



The Writer's Journey Plan

Welcome! If you are early on in your writing journey or want an exact series of steps to follow to grow your skills as much and as quickly as possible, you're in the right spot.

The Writer's Journey Plan consists of three stages: one stage for beginner and novice writers, one stage for intermediate and advanced writers, and one stage for expert and master writers. We don't have the last stage fully mapped out yet, but we do have plenty of resources for those of you wanting to go through the first two stages in a structured fashion.

Each stage consists of several checkpoints that guide you to take actions in three different areas: writing theory, writing practice, and platform building. If you're a brand-new fiction writer, you'll start at the first checkpoint. If you've already been writing, find the checkpoint for each area that best matches where you're at.

Don't worry if it's a different checkpoint for each area. That's normal. If you feel like you don't fit into a single checkpoint or this approach is too scripted for you, that may be a sign that our Writer's Rank Advancement Guide may be a better fit for you. The Journey Plan and Advancement Guide can also be used together.

Once you've found where you're at, begin working on the next checkpoint. At the end of this document, we have a bunch of suggested resources for each checkpoint on the list. Make sure you peruse that list before attempting a certain checkpoint.

When you reach the end of a stage, we'll have you assess where you're at to see if you're ready for the next stage or not. If you're not ready, first confirm that you hit every checkpoint. If you're still not meeting the requirements, try using the Writer's Rank Advancement Guide to fill in your weaknesses. Or [shoot us an email](#) and we'll advise you on what to do next.

Happy writing!

-The Story Embers Staff



Stage One: Beginner & Novice

Writing Theory

Writing Practice

Platform Building

Start

No training

No experience

No platform knowledge

Checkpoint #1

Study what it means to write for Christ.

Write a short story.

Begin thinking about platform.

Checkpoint #2

Study the basics of plot and character.

Get your short story edited. Edit it yourself in light of the suggestions you get.

Create a mission statement as a writer. Explain why you write and what success looks like for you.

Checkpoint #3

Study cliches, the basics of description, the basics of show don't tell, and the main POVs.

Write and edit 3-7 more short stories.

Resources on the vitality of building your platform coming soon.



Writing Theory

Writing Practice

Platform Building

Checkpoint #4

Study in-depth story structure.

Outline a novel (doesn't have to be one you ever plan to write) and get critique on your outline. Make revisions as necessary.

Recommended resources coming soon that teach the basics of how your writing can make you a living.

Checkpoint #5

Study the basics of theme + conflict/suspense.

Outline and write a novella.

None

Checkpoint #6

Study dialogue.

Try re-envisioning and rewriting your novella in light of the problems you're seeing in it.

Download the basic marketing plan so you can reference it regularly.

Checkpoint #7

Study character archetypes and foreshadowing.

Outline a 50,000-70,000 word novel and write the first chapter. This novel likely won't be published (it's a training ground). Still write at your highest level and see if you can produce a good story.

Read one marketing book and write down any tactics you want to remember in the corresponding section of the basic marketing plan.



Writing Theory

Study research, info dumps, and world building.
Volunteer to edit someone else's novel.

Study setting, scene, and internal monologue.

Write up to 50% of your novel.

Resources coming soon on how to nail down the writing techniques you are learning so you can become a master at them.

Study endings.

Writing Practice

Checkpoint #8

Write the first 25% of your novel.

Checkpoint #9

Read one marketing book and write down any tactics you want to remember in

Checkpoint #10

Write up to 75% of your novel. Study time management, goals, writer's block, and general productivity.

Checkpoint #11

Finish your novel!

Platform Building

Read the corresponding resources on surrendering your visions to God.

the corresponding section of the basic marketing plan.

Read one marketing book and write down any tactics you want to remember in the corresponding section of the basic marketing plan.

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Writing Theory

Study how to self-edit a novel.

Self-edit your novel. Also, if you haven't yet, start

Optional: Find another novel you can volunteer to edit and do a critique trade.

Writing Practice

Checkpoint #12

seriously planning your next novel.

Begin to plan what email service you will use. Also, if you intend to launch a blog, vlog, podcast, social media,

Checkpoint #13

Find beta-readers/editors and go through at least three rounds of editing.

