

Taking the Dead out of Deadlines

The following twelve steps will help the writer take the **dead** out of **deadline**. A working example follows the steps.

1. Use a calendar, either print or online, to track all progress.
2. Backup 60 days from the manuscript's due date to publisher and mark that date on the calendar as - "1st Draft Deadline." Backup 30 days from the manuscript's due date to publisher and mark that date on the calendar as "Target for Completed Manuscript." Already you are ahead of the publisher's deadline.
3. Examine your calendar. Assuming your manuscript has just been accepted, determine from now to the 1st Draft Deadline, how many days can you spend on the writing process? Exclude weekends, holidays, birthday, vacations, and conferences. Record the number of days available for the writing process before the 1st Draft Deadline and mark them on your calendar.
4. Determine how many of those total allocated days you'll need to spend in the prewriting phase. Include time for developing backstory, research, characterization, setting, plotting techniques, and any other information necessary to create an outstanding story. Record the number of prewriting days.
5. Subtract the number of prewriting days needed in item 4 from the total days allocated for the entire writing process as determined in item 3. Record the result.
6. Allocate twenty days for concentrated editing with five of those days for the manuscript to rest. Do not touch the project during those five days. The story is cooking. Subtract twenty from the result in item 5 and record that number.
7. Take the manuscript's total contracted word count and divide it by the new number established in item 6.

8. Study the result from item 7. This becomes your daily word count during the writing phase.
9. After completing your 1st draft, shift into the editing phase using whatever manner works best for you. Remember to give the manuscript a rest. You will be approaching the 1st Draft Deadline milestone.
10. While the manuscript is resting, engage beta readers for feedback. Once the manuscript has rested, use a voice to text solution for one or more listen/read-thru edit(s). The number of listens/reads will depend on the writer's comfort level with the resulting manuscript draft(s). Finally consider incorporating constructive comments from beta readers.
11. Wrap up and target emailing the completed manuscript 30 days before the publisher's due date. Take a breath, you've earned it!
12. Good news! If life has presented you with delays during the story construction, you have extra days to complete it. Doesn't it feel good?

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Here's a working example with dates/numbers plugged in to give an idea what this process looks like for a writer.

1. Writer has her calendar ready.
2. The manuscript is due to publisher September 1. So that makes the 1st Draft Deadline July 3. The Target Completed Manuscript date would be August 2nd.
3. Writer counts 85 days to work on the manuscript between now and 1st Draft Deadline.
4. Writer allocates 10 days to complete prewriting the manuscript.
5. 75 days remain to work on the manuscript.
6. 20 days to work on editing. 5 of these days are to let the manuscript rest. The writer now has 55 writing days.
7. For example, the word count is 90,000 words. 90,000 words divided by 55 days equals 1,636 words per day.
8. Writer is pleased with the daily word count of 1,636.
9. Edit, giving the manuscript your best.
10. Manuscript rests while engaging beta readers. With rest over, listen to manuscript, incorporate reader feedback & revise accordingly.
11. Email the manuscript to the editor!
12. Celebrate!

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