

Creative Writing Now
Progress Checklist

Today's date:

Did you meet the goals on your Goals Worksheet?
(Circle one.)

- 1) Yes! I'm awesome.
- 2) Some of them.
- 3) None of them.

Now read the feedback that goes with your answer.

If your answer was # 1:

Super work! You can be extremely proud of yourself. So many people want to be writers, but you belong to the tiny percentage who actually take the steps to make it happen. Keep moving forward, one goal at a time, and you're on the way to achieving your dreams.

If you're taking one of the free creative writing courses, give yourself a pat on the back, and go on to the next class now! <

If your answer was # 2:

You're making great progress! You've put in the effort to meet some of your goals, and that's a huge achievement. Don't worry a lot about not achieving every goal on your sheet. As the saying goes, Rome wasn't built in a day. The effort you've put in will have its rewards. Every time you complete a writing goal, you're closer to becoming the writer you want to be.

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If your answer was # 3:

You're still on the right path for becoming a writer. Just the fact that you kept the appointment to fill in the Progress Checklist is a big achievement. Showing up is the hardest part, and you've done it, which is something you can be very proud of.

Now what about those goals? There are three likely reasons why you didn't meet them. Find the reason below, and read the advice that goes with it. Then move on. Fill out a new Goals Worksheet for next time and get a fresh start.

What happened?

- **Unrealistic goals.** Did you bite off more than you could chew in the timeline you set? If so, don't worry. Just try to set more realistic goals for next time. If you're taking one of the free creative writing courses, go on with the next class now.
- **Emergency situation.** Was there some big, unexpected event (work emergency, family emergency, illness, unplanned trip) that took over your time? If so, I hope everything's fine now and that you're feeling okay. If whatever happened is still affecting your schedule, maybe set smaller goals for next time and put aside just 10 minutes for writing at an hour of the day when you're unlikely to get interrupted; for example, early in the morning, or late at night. It's important to reserve some time for yourself. If you're taking one of the free creative writing courses, go on with the next class now.
- **Distraction or procrastination.** Were you tempted by the TV? Did you sit down to do some writing, then end up surfing the Internet instead? Okay, it can happen to anyone. For next time, clear some time on your schedule when you're unlikely to get interrupted, and find a work space where there are no distractions. Maybe disconnect your Internet and unplug your phone. (Confession: I intentionally broke my TV antenna to remove the temptation).

If you end up sitting with a notebook on the floor of your bedroom closet, that's fine, as long as you are writing.

Don't sweat it. Fill out a new Goals Worksheet for next time and get a fresh start. If you're taking one of the free creative writing courses, go on with the next class now.

- **Fear.** Is the sight of a blank page too horrible to face? I know the feeling. Okay, fill out a new Goals Worksheet for next time, and focus your goal just on showing up for X minutes and writing *something*. Anything. Doesn't matter how bad it is. You don't have to show it to anyone. But you have to get past the fear.

Idea: Set yourself the task of keeping your fingers moving on the keyboard until you fill up a page. When you don't know what to say, just type, "I don't know what to say."

Idea: Instead of starting with a blank page, start with a document from your job or a page torn from a magazine: write on the back, in the margins. Using scrap paper can be less intimidating, and you always have the option later of retyping what you write.

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