

# RWR

## ROMANCE WRITERS REPORT

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**Goal Setting: Work Smarter, Not Harder**

**Crafting Goals and Business Plans for Novel Writers: Innovative Approaches and Best Practices**

**Five Tips for Turning Your Writing Goals Inside Out and Upside Down When You Feel Stuck**

**Chart Your Course: Find Direction and Purpose with Goals**

**How to Make the Most of Your Writing Time**



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## Contributors

### Leslie J. Wyatt

Leslie J. Wyatt knows deep in her bones where the mystery lives that the experience of romance gets better as you grow older, just like almost everything else (except eyebrows, of course). She's been a professional writer since 1997, and in addition to her romance novels with Sibylline Digital First, has published three historical novels for middle graders, edited and contributed to a nonfiction book about hobby farms, and her portfolio includes more than 1000 articles, stories, and essays in various magazines, websites, anthologies and more. A presenter at literature festivals, writing conferences, writing workshops, podcasts and other writing related events, you can find her at [lesliejwyatt.com](http://lesliejwyatt.com), [@lesliejwyatt](https://twitter.com/lesliejwyatt) and [@artfortherestofus](https://www.instagram.com/artfortherestofus) or hand-in-hand with her hubby by their campfire admiring just how many stars she has yet to discover in the night sky.

### Diana Georgelos

Diana is in the process of writing her first book. To develop her craft, she has taken over a thousand writing classes including many on the topic of plotting. When not writing, she works as a business consultant. She helps companies create and launch new products as well as develop marketing and advertising strategies to support those products.

### Ann Kellett

Ann has 30+ years of full-time, award-winning writing and editing experience, and is hard at work on her first romantic suspense novel.

### Lisa Kober

Lisa Kober is an inspirational romance novelist with a unique blend of business acumen and heartfelt storytelling. Armed with an undergraduate degree in Management Behavioral Science with a concentration in Small Business Management, Lisa infuses her novels with the perfect balance of human connection and entrepreneurial flair. Known as The Romance Architect, she draws from your skills in precision constructing love stories and adding them to your business plans. Her characters often navigate the emotional intricacies of love while building their dreams—much like Lisa herself. As a romance author, she encourages her readers to embrace the unexpected, celebrate independence, and always leave room for love—even when it's found in the most unconventional of places. Her novels are more than love stories—they are celebrations of individuality, freedom, and the beauty of human connection in a modern world.

### Kristina Knight

Kristina Knight is the bestselling author of more than 20 books. She began her writing career as a radio and television journalist, working for NBC affiliates throughout the midwest as a reporter, anchor, and producer. After covering everything from a serial killer's capture to the National Finals Rodeo, she decided to leave the TV biz in favor of writing stories she was passionate about. Today, Kristina is a grant writer as well as published romance author. During her fiction time, she writes romances filled with great characters, fun communities, and always with a happily ever after.

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# Message from the President

BY JACKI RENÉE



December is the perfect time to pause and reflect on your accomplishments in 2024. Writing can sometimes feel like a lonely pursuit, but every word written, every manuscript revised or completed, and every manuscript acquired or published is an accomplishment worth celebrating. This is something I do every year as the clock counts down to the start of the New Year, and I encourage you to take pride in your own 2024 journey.

At the start of each new year, I take an intentional approach instead of making a list of resolutions. I write down specific actions I will take to bring myself closer to my vision. I encourage you to find a quiet moment before the season's celebrations begin to do the same. One thing I have learned in my pursuits is that success is built one intentional step at a time, and small, consistent actions lead to bigger results.

I also find myself reflecting on the journey our organization has taken in 2024. This year has been one of change and a renewed focus on our community—a community that unites us as romance writers, fosters connections, shares knowledge, and supports one another as we pursue our visions. With every interaction I have

with members, I am reminded of the strength of our community. Being a part of RWA means you are surrounded by people who understand the challenges and triumphs of a career in romance writing.

As we start a new chapter in 2025, let's continue to uplift each other and our organization by focusing on the things that are most important: advocacy, education, and supporting the diversity of romance writers and romance stories that make this industry so successful.

Here's a business tip for 2025: Success isn't always measured in dollars and cents. There's more than one way to achieve a return on your investment, especially with your RWA membership. In the romance writing industry, one of the most valuable ROIs is building connections. Become active at the chapter and national levels. Engage with members outside of your immediate network. Those connections can introduce you to new resources, fresh ideas, and a broader perspective of the romance genre today. This ROI enriches your craft and career.

