

Writer's Resolutions: 7-Point Upgrade

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/writers-resolutions/>

This entry is part 2 of 12 in the series [Creative Exercises](#)

[Creative Exercises](#)

- [How to Write When Stressed and Running on Empty](#)
- Writer's Resolutions: 7-Point Upgrade
- [Shiny Vespas & Character Inconsistencies](#)
- [Shin Saimdang Writing Exercise](#)
- [Topsied Fairytale Writing Exercise](#)
- [Story Starters for Writers](#)
- [Oxymoron Writing Exercise](#)
- [Little Prince Writing Exercise](#)
- [WHY Zombies Love Writers](#)
- [Umbrella Girl Creativity Exercise](#)
- [Story Starter Writing Exercise](#)
- [Perspective Creative Exercise](#)

I used to think that New Year's Resolutions were a waste of time, some New List of Things to not really do in the next year. But I have a new idea, or a new theory about Resolutions and in particular about **Writer's Resolutions** that I want to share with you.

“A year from now you may wish you had started today.” –Karen Lamb

Resolutions don't work if:

1. You binge on something you want to quit up until December 31st at midnight.
2. You don't tell anyone what you're resolved to do.
3. It's just 1-3 things that are or at least seem to be unrelated.
4. You don't establish a schedule to do the things on your list.
5. You don't give yourself any deadlines.

Let me explain what I mean. If you resolve to

1. quit smoking,

2. write a novel and
3. keep up with the laundry,

that's little more than a grocery list of unrelated items that you *tell yourself* you're going to do. At the point of making the list, there's no real way to actually make any of those things happen.

So what do you do? Do the 7-Point Upgrade.

You don't need to change the list (though you might, after reading this). You need to *upgrade* it. Here's how, a 7-point upgrade:

1. Look at your list closely & make it more interesting.

Is this all you want to achieve in the next year? Really think about this. When I ask most people what their New Year's Resolutions are, they most often list just one thing (lose weight).

How boring. That's it? To be fair, I get the wanting to trim down (it's on my list too!), but surely there's more to aim for than that.

You're a writer. So what do you as a writer want to achieve in 2016? Consider this your Writer's Resolutions, but do consider what you want to write in the next year. **Don't neglect *writing* projects from what you're resolved to do.**

You need to look at what you've done in 2015 and where you want to go next. Make sure your Writer's Resolutions are realistic but definitely push beyond what you've done in some way.

How do you do that? That brings me to the second point upgrade.

2. Calculate days & mark the Calendar.

Get out a calendar and schedule your writing times for the whole year. If you know you can write 500 words per day, then schedule for that on the days of the week you know you can write.

If you know you can only write on the days you commute, then account for that in your schedule. If you know you can only write on the weekends, then schedule that. Calculate your word count.

[Here's a list of the typically expected word counts for any type of story.](#) *Using this, you can simply calculate the days it will reasonably take you to create a first draft of any kind of story.*

If you're fair to yourself and acknowledge how much you know you can do, then there's no reason you shouldn't be able to determine exactly when your first draft of any project will be done.

NOTE: This doesn't account for those writing projects that are a first-time experience. If you're writing a novel or screenplay for the first time, there's always a learning curve involved and that

will directly impact your writing timeline. Writing is never simply a matter of getting words on the page. It's much more involved.

But if you've done it before and know what you need to do technically, then you can absolutely mark the deadline on your calendar.

If you're doing any kind of writing project for the first time, add 3-4 months to your timeline to account for any classes or seminars - or rewriting needs.

3. Make sure the list overlaps in some way(s).

You've got to try to make the points in your list related to each other in some way. If they're all unrelated or *seem* to be unrelated, try to think of how to get them mingled and mixed.

For example, if keeping up with the laundry and writing a novel are both on your list, then start a load of laundry before you start your writing session. When it's time to hang the load of laundry, let that mark one of your writing breaks.

Tie things together, combine efforts to save time and effort - and to yield a greater sense of, "I said I would do that, and I did it!"

If you want to incorporate more music into your life, think of ways you can work this into other things you want to do. How about writing music? Or perhaps having music in the background while you write. (I personally cannot type with music in the background, but I know several people who can.)

Whatever you decide to do will be personal, based on what you like and what you know you can really handle. But if you can tie things together and find ways to overlap Resolutions on your list, then your list will become more robust.

4. Establish clear markers and deadlines.

Most people who want to lose weight don't know how much they want to lose. *If you don't know how much you want to lose, how are you going to recognize when you've met your resolution?* You won't.

The same applies to anything else you might have on your list, including Writing Goals. Give yourself clear, definitive things to do and mark down when you expect to reach them.

You want to write a novel. When? How much per week? Be specific. If you're too big and too broad, it's natural to only have one thing on your list. Because at that point, it's already too much. Break it down.

Don't break it down to chapters. Go further.

- Break it down to the number of words you can generally bang-out in a couple of hours.
- Also give yourself time to create Character Profiles and
- a basic plot outline.

Make these tasks individual and specific goals in your 2016 calendar – but don't just allot the deadline. Also mark down the days when you'll be working on those tasks. Get smaller, more specific.

5. Go big by thinking small.

Plan for the Future by being in the Now.

