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Setting Writing Goals: Generative Writing, Time Management, and Getting Past that Blinking Cursor

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Dissertation Writing & Editing Goal Tracker

You followed your dreams all the way to a doctoral program - a dream that most people (even you on some days) believe is too difficult to accomplish, perhaps even impossible. How do you accomplish the impossible? By dividing the dream into small sets of attainable goals. The most important action you can take is to *keep moving forward*.

◊ Make progress every day.
◊ 15 minutes of outlining, writing, or editing is progress.
◊ If progress every day is impossible, make progress every week.
◊ Track your work.
◊ Take note of when you are most productive.
◊ Inspire yourself.

Set SMART Goals.
Specific.
Measurable.
Achievable.
Reportable.
Time Bound.
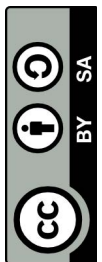
S — Specific
The more specificity in your goal, the better able to are to focus on your writing.
◊ What do you want to accomplish?
◊ What chapter are you working on?
◊ What section within that chapter are you working on?
◊ What subsection within the section within the chapter are you working on?

M — Measurable
How will you know if you accomplished your goal? It must be quanitifiable in order to make a determination. How will you measure your progress?
◊ By the number of words you write or edit?
◊ By the number of pages you write or edit?
◊ By the section or subsection you write or edit?

A — Achievable
Remember, this is a time-bound goal. Can you accomplish your goal in the amount of time you can set aside on this day? How realistic is your goal from where you are starting to where you want to end? Keep two things in mind: 1) when you begin, you'll probably overestimate what you can do on any given day, and 2) after you practice writing goals and establish a writing habit that helps you focus quickly, the liklier you are to set achievable writing goals.

R — Reportable
The purpose for establishing a measurabe goal is to assess the progress made towards your goal.
◊ Did you meet your goal?
◊ How many words did you write or edit?
◊ How many pages did you write or edit?
◊ How far towards your goal did you reach?

T — Time Bound
Work. Family. Life. Sanity. They all take time. How much time today can you devote to writing? Advice from long-time academic writers and writing coaches is to write for short amounts of time - so think of the dissertation as a daily run, not a one-day ultramarathon. And think of writing as a muscle - the more you flex it, the more conditioned it will be.

Date	Time Allocated	Goal	Progress
6/1/18	1 hour	I will outline the limitations of the study.	Completed
6/3/18	30 min	I will write two pages of the Climate Change and Food Security section of my literature review.	1.5 pages completed
6/4/18	90 min	I will write 1,000 words of the background section of the dissertation proposal.	Completed
6/6/18	30 min	I will edit the first 10 pages of the methodology.	8 pages completed
6/7/18	15 min	I will redraft the purpose statement in my introduction.	Completed
6/8/18	2 hours		
6/8/18	2.75 hr		
6/9/18	3 hours		
6/10/18	3 hours		

A printable version of this chart and an Excel version of this chart can be found at http://libguides.unco.edu/WritingIntensive/Toolkit.

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