As we move into this season of celebration, I send you all my warmest wishes for a season filled with joy and inspiration.

Here's to closing 2024 with gratitude and stepping into 2025 with intention, resilience, and continued membership in a thriving community.

Jacki Renée  
2024/2025 RWA President

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# News & Updates

BITE-SIZED INFO ON THE INDUSTRY

## PUBLISHING

### Internet Archive Copyright Case Ends Without Supreme Court Review

*Publishers Weekly*

After more than four years of litigation, a closely watched copyright case over the Internet Archive's scanning and lending of library books is finally over after Internet Archive officials decided against exercising their last option, an appeal to the Supreme Court. The deadline to file an appeal was December 3.

With a consent judgment already entered to settle claims in the case, the official end of the litigation now triggers an undisclosed monetary payment to the plaintiff publishers, which, according to the Association of American Publishers, will "substantially" cover the publishers' attorney fees and costs in the litigation.

"While we are deeply disappointed with the Second Circuit's opinion in Hachette v. Internet Archive, the Internet Archive has decided not to pursue Supreme Court review," reads a December 4 statement posted on the Internet Archive's blog.

[Read More.](#)

### HarperCollins CEO Brian Murray Talks Hot Print Book Sales and AI

*Publishers Weekly*

The ongoing strength of print books and the possible uses of AI were among the topics discussed by HarperCollins CEO Brian Murray on December 10 at the UBS Global Media and Communications Conference. While sales of digital formats have grown, "the strength of print books has been surprising," Murray said.

The most recent example of the format's resiliency is from this holiday season, Murray said, pointing to the willingness of readers to buy deluxe editions of mostly backlist titles. Deluxe editions of such HC titles as *Wicked* and books in the *Bridgerton* series "are selling like crazy," Murray said, and helping to drive the overall market.

[Read More.](#)

### Sourcebooks Launches In-House Audio Program

*Publishers Weekly*

Sourcebooks has partnered with Penguin Random House Audio to launch an audio program, Sourcebooks Audio, through which the publisher will produce audio content in-house via "editorially independent imprints" within PRH Audio, per a release. The company plans to release more than 40 titles in total next year, and roughly 250 titles through 2026. PRH is the majority owner of Sourcebooks.

[Read More.](#)



## The Bookseller redesigns weekly magazine to bring authors and books to the front

### *The Bookseller*

The Bookseller has redesigned its printed magazine bringing books and authors to the front of the weekly edition for the first time. The issue opens with an interview with Natasha Brown, author of the bestselling *Assembly*, talking about her forthcoming new book *Universality*, before its regular Paperback, and Children's Previews. The relaunch issue also includes for the first time a ranking of editors, based on the sales success of their books, as well as prize wins.

[Read more.](#)



# publisheralley

## Member Benefit

Publisher Alley is a web-based sales reporting tool that includes all of the sales and inventory data from Baker & Taylor. Baker & Taylor is the world's largest book distributor! We work with publishers to provide their book products to all markets. Publisher Alley allows authors to see what titles libraries are buying on a daily basis. Publisher Alley is the BEST tool available for analyzing sales on your titles and competitive titles by subject area, sales level, publication date, price point, reviews, author affiliations, interdisciplinary identifiers and sales channel. Full bibliographic data, including cover images and table of contents is available for all titles.

Book sales data serves several needs:

- Easily produce market research for book proposals, based on sales of comparable titles. Approach the right publishers for each project.
- Evaluate the potential of projects for self-publication: learn what sells in which markets, and at what price points.
- Locate expert authors as sources for newspaper or magazine stories, or identify trends related to world events.

*\*Paid Advertisement\**

# RWA 2025 Conference



## Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada July 16-19, 2025

Mark your calendars for July 16–19, 2025, and join us at the stunning Niagara Falls for an unforgettable experience! Whether you're new to romance writing, an established author, or anywhere in between, there's something for everyone—dynamic workshops, exciting community activities, and much more to elevate your career and connect with fellow writers.

**Don't wait—early bird pricing is available until February 14th!**

**Register now and join us for an unforgettable experience! [Click here to learn more and register today.](#)**

## Call For Workshop Proposals!

We're already looking ahead to the RWA2025 Conference, and we want YOU to be a part of it! This is your chance to share your expertise, inspire fellow authors, and help shape an unforgettable event that will empower writers at every stage of their journey.