Launch your blog, vlog, podcast, social media, or

Platform Building

etc., begin planning how you want to run those.

whatever other platform you want to build a following on. Launch your email list with the aim of getting 100 subscribers.

Evaluation Period:

Writing: Evaluate the quality of your writing by taking the [Writing Craft Quiz](#) and also having someone else you know and trust take it for you. You should reach a score of **42** before moving on to the second stage.

Stability: Make sure you have a consistent, regular writing habit. We recommend you have at least a year of writing experience before moving on to prevent you from overrating yourself in the above quiz or any of the writing skill areas.

Qualifications: Verify that you've hit all the checkpoints.

Mindset: Step back and consider your mindset. Is your heart in the right place? Are you suffering from fear, or are you ready and confident to move on?



Once you pass the evaluation requirements, you're ready to graduate to Stage Two!

Stage Two: Intermediate & Advanced

Writing Theory

Study theme, “show, don’t tell,” subplots, and style deeper than you have before. We recommend you find a writing coach or take writing courses. You can move on to Checkpoint 17 before completion, but you must finish the study before the Stage Two evaluation.

Writing Practice

None

Platform Building

Begin to surround yourself with a group of other writers who are near the same skill level or higher. You will help each other grow, keep each other accountable to regularly grow your platforms, and eventually you will likely cross-promote each other.

Checkpoint #14

Checkpoint #15

Study the genre of the next book you’re going to write. Learn what to copy from others and what not to copy. In addition to this, conduct any historical, factual, or other research you’ll need to do for this novel so you’re well prepared.

None

Research self-publishing vs. traditional and decide which route to focus on. Practice writing a synopsis. Experiment with at least one of the following: social media, blogging, YouTube, podcasting, or any other content marketing platform you know of. If you like it, continue; if you don’t, leave it. Stay accountable with your writing group.



Writing Theory

Writing Practice

Platform Building

Checkpoint #16

None

write this book so it will be publishable quality.

marketing that should have a high conversion rate (e.g., an e-course, giveaway, survey, etc.) and do a short-term marketing push. Read one marketing book and write down any tactics you want to remember in the corresponding section of the basic marketing plan.

Outline your novel and begin writing it. Try to

Continue experimenting with content marketing platforms. Create something you can use for

Checkpoint #17

Coach another writer for 20 hours or more. Or write 3-4 articles on fiction writing and get them published on a reputable site. Or critique 3+ novels for other writers.

endeavors. Read one marketing book and write down any tactics you want to remember in the corresponding section of the basic marketing plan.

Continue to write your novel.

Continue with content marketing and/or short-term list-building



Writing Theory

Study 10+ classics in a community setting. If at all possible, do this in person through college or a writers' book club. If not possible, do a video-call book club. As a last resort, study alone but take copious notes.

Writing Practice

Checkpoint #18

Continue writing your novel. If you have already finished it, edit it.

Platform Building

Build your mailing list to 1,000 subscribers. Focus your marketing research on book launches and online retailer algorithms.

Checkpoint #19

Launch your book! Aim to sell 1,000 books in a 1-month launch period, then continue marketing.

Evaluation Period:

Writing: By now, you should have had 20+ hours of personal coaching, had a professional editor polish your book, taken 3+ full-length writing courses, or read 15+ books on writing craft. Evaluate the quality of your writing with the [Writing Craft Quiz](#) and have 2-3 peers/mentors take it for you. You should reach a score of **62** before moving on to the third stage.

Platform: By this point, you should have at least one book published and 1,000 subscribers. Set a *long-term* marketing goal you want to achieve as an author (e.g., sell 10,000 books per launch) and create a written plan for reaching that goal.

Qualifications: Verify that you've hit all the checkpoints.

Mindset: Are you still seeking to grow as a writer or have you become complacent? Now that you've achieved a decent level of success, have you developed a fame-and-fortune mindset, or are you staying humble?



Once you pass the evaluation requirements, you're ready to graduate to Stage Three!

Stage Three: Expert & Master

This section of the Writer's Journey Plan is still under construction and we don't have much for it yet. If you find yourself here, keep working until you achieve a perfect score in the [Writing Craft Quiz](#) and hit 10,000 email subscribers.



