pay more, but only if they feel the product is worth it.



## Brick

<https://www.getbrick.app>

Although most distraction-busting tools are application-based software, Brick is a physical device about the size of a matchbook, and it's completely portable. To use it, select which applications and/or sites to block on your phone or computer, then walk away. Brick continues to block distractions until you physically tap the device to your phone and choose to unblock them. The physical Brick device costs \$59 and allows authors to avoid the temptation to circumvent application-based blocking.



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The next time you find yourself drifting down the doomscrolling rabbit hole, know that even without swearing off social media altogether, you can take steps to slow the scroll. Even without a dedicated tool for the job, physically stepping away from your device or scheduling time away from screens can be a boon for your mental health—and, therefore, your writing career. ■

### Jenn Mitchell



Jenn Mitchell writes Urban Fantasy and Weird West, as well as culinary cozy mysteries under the pen name, J Lee Mitchell. She writes, cooks, and gardens in the heart of South Central Pennsylvania's Amish Country. When she's not doing these things, she dreams of training llama riding ninjas. She enjoys traveling, quilting, hoarding cookbooks, Sanntangling, and spending time with the World's most patient and loving significant other.

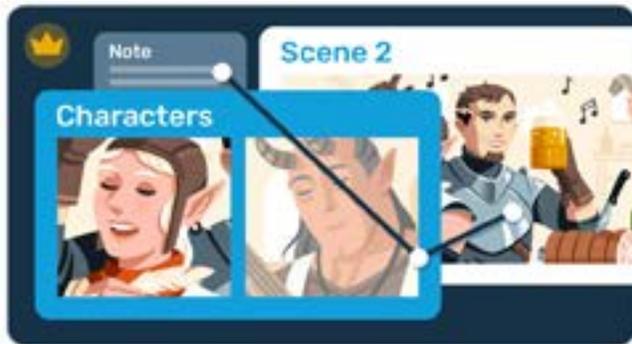
reedsystudio

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The screenshot displays the reedsystudio interface, which is divided into several functional areas:

- Manuscript Management (Left Panel):** A sidebar with a dark theme showing sections like 'Front matter', 'Copyright', 'Table of Contents', 'Body', and 'Back matter'. 'Chapter 1' is currently selected under the 'Body' section.
- Editing View (Center):** Shows the manuscript title 'Rocket Bride' and the chapter title 'The Rehearsal D'. The text reads: "Are you ready, Princess?" Bri placed the delicate silver crown "I don't know." Ximara pressed temples, just below where the ci bit of a headache. **Maybe it's the braids?**
- Goals & Insights (Top Right):** A dashboard showing a 'Word count' of +1000 and '+1123 +123 Added/Removed'. It includes a calendar view for the week of Oct 23-27 and a 'Manuscript goal' of 12,079 words (30% progress) with a due date of 30 Nov. A note indicates 'Write 1,117 words/day to finish on time'.
- Main Characters (Bottom):** A section titled 'Main characters' featuring three character cards: 'Princess Andromeda', 'Aether Lefield', and 'Captain Perseus', each with a stylized illustration.
- Tools (Bottom Center):** A floating toolbar with icons for text formatting (bold, italic, underline, strikethrough), alignment, and other editing functions.



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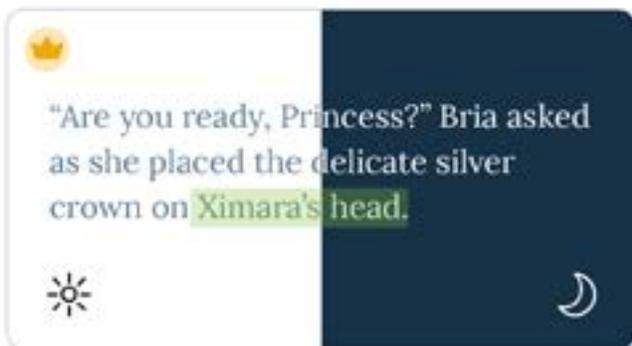
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