

Urban Writers' Retreat



2013 – Your Writing Year Planner

Happy New Year!

Doing an annual review and planning the next year isn't about setting vague New Year's Resolutions made up of things you think you should be doing and things you really think you shouldn't do so much. Yawn. Chances are you're going to forget learning Russian after a fortnight, particularly if it's something you think you should do rather than what you really, truly want.

If you're here, it's likely that what you really, truly want is to write. Simple.

This is about looking at what's important to you as a writer, about being clear about what you want to do, why you want to do it and most importantly how to get there. It's a flexible plan with a positive focus that's all about your dreams, what you want and what you hope to achieve. If your goals change in the year or it starts to feel restrictive it's no big deal, just amend the plan. It's yours to play with.

The thing is, your life and your writing are your responsibility. All the time. How are you going to get an agent for your first book if it's sitting in the drawer? Equally, you might have 7 published books but the 8th won't magically write itself. A good, fulfilling writing (and regular) life doesn't just happen by accident, you have to create it. Dreaming is all well and good, but doesn't having dreams and a map sound better?

So. Block out at least an hour, print out this workbook (ideally just the worksheet pages, no point wasting paper) and settle down with a drink and your favourite pen. When it's completed, pin your monthly calendar up where you'll see it and keep the rest where you can access it easily to refresh your memory.

This is the 4-part process I'm following this year, though of course you should feel free to go off-piste and adapt it to your own needs.

1. Looking back at 2012, the writing successes and failures.
2. Setting goals for different areas, checking they work for you and breaking them down into an action plan. Includes a sneaky trick to work out what you need to change now to make it happen.
3. Establishing priorities and summarising. You'll ask yourself what it is you really want most and set out what your year will look like.
4. Making your monthly planner. This is your map for the year, something to remind yourself of your goals and help keep you on track.

Step 1: Looking back at 2012

Do this quickly, taking 10 minutes max. You can add to it as you go if more things occur to you. Focus on events/things that you had control. Think about what your successes and failures were last year and about times you were happy and proud or frustrated, and include notes about any writing goals you set last year.

What went well in your writing life last year? What did you achieve?

What wasn't so positive about your writing life last year? What didn't go as well as planned?

Step 2: setting goals and breaking them down

Now for the fun bit.

In an ideal world, what would you like to see when you look back on 31st December? What do you want to have achieved?

Make your goals here, a couple for each category or subcategory, leaving a bit of room between each so you can fill in action steps later. Sketch them in first then take a look over all of your goals.

Ask yourself these questions and then adjust your plan if needed:

- Does this goal really matter to me or is it something I think I should do?
- Is it specific, ideally measurable?
- Is there anything else I really care about that isn't covered here?

Once you're happy with your goals, break them down and write down what actions you need to take to make that happen. Make them specific/measurable. For example, to write the first draft of a novel you've already planned this year, your main action might be to write 750 words, 4 times every week. If you want to go to Rome in November to write, you might need to:

- Set up a standing order on payday so you save £100 a month
- Research places to stay and get a shortlist of 5 options
- Book a fortnight's holiday
- Book a flight.

If there's a competition deadline or other dated goal or action, pop a star next to it note the date.

Seriously though, every time I think about breaking things down into manageable chunks I get [MC Hammer](#) stuck in my head. Now you can too.

Break it down!

Writing

The big one. Include planning, writing, editing, getting your work out into the world and any other areas you'd like to cover.

Writing Life

This is about other things that influence and are influenced by your writing. What goals do you have this year for your health, creativity, home environment, work balance and relationships that will support your writing?

Growth

What growth do you want to achieve this year? You might focus on personal growth and overcoming mental barriers, doing other things that will allow you to develop as a writer like booking time at a retreat or educating yourself with courses and wider reading.

Finance

If you are making money from your writing, or would like to, set the goals you really want to for this. Don't be shy. If not you may still have financial goals that will support your writing, like saving money to invest in a course.

Now for the sneaky superpower trick. Put yourself in the shoes of your future self. It's 31st December and you've achieved all of these goals. Think about how you actually did and how you overcame obstacles. What did you change about your habits, your lifestyle and your attitude to make this happen? Make sure that your goals and actions include these changes.

Step 3: establishing priorities and summarising

Which of your goals is your secret heart's desire, the one you desperately want to make happen? Go back and make sure you've detailed the action steps you need to take to get there.

Look at your goals. Is there a theme that connects the most important ones? Try to find a word or phrase that sums up your writing dreams for the year, an idea you want to live by or something you want to create in your life. What is it?

Write a short paragraph summarising the most important points of how your writing year will look. What will it look like and who will you be or become in it? This will show you what you should prioritise this year.

Step 4: making your monthly planner

Now you have writing goals for the year that reflect your values and dreams, the major actions you need to take to get there, and what your priorities are.

Rather than forgetting about them and remembering in November, far too late to do much about them, set yourself some monthly challenges to make sure it all gets done.

- Fill in the title with your theme/word for the year.
- Start with the most important goals from the previous page and anything with a fixed date. Fill in your calendar with these.
- Write the goal that will be your primary focus in one colour at the top, and any actions assigned to the month in another colour underneath.
- Once you've put key goals into months, work back from your target completion dates assigning action steps to particular months.
- Now do the same with your other goals and actions.
- Review. You want to stretch yourself, but if there's clearly too much there, consider chopping the least important goals.
- Pin it up somewhere you'll see it, and glance over it once a month to see if you're on track or if you need to amend it.

I'm looking forwards to crossing things off and sticking gold stars on for completing actions!

2013, my year of.....

Tasks spanning the whole year (daily/weekly actions)

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

Created by Charlie at [Urban Writers' Retreat](#).



I started running writing retreats in London in 2008 to overcome my own chronic procrastination, and they worked better than I could have imagined. I'm now on a mission to get writers writing and also run residential retreats, 4-week online bootcamps and a private writers' forum with more to come this year. Be warned, if we meet in person I'll probably try to feed you cake.

This is my personal review process I'm using for my writing in 2013, but I'm always interested in hearing suggestions for alternative/better ways of doing it.

Feel free to come and say hi!

Email: hello@urbanwritersretreat.co.uk

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/urbanwriters>

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/UrbanWritersRetreat>

Web: <http://www.urbanwritersretreat.co.uk>

Spring 2013 [One Day Writing Retreats in London](#)

Saturday 12th January – SOLD OUT

Sunday 27th January

Sunday 17th February

Sunday 10th March

Sunday 7th April

Sunday 28th April

Spring 2013 [Residential Retreat in Devon](#)

Friday 22nd – Thursday 28th March. Can be taken as 6 nights or 3 nights:

Friday 22nd – Monday 25th March

Monday 25th March – Thursday 28th March