Resources

Checkpoint #1:

[Preview lesson “What is a Novel?” from Jumpstart Your Novel by Daeus Lamb for free](#)

Marketing:

[Why Young Writers Shouldn’t Wait to Build a Platform by Josiah DeGraaf](#)

Checkpoint #2:

Plot:

[The Secrets of Story Structure](#)

[Jumpstart Your Novel by Daeus Lamb](#)

Character:

[The Ultimate Guide to Character Development](#)

[The Anatomy of Story by John Truby](#)

[How to Use Personality Types to Deepen Your Characters](#)

[Make Your Protagonists Hate Each Other in Four Easy Steps](#)

[Why Characters Who Love Each Other Won’t Ruin Your Novel](#)

[Three Ways Gender Differences Should Impact Your Story’s Character Arc](#)

[Your Characters’ Limits Are the Most Interesting Thing about Them](#)

Checkpoint #3:

Cliches:

[Three Reasons You Shouldn’t Fear Cliches](#)

[Twenty-Seven Examples of Ways to Bend Clichés](#)

[Five Overused Clichés in Christian Fiction \(and How to Avoid Them\)](#)

Descriptions:

[Avoiding the Vague Swamp](#)

[What Sherlock Holmes Can Teach You about Writing Descriptions](#)

[Write a Great Description in Three Easy Steps](#)

[Three Ways You May Be Wasting Your Descriptions](#)

[The Show Don’t Tell Course Part One](#)

[Three Ways to Use Subtext to “Show, Don’t Tell”](#)

[Shoot Your Novel by C.S. Lakin](#)

[5 Editors Tackle the 12 Fatal Flaws of Fiction Writing by C.S. Lakin, et al.](#)

[The Emotion Thesaurus by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi](#)



[Three Types of Telling You Must Erase to Create an Intimate POV](#)

[How to Write Believable Emotion](#)

The main POVs:

[Everything You Need to Know about Writing a 3rd-Person POV](#)

[What Every Writer Ought to Know about the Omniscient POV](#)

[1st-Person POV vs. 3rd-Person POV: Which POV Is Right for Your Book?](#)

[3 Ways You Can Use a First-Person Narrator to Tell a Better Story](#)

[Most Common Writing Mistakes, Pt. 62: Head-Hopping POV](#)

[5 Editors Tackle the 12 Fatal Flaws of Fiction Writing by C.S. Lakin, et al.](#)

Checkpoint #4:

[Structuring Your Novel by K.M. Weiland](#)

[The Secrets of Story Structure by K.M. Weiland](#)

[Set Your Novel Up for Success by Sharing Your Outline](#)

[Story by Robert McKee](#)

Checkpoint #5:

Theme:

[Theme Made Simple](#)

[Jumpstart Your Novel by Daeus Lamb](#)

[The Christian Imagination by Leland Ryken, ed.](#)

[How to Write Without Sounding Preachy](#)

Conflict:

[Five Ways to Create Nail-Biting Internal Conflict](#)

[4 Ways to Ramp Up Tension and Pacing In Your Fiction by C.S. Lakin](#)

[Story by Robert McKee](#)

Keep Readers Turning Pages by Josiah DeGraaf (Coming Soon)

Checkpoint #6:

Dialogue:

[How to Write Dialogue that Captivates Your Reader by Jerry Jenkins](#)

[Helping Writers Become Authors Database on Dialogue](#)

The Basic Marketing Plan (See Appendix)

Checkpoint #7:

Character Archetypes:



[Jumpstart Your Novel by Daeus Lamb](#)

[How to Write Comic Relief Characters without Annoying Your Audience](#)

[Three Reasons to Make Your Villain Sympathetic \(and Two Dangers to Avoid\)](#)

[Four Lessons Loki Can Teach You About Writing Villains](#)

[How to Do a Character Archetype Well in Four Easy Steps](#)

[The Anatomy of Story by John Truby](#)

[Story by Robert McKee](#)

Foreshadowing:

[Three Types of Foreshadowing](#)

First Pages:

[How to Give a Terrific First Impression as an Author](#)

[How to Write the First Page of Your Novel](#)

[Why Theme Is the Key to Unlocking Your First Chapter's Potential](#)

Marketing:

[Your First 10,000 Readers by Nick Stephenson](#)