**Submit your workshop proposal today!**

If you've got a topic you're passionate about—whether it's about writing, publishing, marketing, or anything else that helps authors succeed—we want to hear from you. Here's your chance to lead a session and connect with the vibrant romance writing community. [Click here to submit your proposal.](#)





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# Indie Author WEEKEND Romance Writers of America®

You can't miss Indie Author Weekend—a two-day virtual self-publishing conference on January 25–26, 2025 designed to ignite your indie author potential! Whether you're starting your journey to self-publish a romance novel or a seasoned author looking to level up, this event connects you with key industry experts who'll provide straight answers to propel your career forward.

Your golden ticket to self-publishing success awaits.

Bonus: Registrants get lifetime access to all recorded sessions.

**[REGISTER TODAY!](#)**

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# Goal Setting: Work Smarter, Not Harder

BY DIANA GEORGELOS

We, as story tellers, are well versed in the importance of setting goals for our characters. Every protagonist ideally has a goal (something they want to achieve) by the end of the story. Over the course of the story, a reader tracks the main character's progress. They see if the hero/heroine is getting closer to or further away from achieving their goal. And at the climax, they see if the protagonist will finally achieved the goal or not.

As writers, not only do we need to create goals for our characters, we need to set them for ourselves too. Setting goals is important for writers, because we need to figure out what we hope to achieve in our writing lives. And when I say writing life, I mean any activity related to the creation, marketing, and sale of any romance story. These can include: story development, taking classes, research, writing, getting feedback, editing, marketing, sales, etc. We can set goal in any of these areas that we think it would be helpful to us to do so.

## **WHY IS GOAL SETTING IMPORTANT? BECAUSE IT HELPS US TO WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER.**

When we set goals, we have a clear idea of what we want to accomplish, and how we plan to do that. We are able potentially able to be more productive and save time, money, and personal energy in the process. While there are many different approaches one can use to set goals, I enjoy setting SMART1 goals.

## **WHAT ARE SMART GOALS?**

Business owners widely use SMART goals to create strategic action plans, otherwise known as goals, for their companies. SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. The words associated with each letter varies depending on whose framework one is using.

Because we are all writers, I've decided to provide examples of SMART goals for a set of characters in a romance story and examples of SMART goals for a writer who is writing a first draft of a romance story. I thought it would be a fun way to illustrate how SMART goals work.

### **1.SPECIFIC**

How you define your goal, guides where you will apply your effort. You want to make sure you know specifically what you are trying to achieve to make sure your action steps are getting you to where you want to go.

**Non-Specific Story Goal:** Two people are traveling cross country. This raises a number of questions: Who is traveling? Where are they going? What mode of transportation are they using? Why are the traveling? When do they need to arrive?

**Specific Story Goal:** The best man and the maid of honor are traveling together from New York



City to San Francisco, by car, to stand up for each of their respective best friends. The wedding is happening on New Year's Eve and they are leaving the day after Christmas.

**Non-Specific Writing Goal:** I want to be a writer.

**Specific Writing Goal:** I want to write an 80,000-word first draft of my romance story over the course of a year.



## 2. MEASURABLE

If you quantify a goal, you can measure the progress you are making toward it. This requires some kind of record keeping. A writer can track multiple variables related to their writing session: time of day, location, time spent writing, words written, writing speed (words per minute), number of beverages consumed during writing session, number of breaks taken, etc. The key here is not to track every possible metric. Only track the ones that matter to you. When we analyze the data as we go along, we can see if we are on track to meet our deadlines or not. Also, not everything worth doing in life needs to be tracked.

**Non-Measurable Story Goal:** The couple gets in the car and starts driving. They don't measure how many hours they drive a day. They don't

measure how many miles they drive a day.

**Measurable Story Goal:** The couple needs to drive 3,270 miles to get from New York to San Francisco. On average, it takes 52 hours to make the drive. They've decided to drive ten hours a day and follow the speed limit. At the end of the day, they can check and see how many hours they drove and how many miles they traveled. They can see based on the progress they are making whether they will get there in time or not.

**Non-Measurable Writing Goal:** I want to write every day.

**Measurable Writing Goal:** I want to write for 15 minutes every day, or I want to write 200 words every day. You can track every day how long you wrote and how many words you wrote. You can see if you are on track to meet your deadline for finishing your draft.

## 3. ACHIEVABLE

Is achieving this goal realistic given the resources (time, money, energy, etc.) that you have available to allocate toward your project. Are you setting attainable or unattainable goals given your current circumstances? Are you setting yourself up for success or failure?

