

THE CLOCKWORK METHOD

FROM BOOK IDEA TO DRAFT IN 12 WEEKS



Iron & Ink Publishing



It's like clockwork.

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THE PREFACE

So you want to write a book. Maybe the idea of it has come in and out of your mind too many times to count. Maybe you even tried to start one before hitting a snag and setting it aside. Either way, the seed remains... like a boomerang that keeps returning to your doorstep. To this point in your life, you've found reasons to put it on the back burner. But the itch won't go away.

Where would you even start? What would it even be about? Who would even want to read it? All questions that have stopped you from starting.

This workbook and its 12-week class are here as your companion and guide to getting that first draft done. This class and book will teach you:

- How to outline and organize your book.
- How to identify your audience and target reader.
- How to approach the writing process and overcome obstacles.
- How to write a book you'll be proud of.

As you embark on this journey, a few things to keep in mind:

- This will be hard and make you uncomfortable.
- You will get tired, confused, and be overwhelmed at times.
- This whole process will take (much) longer than you want it to.
- **Most importantly: This will be one of the most rewarding and fulfilling things you've ever done in your life.**

The lessons beginning in Week 1 assume that you already have a book idea in mind. If that is not you, you will need to at least get a general sense of what you want to do. Ask: What topics are you most passionate or knowledgeable about? What problems or challenges have you overcome that others might benefit from hearing about? Who is your target audience, and what do they want or need?

Once you have the idea, the work begins.

****Side Note:** This workbook is most relevant for those wanting to write a non-fiction book. If you want to write fiction, many of the general writing principles covered will still apply (but the specific exercises may not be as relevant).

WEEK 1: THE INTRODUCTION AND PREPARATION

AGENDA

- **Introductions and Overview** (15 minutes)
- **Lecture:** The writing process and first draft mindset (15 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Setting SMART goals / discuss with peers (15 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (15 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Write a 500-word summary of your proposed book, and (II) write an outline of your book (see Exhibit A for a sample outline). Suggestion: write (I) the summary on day 1, then write (II) the outline on day 2. Then, go back to the summary and re-write / revise it as many times as you can this first week. We will return the outline in Week 2.

TAKEAWAY

This week sets the foundation for a successful 12-week journey to completing a first draft. It starts with setting SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound). What gets measured, gets managed, and we want to find a way to make the process of writing fun and energizing. Tools like Excel charts that track writing progress can be helpful here. (Ask if you want a sample.)

As we begin the drafting process, there are a few things related to mindset to keep in mind. The first is to separate the creator from the critic. Try not to edit as you write. Follow your curiosity and let imperfect onto the page without judgment. Editing comes later. The second: if you have writer's block, it may be you're not listening.

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WEEK 2: THE OUTLINE

AGENDA

- **Review:** Share unique challenges from the prior week (10 minutes)
- **Guest Lecture** (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Review and discuss outlines with peers (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Look at your outline and (if you have not already) list sub-bullets with references to any quotes, stories, or principles that come to mind when you think of that section. Then (II) pick a different part of your outline every day and write (stream of consciousness)... remember: try not to write and edit at the same time. Just cut open a vein and let it flow.

TAKEAWAY

This week, we break down the process of creating an outline to use as a roadmap. If you take time and develop a well-structured and thought-out outline, the book tends to write itself. If you don't, the process will be clunky and haphazard. Some people use a traditional bullet and sub-bullet style while others prefer a mind-mapping approach. The key here is to find an approach most suitable to how your brain thinks about and organizes ideas. The goal is to break the book down into manageable sections, chapters, and key points, and to arrange these elements in a logical flow so that when it comes to write you don't have to worry about organization... you can just write.

Side note: The outline will change a few times as you make progress. Don't worry about making it perfect at this stage.