[Book Launch Blueprint by Tim Grahl](#)

[How to Market a Book by Joanna Penn](#)

[Let's Get Digital by David Gaughran](#)

Checkpoint #8:

World Building:

[Fantasy Worldbuilding Questions](#)

[How to Resist Writing Stereotypical Fantasy Races](#)

[Keeping Readers Grounded in Strange Worlds](#)

[How to Develop Realistic Sci-Fi Technology](#)

[How to Use Multiple Tiers to Worldbuild Effectively](#)

Research:

[Pitfalls and Strengths of Historical Fiction](#)

[How to Research Historical Fiction](#)

Info Dumps:

[How to Avoid Info Dumps](#)

[Info Dumps by K.M. Weiland](#)

Platform:

[Don't Look to Your Writing to Find Your Identity](#)

Checkpoint #9:



Setting and Scene:

[How Advice from a Chess Grandmaster Can Transform Your Writing](#)

[The Show Don't Tell Course Part One](#)

[Infusing Your Settings with Emotions](#)

[How to Describe the Setting of a Story](#)

[Connecting Your Characters to Settings In Your Novel](#)

Internal Monologue:

[The Show Don't Tell Course Part 2](#)

[Revolutionize Your Writing by Deepening Your Characters' POV](#)

[Four Tips for Creating a Compelling POV](#)

Checkpoint #10:

Finding Time to Write:

Time Management for Christian Writers by Kingdom Pen (Coming Soon)

[The #1 Reason You Won't Complete NaNoWriMo This Year](#)

Checkpoint #11:

[How to Create a Seriously Satisfying Ending](#)

[8 Ways to Write a Perfect Ending](#)

[How to Craft Bittersweet Endings that Don't Turn Off Readers](#)

Checkpoint #14:

[Theme Mastery Course](#)

[The Show Don't Tell Course](#)

[How Subplots Can Magnify the Emotional Depth of Your Story](#)

[How to Meaningfully Connect Subplots to Your Story's Main Conflict](#)

[5 Editors Tackle the 12 Fatal Flaws of Fiction Writing by C.S. Lakin, et al.](#)

[Stein on Writing by Sol Stein](#)



Appendix: The Basic Marketing Plan

The Foundation

Incentive: Think of the best reason you can for people to follow you (because you pour your soul into providing the best training on a certain topic, because they'll receive an awesome free book, because you're out of this world at connecting with people and helping them feel special, etc.) and make that vision a reality. Give people value and get them to follow you. You can have people follow you on a blog, YouTube channel, email list, etc., but an email list is most important.

Conversion: Develop the perfect invitation for someone to follow you. (a landing page for email subscribers, a description of your blog to put on your homepage, etc.). Optimize this so that it converts as many people who see it as possible into long-term followers.

Traffic: Get your invitation for people to follow you in front of as many eyes as possible, especially those who are already interested in your topic.

Incentive: Find other writers and influencers and build connections with them through simple friendships and by helping them however you can. You aren't asking for anything in return, but you are building an army of people who will be much more willing to help you than otherwise. This same tactic applies to your normal followers as well. We'll refer to this entire group as your Friends.

Getting Your Friends to Help Grow Your Following

Incentive: Create a piece of content that your Friends will be excited to share. Whether people would naturally love to share it or not, come up with some way to incentivize them to do so (i.e., give them something in return).

Conversion: Try to make this a piece of content that people will really want and that they'll have to follow you to get (like a free e-course that prompts them to enter their email address). Alternatively, create a piece of content that people will want that doesn't require following you but will convert a large percentage into followers (e.g., a personality test with a popup for a free download containing extra information on the visitor's personality type if they leave their email address).

Launching a Book Successfully



Incentive: This is optional, but if you can come up with a reason for people to buy your book now rather than waiting and maybe forgetting to, that will increase your book sales.

Conversion: Get your book cover, description, etc. optimized so that anyone randomly scrolling through a list of books online or thumbing through them in a bookstore won't just pass by but will give your book serious consideration. For online buyers, also optimize your sales page to convert as many interested browsers into paying customers as possible.

Traffic: Contact your Friends through all your networks when you launch your book and build as much buzz as possible. Also, try to get your Friends to help you drive traffic to your book during the launch.