**Non-Achievable Story Goal:** A massive snow storm hits on Christmas Day. The couple does not have snow tires, so they have to drive below the speed limit. The maid of honor, a native New Yorker, doesn't know how to drive, and can't take any shifts. The best man wants to stop and see his friends in several cities along the way. While this creates great conflict for a story, it doesn't make the goal easy to achieve.

**Achievable Story Goal:** A massive snow storm hits on Christmas Day. The couple has snow tires and four-wheel drive. The maid of honor and the best men each invite a friend to come along so there are more drivers. They decide to only stop for eating, gas and sleeping. Not nearly as exciting a story, but in real life, this approach makes it easier to achieve the goal and get to the wedding on time.

**Non-Achievable Writing Goal:** I want to write for four hours every day, and I only have one hour of free time during my day to write.

**Achievable Writing Goal:** I want to write for 15 minutes every day and I have an hour-long block of time available for me to write every day.

#### 4. RELEVANT

Are you working on the right tasks to help you make progress toward that specific goal. Are the things you are expending effort on the right things? You can be busy at work, but if you aren't doing the right things at the right time, it doesn't help you achieve the goal you are working towards.

**Non-Relevant Story Goal:** Although the couple needs to drive from New York City to San Francisco in the middle of the snowstorm, they decide to take a detour. They visit Washington D.C. because they've both always wanted to visit the Smithsonian.

**Relevant Story Goal:** The couple wants to find the most efficient path, so they decide to use their navigation system to optimize the route they will take to ensure they have the most favorable weather conditions.

**Non-Relevant Writing Goal:** I want to complete an 80,000-word draft of my romance story in a year, and I spend my scheduled writing time working on writing a sci-fi story instead.

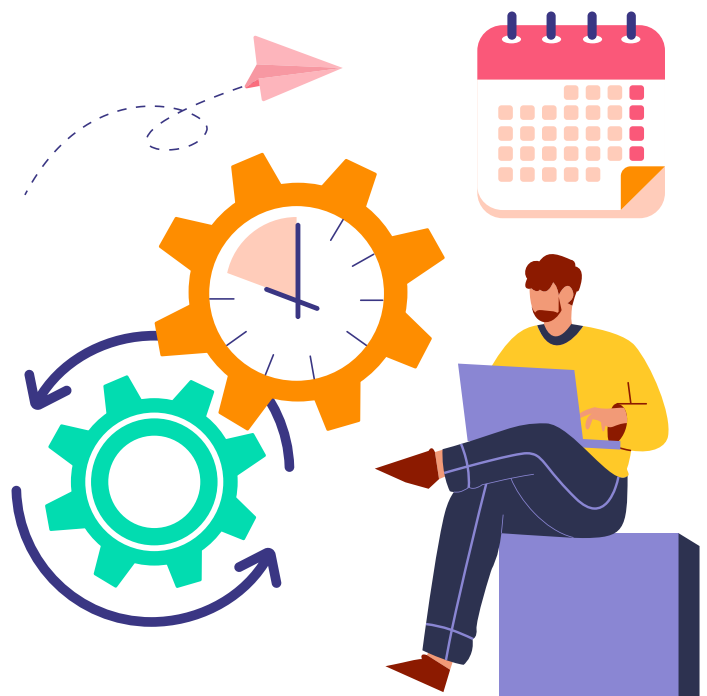
**Relevant Writing Goal:** I want to complete an 80,000-word draft of my romance story in a year and I spend the free hour I have in my schedule writing my romance story every day.

#### 5. TIME-BOUND

This tells you when you expect the project to be completed. If there is no deadline, you can continue to work on something forever without finishing it.

**Non-Time-Bound Story Goal:** The couple has a long as they want to make the drive cross country.

**Time-Bound Story Goal:** The rehearsal is the day before the wedding and the wedding is on New Year's Eve. These are the factors that are the outer bounds of the timeline.





**Non-Time-Bound Writing Goal:** I am going to write my 80,000-word draft, but I haven't specified when it will be completed. I can take as many years as I want to finish the first draft.

**Time-Bound Writing Goal:** I want to complete an 80,000-word draft of my romance story and I'm giving myself a year to do so.

So, to recap, setting SMART goals helps us to work smarter, not harder. If we know what we want to achieve, we can focus our activities in that direction, track our progress and meet our deadlines. And along the way, we set ourselves up for success.

## References

1SMART goal is a type of goal setting popularized by business leaders, Peter Drucker, George Doran, and Kenneth Blanchard.

Peter Drucker, *The Practice of Management*, First Edition, (Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1954).

