

SETTING QUARTERLY GOALS



NEW YEAR... NEW GOALS!



Happy New Year, writers! January is a magical time. The calendar resets, and a feeling of excitement about the year ahead settles in. We're armed with a fresh burst of inspiration.

As we dive into all the potential 2024 holds for us, let's talk about setting the stage for success by crafting **achievable quarterly goals**. We're here to tell you that they really work.

Buckle up; we're about to make 2024 YOUR year!

Reflecting on the Past, Paving the Way for the Future

Before we jump into the goal-setting extravaganza, let's take a quick peek in the rearview mirror.

Last month we talked about how important it is to end the calendar year with reflection and take stock of your writing life. What worked well for you last year? What challenges did you conquer? Were there things you were unable to achieve? Why?

Reflecting on your past achievements and stumbling blocks can offer valuable insights. But the reflection process is not about dwelling on the past. It's about learning from it to pave a smoother road ahead.

The Magic of Quarterly Goals

Instead of setting goals for the entire year, we here at Technica Editorial like to break our year into manageable chunks. How can we craft realistic and

achievable goals for later in the year if there are unknowns about how the earlier months will go?

Quick answer: We can't. Trying just means we'll end up veering off track, and that can be discouraging.

Enter QUARTERLY GOALS

If you look at your year as a road trip across the country, then quarterly goals are the checkpoints where, at the end of each quarter, you can take a mini-break, stretch your legs, and plan the next part of your route. In writing, these checkpoints give you the opportunity to look back at the prior three months, reflect, evaluate, and use this information to inform your goals for the next three months.

Essentially, quarterly goals break down the colossal task of an entire year into manageable, bite-sized chunks. They allow you to stop, recalibrate, celebrate wins, and adjust your course if needed.

THREE STEPS TO CRAFT QUARTERLY GOALS

STEP 1:

DREAM BIG, START SMALL:

Begin with the end in mind. In education, this is called “backward mapping.” If you know what students need to learn by the end of the year (the end goal), you can then map it backward to figure out the steps needed to get them there.

This concept works with writing, as well. What’s the big, audacious goal you envision accomplishing by the end of the year? It could be finishing that novel, launching a blog, completing the research for a big project, or mastering a new skill. Once you’ve identified that BIG GOAL, look at it as your North Star. It’s always there to guide you, but you’re not just shooting an arrow straight at it. No, no, no. Now you get to break it down into smaller, doable tasks for each quarter—things that will help you get there... eventually. It’s like stepping on stones to cross a river. You do it one rock at a time.

STEP 2:

SMART GOALS FOR THE WIN

SMART goals help the vague become tangible. They are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Let’s break it down:

- **Specific:** Define your goal with clarity. Instead of “Write a book,” go for “Complete the first draft of my novel.”
- **Measurable:** How will you know when you’ve achieved your goal? Use metrics like word count, completion percentages, or other specific milestones as your gauge.
- **Achievable:** Set goals that challenge you but are within reach. It’s about pushing boundaries, not trying to bust your way through the wall at Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ when you’re not actually a wizard.
- **Relevant:** Ensure your goals align with that big, audacious vision you defined early on. If your goal is to become a published author, taking a coding class might not be the most direct route. Taking a comprehensive course on writing a novel might be.



- **Time-bound:** Assign deadlines to your goals. This adds a sense of urgency and keeps you accountable. It also gives you something to celebrate, and the accomplishment can motivate you to keep going.

STEP 3:

LOOK AHEAD

At the end of one quarter, take the time to set yourself up for success in the next. Here's a look at how we like to break our year into quarters.

QUARTER-BY-QUARTER BREAKDOWN:

Q1

THE LAUNCHPAD (JANUARY-MARCH)

This is your initiation phase. Break down your big goal into smaller tasks and focus on building momentum. It's like revving the engine before a race. If your goal is to write a book, set a target word count for the first few chapters or set a daily word count goal. Front-load your research. Map out your chapters or complete your synopsis. Do your prep work, whatever that might look like.

Q2

THE SPRINT (APRIL-JUNE)

By now you should have found your rhythm, so it's time to pick up the pace. Tackle more substantial chunks of your goal during this quarter. If you're writing a blog, aim to publish consistently and experiment with different content types. If your goal is to complete a novel, nonfiction book, or memoir, have you been able to meet the word count goals you set during the first quarter? Or did you regularly exceed them? Up that word count goal or make minor tweaks to your goals, and keep on keeping on.



Q3

THE REFINEMENT (JULY–SEPTEMBER)

Midway through the year, it's time for a pit stop to take stock of how the first half of the year went. In education, we call this a MYR, or Mid Year Review. Educators evaluate their students to see if they're on track with where they should be in order to reach the end learning objective.

You can do the same thing. Evaluate your progress so far. Are you on track? Adjust your strategy if needed. Maybe that character you introduced in your novel needs more development, or perhaps your blog could use a fresh design. Be realistic and use the first six months to inform how the next six months will go. As you get ready to start the second half of your year, do you need to pivot or redefine your endpoint? If you do, that is okay! This is a time to make adjustments. Set yourself up to WIN!

Q4

THE GRAND FINALE (OCTOBER–DECEMBER)

This is the final stretch! You've honed your skills and overcome unexpected challenges that arose along the way. Now it's time for the final push. Pick up the pace if necessary. Fine-tune your work. Tie up loose ends. By the end of the quarter, you should be able to revel in the satisfaction of achieving your goal. And remember, December is a time to reflect back on your year: determine what worked, what didn't, and how you can make adjustments for the next year.



Every goal achieved, big or small, deserves a celebration. Seriously. *We are all about the celebration!* Treat yourself to that fancy coffee, take a day off, or simply bask in the glory of your accomplishments. And remember, setbacks are not roadblocks; they are only detours that take us on unexpectedly interesting paths. Learn from them, pivot if necessary, and keep moving forward.



WRAPPING UP



So, writers, let's kick off this year with a bang! Embrace the power of quarterly goals, infuse your writing journey with intention, and watch the magic unfold. Remember, 2024 is YOUR year to shine. Let's make every word count!

