

Embracing the Power of the New Year to Finally Accomplish that Dream Goal

How to make it easy to write a book – or achieve any other big project

By Lynne Golodner

At a new year, many people resolve to do things better or differently than before. But that starts us off at a deficit, doesn't it? Because to be better, you have to know what was less than in the prior year. What if, this year, we instead look at how we can finally do what we've always wanted, and live the dream!

For years, I focused on raising my children and earning money. That was all I cared about, though in the background, I always called myself a writer. But as I approached midlife, I wondered if I was, in fact, a writer. *Prove it*, I was saying to myself.

I dreamed of focusing on my writing as my primary pursuit – but little voices in my head (parents, teachers, well-meaning mentors) chattered away with phrases like, *Can you make any money writing? Who's going to read your book? Are you even any good?*

I still needed to earn income for my family, but I loved writing more than any other pursuit. And, I knew I was good at it. I'd already made money as a journalist and written eight books! So I hatched a plan to flip my schedule to start each day writing, when I was fresh and energetic and at my most creative. I reserved my afternoons for the other work.

Start small. I began by writing for an hour early in the morning, before the sunrise, just to flex my creative muscles. Then I launched into my workday. Soon, an hour became two hours, and eventually, I was writing for three or four hours every morning. My writing improved because I made it a routine. It took time to make the switch complete, but one day, I realized, *I'm here. I've done it!* I never expected overnight success. I was patient, and I made changes in small, manageable chunks, so eventually I got there. And it felt great.

First, I wrote creative nonfiction essays. Short pieces, inspired by topics I was curious about or questions I sought answers for. Then, I dared to dream of writing a novel – which had been a goal of mine for decades, but it always seemed out of reach. My eight published books were poetry collections and nonfiction, researched tomes, which felt easier because I could write them in chunks.

Once I had a critical volume of essays, I shared them in critique groups and listened attentively to their feedback. I revised and edited until I felt the pieces were strong, and then I started the long road of submissions. I wanted to be published. I kept at it, shouldering rejections and celebrating acceptances, and before long, I had an impressive volume of published work.

What I learned from this was that it's not talent necessarily that will get you to your goal – it's **perseverance**. Keep showing up. Keep going, even when you doubt yourself (which will happen a lot!). That's why it's so important to **have a community of writing peers around you** cheering you on.

Still, I dreamt of writing fiction. So I took some writing classes to sharpen my skills and hone my voice – despite already having an MFA in creative writing and a first career as a journalist! That’s another tip – **never stop learning**. Sign up for classes, attend writealongs and readings, go on a writers retreat, surround yourself with writer friends, hire a writing coach. All of these investments in your talent will get you closer to achieving your goal of actually being a writer.

Finally, I felt ready to write the book. The best way to write a book is to **plan it out so you have a road map** to follow when the going gets tough. There’s something in book-writing called the saggy middle. That’s when the story lags, and you’re not sure where it should go, and you want to throw the pages to the ground and walk away. With a plan, you know where the story’s going, which makes it easier to get there.

I’ve done my share of “pantsing” – writing by the seat of my pants – and those projects do turn out in the end, but it takes a lot longer to get to good. That’s why I am a converted “plotter,” and now swear by the power of planning out my writing before I start typing words onto the page. Planning a book makes it easy to write because you do it in pieces.

During the Jewish High Holidays, there is this tradition called *tashlikh*, where people take bread crumbs to a body of flowing water and toss them in to represent their sins, floating away. When my children were little, I took them to a river near our home and instead of talking about sins, I framed the conversation in terms of “how do you want to be better in this new year?”

Let’s take it a step further because I cringe at the thought of judging my past self. Here I am today, standing in front of a blank canvas and an open calendar. I can do anything, be anything, achieve whatever goals I set my heart on. So what’s it going to be?

Whether you dream of writing a book or setting out on a new entrepreneurial path, you can do it. Just take it one task at a time, make a plan, and check off the steps as you achieve them. That’s the key to starting the year off with power and optimism. Knowing you can do something makes it a lot easier to actually pull it off.

Now’s a pretty good time to also say a word about manifesting. It may sound a bit “woo-woo,” but I believe that what we say out loud and what we think has a better chance of coming true because we are focusing on it. I tend to manifest things really fast, so I have to be careful what I focus on.

You, too, have this power. The words matter. Thinking them, saying them, writing them down. As you enter the new year, make a list of things you’ve always wanted to do. Prioritize them in order of importance. Then make specific, task-oriented notes about what you need to do to get there.

It’s that easy. Really. You can have and be anything – so what would make you happiest and most satisfied in 2024?