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WEEK 3: THE POSITIONING

AGENDA

- **Review:** Share unique challenges from the prior week (10 minutes)
- **Lecture:** Book positioning, audience, and a north star (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Finish this sentence: “My book will help [audience] by teaching them [takeaway] through [method].” Discuss this “north star” with a peer and revisit your 500-word summary from week one with this in mind. (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Continue working through and filling in your outline on a daily basis, and (II) Come up with a description of a visual that would summarize your book (think what would you send to a book cover creator?)

TAKEAWAY

This week focuses on getting clear on your book’s unique place in the market and understanding your target reader. Why should they read your book? What do you want them to take away from the book? Where is your target reader right now and what problems are they having? Is your book a marketing tool to something else or an end in itself?

By the end of the week, participants will have a clear vision of who they're writing for and how to tailor their content to meet their audience's needs and expectations, setting the stage for more focused and effective writing in the coming weeks.

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WEEK 4: THE RESEARCH

AGENDA

- **Review:** Share unique challenges from the prior week (10 minutes)
- **Lecture:** Bird by bird (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Identify five books most similar to yours. Look at their structure, outline, book cover, etc. Make a list of things from those books you want to incorporate. (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Revisit your outline in light of books most similar to yours. Is there anything that needs to change? (II) Continuing writing through your outline.

TAKEAWAY

This week focuses on research techniques and adopting a productive writing approach. We first look at the question of how to do efficient and effective research, including how to identify credible sources, organize information, and integrate research into writing.

The second part of class introduces a few tools for tackling big projects (like writing a book). The first is an approach inspired by Anne Lamott and encourages writers to think about their books in small, manageable chunks (or “bird by bird”). The second reminds writers to accept poor first drafts as a prerequisite to polished second drafts. The third emphasizes the importance of regular, consistent writing sessions because not every session is going to be good and if you rely on inspiration, the book will never get finished.

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WEEK 5: THE ORGANIZATION AND FLOW

AGENDA

- **Review:** Check-in on writing progress and challenges (10 minutes)
- **Guest Lecture** (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Peer review of outline and feedback on organization (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** Continue writing through the ideas in your outline on a daily basis. (By this point we are a little over a month in.)

TAKEAWAY

This week focuses on organizing the book's content and creating a logical flow that engages readers from start to finish. The lesson begins by introducing various organizational structures suitable for different types of books, such as chronological, thematic, problem-solution, or modular approaches. Participants will revisit their outline and evaluate whether their existing structure best suits their material and audience.

Writers also explore techniques for pacing their content, balancing depth with readability, and strategically placing key information for maximum impact.

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WEEK 6: THE WRITING

AGENDA

- **Review:** Check-in on writing progress and challenges (10 minutes)
- **Lecture:** Topic sentences and coherence (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Peer review and feedback (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Write a back-of-the-book summary of your book. (II) Continue working through and filling in your outline on a daily basis.

TAKEAWAY

This week focuses on the fundamental skills of constructing effective topic sentences and building logical arguments throughout the book. The lesson begins by exploring the role of topic sentences in guiding readers and providing structure to paragraphs and chapters. Writers learn techniques for crafting clear, concise, and compelling topic sentences that accurately preview the content that follows.

The lesson then transitions into the art of logical argumentation, teaching participants how to construct sound arguments, support claims with evidence, and anticipate and address potential counterarguments.

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WEEK 7: THE VOICE

AGENDA

- **Review:** Check-in on writing progress and challenges (10 minutes)
- **Guest Lecture** (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Read a section out loud to a peer (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Rewrite the section you read out loud to your peer. (II) Continue working through and filling in your outline on a daily basis.

**For next week: bring a book and / or writing sample of your favorite author... we'll need it for next week's exercise.

TAKEAWAY

This week delves into the crucial aspect of developing a distinctive authorial voice. The lesson begins by exploring what constitutes voice in writing, including elements such as tone, style, rhythm, and perspective. Participants learn to identify their natural writing tendencies and how to refine and amplify these to create a unique and engaging voice. An easy way to think about voice: write how you talk.

