**Taking Boot Camp Home**

Developing a Strategic Writing Plan to Get You to Completion

Writing a proposal, thesis, or dissertation is not something you must do today. But it is important that you **accomplish something today** and every day to move your writing project to completion. How will you do that?

1. **Think ahead and plan backwards**.

**“Time is that quality of nature which keeps events from happening all at once. Lately it doesn’t seem to be working.”**

Make a schedule for completion so you have a schedule that keeps things from happening all at once.

* When will you defend? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* When do you need to distribute your reading draft to your committee? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* When do you need to give your final complete draft to your advisor for approval to distribute to your committee? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Then what do you need to do the week before that? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* The week before that? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* And the week before that? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. **Set a goal for every day between now and when you plan to defend**.

Having a goal will help you

* + Focus on what you need to do in the time you have scheduled (rather than time available) for writing.
  + Limit extraneous tasks and writing.
  + Be accountable – it can posted, shared, and measured.

Remember, something **small** that you can do **soon** (next 24 hours). Write specific daily goals for at least two days in advance. Remember to use your lists: What I must do **after** my writing is complete. What I must do **late**r to be ready to write productively tomorrow. And what I want to focus on when I **return to write**, edit, or finalize this chapter.

You should have writing goals at least five days a week. But you also need to move your writing project forward in other ways, too. (Meetings with your advisor. Data analysis. More reading. And you should schedule time for sleep, exercise, and eating in healthy ways at regular intervals.)

1. **What obstacles are you likely to encounter in your writing and meeting your goals? What are the biggest challenges and roadblocks ahead of you?**

Write these down, and add to your list as new ones occur. Then search your “toolkit” for what will work to help you overcome this obstacle. If you encounter a new obstacle and there’s no strategy in your toolkit to address it? Write to your Boot Camp colleagues or to me (Jan.Allen@cornell.edu). But don’t let this obstacle be insurmountable and stop your progress.

1. **What will I do to be accountable?**

Will you have a writing buddy? Will you work with a writing support group? A virtual community? Will you share your goals with your spouse, partner, roommate, bathroom mirror? Will you post a photo of your Boot Camp team next to your computer to help you keep the momentum and focus on your writing?

1. **What will you do to celebrate when you are done?**

Writing can become its own reward, especially productive and/or good writing. (But a terrible first draft is a good start.) **And let us know when you defend so we can celebrate with you! Good luck. You can do this. Or, in the words of Dissertation Group II June 2014, “We’ve got this!”**