When [World Champion Freediver Guillaume Néry speaks](#) of what it takes to delve 125 meters into the water without an oxygen tank, he puts himself fully in the moment, where he is at that specific second. This is what writers need to do when thinking about what it takes to be creative. Think more in the moment, to the breath.

Right now, I know I can type 1000 words of solid material (read: material I enjoy reading later, after edits) in two hours. That is reasonable for me to accomplish, even on a bad day. So that's what I calculate.

Maybe you can do more than that. Maybe less. Whatever it is, that's the best way I know how to figure-out where you will reliably be as a writer by – March, or any other given month of 2016.

If you want to be really safe, take your average writing time and divide it by half. Doing this gives you plenty of space for those days when the Unexpected interferes with your best laid plans.

If you can do this for yourself, it makes any task that much more doable. It's well within your grasp. Don't think too far into the distant fog of the unknown. Break it down to the Now. Small doses. Doable tasks.

6. Don't wait for January 1st to get going.

I think this is perhaps one of the biggest problems with New Year's Resolutions. We want so badly to remain consistent that this makes waiting a *little bit longer* easy to justify. "I can start next week," – because that marks the New Year.

Don't use a false sense of consistency to justify procrastination. Start working towards your life's goals right now. You will never get today back. So use it to the fullest. There's no good reason to not live the life you want.

Am I already doing some of the items on my list? Yes. All? NO. Some of my Resolutions are specifically things I want to do in the third or fourth quarters, so nothing that I should be doing right now. I'm just doing what I can right now, and I'm not beating myself up about anything I can't get to yet. That will never change, and is something I'm doing my best to schedule for the New Year.

7. Share your Resolutions.

If no one knows anything about your Writer's Resolutions, they're that much more likely to never happen. You don't have to worry about losing face to anyone, no need to let anyone down because you

slacked-off.

I have a strong feeling that it's good – in fact, it's essential – to have people expect things of you. What they *should* expect is entirely up to you. That's about priorities and determining what kind of person you want to be.

It's ok (in fact, it's best) to have your list be *for you*, and not for the things you think other people expect of you. Decide what it is that You Want For You, not what you think your mother in-law wants of you. This could in fact be a Resolutions Upgrade Point all by itself, but I've decided to place it here along with accountability because it's so closely linked.

Know what it is you really want to achieve. If it isn't what you want to do, you might want to remove it from the list. **If it isn't something you want, it's very unlikely to happen.**

So I'll jump into the deep end here and list my Writer's Resolutions for 2016. I'm still in the process of scheduling these tasks, but here's what I want to Get Done.

My Writer's Resolutions for 2016:

1. Lose 20 kilos by September or October. (Yep. Here at the top, no less.)
2. Strengthen my immune system. (I have specific tasks for achieving this.)
3. Learn to play Snooker (I love watching this game but have never played!).
4. Get an agent for my storybooks and novels. (A must, as I recently learned.)
5. Raise the money for and attend [Bologna Children's Book Fair](#) in April. (For the first time!)
6. Attend [Buchmesse in Frankfurt](#) in October. (I'll be returning. Cannot wait.)
7. Host [KunstWerkStadt](#) event and double that as [book launch party](#) in September.
8. Write 3 novels.
9. Write and illustrate 3 storybooks.
10. Finish GSB class lessons. (Which is currently in beta-test stage.)
11. Launch a second GSB class mid-year.
12. Finish writing "Be the Writer You Are" book. (I'm almost done.)
13. Write a book about Writer's Blocks and how to overcome them.
14. Write and direct a Kid's English Theatre production. (3 Dragons and a Baby)
15. Learn to knit a scarf. (My Aberdeen Class gifted me a knitting basket filled with everything I need, as I once mentioned that I want to learn to knit some day. I love my students!)
16. Learn to play the harmonica. (How can I not have this on my list?)
17. Organize and clean one piece of furniture per week. (It's necessary.)

That's my list. Right now, I'm still working to break down each goal into smaller tasks to do on specific days of each week, and I've been finding ways to bring certain goals together (for example, hosting a book launch party and hosting a KunstWerkStadt – I'm combining these).

You might wonder how I plan to learn such tasks as Snooker, knitting a scarf and harmonica playing. To be clear, I don't plan to become a master at these tasks. I just want to be able to *do* them. [According to Josh Kaufman, it takes 20 hours to learn a new thing](#). So that's my timeline determiner for grasping a basic understanding of these three things.

These 17 Resolutions are a lot. But I'm going to be brave here and say that this is what I'm going to do in 2016. I just need to be smart about how I schedule my tasks and then DO THAT. Plan for the future by being in the Now.

Maybe this will prove to be too much. Seriously – it could be too much, but that's my list and what I'm writing into my 2016 calendar. And here. Ta-DA! *But it will only be impressive if by this time next year, I've actually done these things.* Oh yes, I'll be revisiting this entry when December 2016 rolls around.

What's on your list of Resolutions for 2016? (NOTE: It certainly doesn't have to be 17 things!) Send me a note and let me know. OR – be really brave and share below in a comment! How's *that* for accountability?

No matter what your New Year's Resolutions may be, resolve to do this:

Keep creating, no matter what.

This entry is part of the series

[Creative Exercises](#)

Be sure to check out the other posts:

[<< How to Write When Stressed and Running on Empty Shiny Vespas & Character Inconsistencies >>](#)