HINT: If you're having trouble finding your voice, you can try pretending that you are writing specifically to a friend (or to someone who needs your help). Another option to try is to speak or talk into a recording about specific sections in your outline, transcribe the recording, and then edit the transcript. The key is to find what works best for you.

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WEEK 8: THE INSPIRATION

AGENDA

- **Review:** Check-in on writing progress and challenges (10 minutes)
- **Lecture:** Short lessons from great writers (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Re-write a paragraph of a writer you love (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Read the articles below and make a list of writing reminders you want to remember, print it out, and put it where you write. (II) Continue writing through your outline.

Resources

Scott Adams: [The Day You Became a Better Writer](#)

Naval Ravikant: [How to write like the great entrepreneurs](#)

Stephen King: On Writing (summarized [here](#))

C.S. Lewis: Letters (summarized [here](#))

TAKEAWAY

This week explores the process of drawing inspiration from one's favorite writers to enhance one's own writing. The lesson begins by emphasizing the difference between inspiration and imitation, encouraging writers to analyze what they admire in other authors' works. Writers will try their hand at exercises that involve mimicking admired styles as a learning tool, then adapting these techniques to fit their own voice and project.

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WEEK 9: THE BEAUTIFICATION PROCESS

AGENDA

- **Review:** Check-in on writing progress and challenges (10 minutes)
- **Guest Lecture** (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Brainstorm with peer how you can make your book stand out (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Call a loved one and tell them about the book. Make your description as concise as possible. (II) Continue working through and filling in your outline on a daily basis.

TAKEAWAY

This week focuses on the art of infusing the book with unique, beautiful, and personal elements that set it apart. The lesson begins by exploring the concept of a book as more than just information—it's a creative expression of the author's perspective and experiences.

Participants explore ways to weave their personal experiences and worldviews into the narrative, creating a deeper connection with readers.

The hope is that writers will leave this week with a clear picture of how they want to imbue their book with a beauty and individuality that resonates with readers and cultivates true fans.

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WEEK 10: THE READER'S WILL

AGENDA

- **Review:** Check-in on writing progress and challenges (10 minutes)
- **Lecture:** Roadmapping and reader willpower (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Peer review of “back cover” summary (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** Continue working through and filling in your outline on a daily basis.

TAKEAWAY

This week begins by introducing the concept of cognitive load and how it affects a reader's engagement and comprehension. Writers will think about how to structure their content and sentences in ways that maintain reader interest and reduce mental fatigue. The lesson covers strategies such as varying sentence and paragraph length, strategically placing "rest points" or summaries, and using transitional phrases to guide readers smoothly through complex ideas.

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WEEK 11: THE ROADBLOCKS AND RESISTANCE

AGENDA

- **Review:** Check-in on writing progress and challenges (10 minutes)
- **Lecture:** Strategies for overcoming writer's block (20 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Peer review of the section you're most struggling with (20 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** Just. Keep. Writing.

TAKEAWAY

This week addresses the common challenges of overcoming roadblocks and resistance in the writing process. The lesson begins by identifying the typical obstacles that writers face, including self-doubt, perfectionism, and creative blocks. Participants will share their experiences and learn practical strategies for pushing past barriers.

Fears and insecurities you can expect to face include: Who am I to write this book? Hasn't someone already done this? Does this make any sense at all? Will people care? Are people going to judge me for the ideas in this book? Is this book going to make me look stupid?

Reframes: (1) Fear is excitement in disguise. (2) Who will be hurt if you don't write it? Your work is oxygen to someone suffocating.

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WEEK 12: THE FINAL TOUCHES AND NEXT STEPS

AGENDA

- **Review:** Check-in on writing progress and challenges (10 minutes)
- **Lecture:** Finalizing the draft, the editing process, and the path to publication (10 minutes)
- **Workshop:** Pitch your book in 4 minutes (40 minutes)
- **Q&A Session** (10 minutes)
- **Homework Assignment:** (I) Finish your draft then take 3-7 days away from the book. (II) Then start editing.

