

StoryADay Writing Guides

SAVE OUR
STORYADAY

WORKBOOK

S.O.S.

Save Our StoryADay

There comes a moment in every StoryADay Challenge where you have to face a question: will I quit or will I find a way to continue?

Maybe it comes before you've started. Maybe it happens eight stories in. Maybe you have the best of intentions, but life gets in the way...

Whatever happens, remember this is your challenge and there is always a way for you to adapt it so that you can spend this month discovering how to be more productive, creative and fulfilled than ever before.

Sports psychologist Kevin Willis encourages athletes to ask themselves: today, am I trying to "be good" or "get better"?

- "Be good" is for match days, when you're performing, showing what you can do, being judged against other people.
- "Get better" is for practice days...this is where you need to let go of trying to be perfect, and instead allow yourself to experiment

The StoryADay Challenge is ALL about trying to get better. It's all about getting comfortable with writing even when it's not perfect (it can't be. Not if you're trying to write a story a day!)

It's about training ourselves to do the difficult work of allowing our first drafts to be, well, first draft-y and extremely imperfect.

Ready to make some perfectly-imperfect progress? Read on...

8 Ways To Save (or Support) Your StoryADay Challenge:

1. RESET YOUR GOALS

Only you know what's going on in your life. If you know (or have discovered) that you simply can't write a story a day, ask yourself what you could write. Three stories a week? One story, but worked on four days out of the week?

This is your challenge. Make it what you need it to be.

Some suggestions:

- Sketch out an idea each day. Commit to turning 12 of them into stories in the next 12 months
- Read every prompt and journal about what comes up for you
- Write character sketches or background scenes for a longer, in-progress work
- Write 3 days a week, or only on weekends, or skip Wednesdays...
- Start late and don't worry about the days you missed
- Write one story a week, every week this month. Don't quit!

2. FORGET THE PAST

Missed a day (or eight)? Forget it. Forgive it.

You have today.

Write something today.

3. FORGET THE FUTURE

31 stories in 31 days sounds like a lot – and it is. What if you're tired? What if you can't face the idea of having to do another story tomorrow? Well, what if the world ends and there is no tomorrow? What if aliens abduct all the writing materials on Earth tonight? Just write for today.

Tell yourself "I can choose to not write tomorrow. But today? Today I write."

4. FORGET YOUR AUDIENCE

Nothing is more paralyzing than thinking about what someone might think of your writing. On a first draft you must shut out all those voices. Don't worry about the snooty woman in your book club who thinks First Person stories are lazy. Don't worry that your sister will recognize herself in the portrait of the uptight pain in the posterior you are writing.

Write to entertain or amuse yourself, to exorcize your demons, to distract yourself from having that drink or eating that fourth slice of pie. Whatever.

You do not need to share these stories with anyone. Write for yourself.

5. WRITE RUBBISH

Really.

You are allowed to write something truly terrible. Because if you allow yourself to write badly, you can laugh at yourself, and laughter is powerful voodoo. And then you can learn what not to do tomorrow.

And, the chances are, somewhere in that steaming midden of middling prose, will be a phrase, a clause, a character, an image — something — that you're just a little bit proud of and that will make you come back and try again tomorrow.

6. USE THE PROMPTS

Even if you hate the idea of writing to prompts—even if you sit staring at each one for ages before anything comes—prompts can be a great way of getting you started on your day's writing

Even if it's just to shout, "This is stupid. I'm writing X, instead!"

But do consider using the prompts to push you outside your comfort zone (it helps with the whole 'It doesn't have to be perfect' thing!)

7. READ & COMMENT ON SOMEONE ELSE'S STORIES

Go to the comments under the prompts and find a place where someone has shared a story. Leave a comment. Admire the double bravery of your fellow writer who both wrote a story and put it out into the world. Encourage them. Imagine how it might feel to get a little of that love in return. Want it? Write something!

8. GET A BUDDY

If you do read and comment on some other StoryADay participants' stories, you'll probably find that you've just built yourself a personal cheering squad.

It's a pretty awesome, supportive community here at StoryADay. Comment on someone's story and they're liable to come looking for yours. Ask them to check in on your progress and they will. Knowing that someone is waiting for your story (or to see your celebratory "I wrote today!" post) can work wonders for your productivity!

People are sharing their struggles and triumphs and tips for getting over the difficult parts. The community comments are a great resource!

[Want more community? Consider joining the StoryADay Superstars](#)

Now What?

You've spent some time considering what you'll do to make this challenge work for you. Now it's time to take action.

I'd love to hear from you: [post a comment here](#) and tell us what you decided to do.

Keep writing,



Julie Duffy, Founder & Director, StoryADay

NOTES

A large area of the page is filled with a grid of small dots, intended for students to write their notes.