TAKEAWAY

This week focuses on finalizing the first draft and preparing for the next stages of the book's journey. Participants learn techniques for effective self-editing, including reading aloud and using digital tools to catch common errors. The lesson then shifts to discuss the crucial steps that follow the completion of a first draft. Writers are introduced to the revision process and finding an editor, the formatting process, and a primer on marketing the book post-launch.

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Exhibit A: Sample Outline

The Wisdom of Non-Attachment: Lessons from Boethius and Beyond

- **Introduction: The Chains of Desire**
 - The human condition and the pursuit of happiness
 - Introduction to Boethius and "The Consolation of Philosophy"
 - The concept of non-attachment: definition and relevance

Part I: The Nature of Attachment

- **Chapter 1: The Psychology of Attachment**
 - Understanding our attachments: material, emotional, and ideological
 - The evolutionary roots of attachment
 - How attachments shape our identity and behavior
- **Chapter 2: The Suffering of Attachment**
 - The Buddhist perspective on attachment and suffering
 - Boethius' personal story: from power to imprisonment
 - The impermanence of worldly possessions and status
- **Chapter 3: The Illusion of Control**
 - Our desire for certainty and control
 - Fortune's wheel: the unpredictability of life
 - Embracing uncertainty as a path to freedom

Part II: The Philosophy of Non-Attachment

- **Chapter 4: Boethius and Lady Philosophy**
 - Introduction to the allegorical figure of Lady Philosophy
 - The dialogue structure of "The Consolation of Philosophy"
 - Key philosophical arguments for non-attachment
- **Chapter 5: Stoicism and Non-Attachment**
 - Parallels between Boethius' ideas and Stoic philosophy
 - The Stoic concept of "amor fati" (love of fate)
 - Practical Stoic exercises for cultivating non-attachment
- **Chapter 6: Eastern Perspectives on Non-Attachment**
 - Buddhism: Non-attachment as a path to enlightenment
 - Taoism: Wu wei and the art of non-doing
 - Hinduism: The Bhagavad Gita's teaching on detached action

Part III: Practicing Non-Attachment in Modern Life

- **Chapter 7: Mindfulness and Present-Moment Awareness**
 - The role of mindfulness in fostering non-attachment
 - Meditation techniques for observing thoughts and emotions
 - Cultivating a non-judgmental awareness
- **Chapter 8: Reframing Success and Failure**
 - Boethius on true happiness and the highest good
 - Detaching from societal definitions of success
 - Finding intrinsic motivation and purpose
- **Chapter 9: Relationships and Non-Attachment**
 - Loving without possessiveness
 - Healthy boundaries and interdependence
 - Dealing with loss and grief through the lens of non-attachment
- **Chapter 10: Work, Ambition, and Non-Attachment**
 - Applying non-attachment principles in career and business
 - Balancing goals with detachment from outcomes
 - Finding fulfillment beyond external achievements

Part IV: The Freedom of Non-Attachment

- **Chapter 11: Emotional Resilience**
 - How non-attachment fosters emotional stability
 - Techniques for managing difficult emotions
 - Building inner strength through philosophical reflection
- **Chapter 12: Ethical Living and Non-Attachment**
 - The relationship between non-attachment and virtue
 - Making ethical decisions free from personal bias
 - Contributing to society with a detached mind
- **Chapter 13: Spirituality and Transcendence**
 - Non-attachment as a spiritual practice
 - Exploring the concept of the eternal and unchanging
 - Finding meaning beyond material existence

Part V: Conclusion & The Consolation of Non-Attachment

- Recap of key lessons from Boethius and other traditions
- The paradox of engagement without attachment
- Invitation to readers to explore their own path to non-attachment

Epilogue: Boethius' Legacy

- The enduring influence of "The Consolation of Philosophy"
- How Boethius' ideas continue to resonate in modern times
- Final reflections on the timeless wisdom of non-attachment