George Doran, "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives", *Management Review* 70, no. 11, (1981): 35-36.

Kenneth Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level*, First Edition, (Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2006).



## RWA Writer Service List

It no longer matters if an author works with a publisher or not, they still have to have their book edited, promoted on social media, advertised, and so much more. Since every writer wants help, RWA's Writer Services List offers members a single location to find the support team they need for a great book with a long shelf life.

RWA's website annually garners more than 350,000 sessions and nearly one million page views, of which 79 percent are new users. As an established trade association with a growing membership, RWA's Writer Services List is the perfect place for focused advertising to those who need your services the most: authors.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

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# Crafting Goals and Business Plans for Novel Writers: Innovative Approaches and Best Practices

BY LISA KOBER

The journey of a romance novelist is a blend of creativity, passion, and determination. Like any artistic endeavor, it requires thoughtful goal-setting and structured business planning to thrive in the competitive publishing landscape. By taking a strategic approach to their career, romance writers can nurture their creative ambitions while ensuring sustainable business growth. Below are innovative and best practice strategies for creating successful goals and business plans, ensuring artistic fulfillment and financial success.

## 1. Defining Clear, Specific Goals

As with any profession, defining clear, actionable goals is the first step toward success in romance writing. These goals should be both creative and business-oriented. Writers often focus on artistic milestones, such as finishing a manuscript or improving their narrative voice, but successful authors also prioritize goals that support the business side of their careers.

**SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) are precious. For example, rather than setting a vague goal like "finish my novel," a SMART goal would be "complete the first draft of my 80,000-word romance novel by December 31, writing 2,000 words a week."

Setting clear benchmarks helps romance writers track their progress and maintain motivation.

These structured goals help them balance creativity and productivity, leading to long-term success.

## 2. Building a Strong Author Brand

In today's digital landscape, authors are not just storytellers—they are brands. Romance writers, in particular, must consider how their work is marketed and perceived by readers. To build a brand, consider elements like your author's voice, cover design aesthetics, and consistent themes across your novels.

Successful romance authors like **Nora Roberts** and **Julia Quinn** have carefully cultivated their



brands, which evoke specific emotions and experiences. Romance readers often seek authors whose work offers consistent satisfaction, and establishing a solid brand helps foster that connection.

#### **Practical Steps:**

- Create an author website highlighting your books, voice, and journey.
- Maintain a consistent social media presence where you engage with readers and share insights into your writing process.
- Develop a mailing list to keep your fans updated on book releases, exclusive content, and personal milestones.

### **3. Innovative Marketing and Reader Engagement**

Innovative marketing techniques are essential to standing out in the crowded romance genre. The romance community thrives on connection and loyalty, so finding ways to engage with your readership directly can be transformative. **Book bloggers, podcasts, and bookstagrammers** are great tools for reaching readers organically.

Romance authors should also consider:

- **Collaborative efforts** with other authors: Boxed sets, anthologies, or cross-promotions can boost visibility.
- Hosting **virtual book tours** and **live Q&A sessions** with readers to discuss themes, character development, and your writing journey.
- Offering **exclusive content** such as behind-the-scenes looks at your writing process, character sketches, or early chapters through platforms like **Patreon**.

Successful romance writers frequently interact with their fans through newsletters, social media,

or live events. Reader engagement builds a loyal community, which can translate into higher book sales and sustained interest in your work.

### **4. Treating Writing as a Business: Financial Planning & Self-Publishing Strategy**

Romance novelists often overlook the financial side of writing, yet effective budgeting and business planning are crucial. Writers should develop a business mindset and consider **income diversification, self-publishing costs, and royalties**. Understanding these areas can empower writers to take control of their careers.

For self-publishing, it's essential to budget for professional services such as:

- **Editing** (both developmental and copyediting),
- **Cover design**, and
- **Marketing campaigns**.

Consider innovative platforms like **Kickstarter** to fund projects or **KDP Select** for exclusive Amazon releases. Some romance authors also thrive through hybrid models, combining traditional and self-publishing. This approach allows authors to retain creative control while leveraging the resources of a traditional publisher.

Furthermore, diversification of income streams—such as **audiobooks, international translations, and merchandise**—can provide additional financial security.

### **5. Staying Adaptable and Embracing New Trends**

The publishing industry is dynamic and continually evolving, especially in romance. Romance writers must remain flexible and open to new trends, from **tropes** (e.g., enemies-to-lovers or second-chance romance) to **formats**



(e.g., serialized fiction platforms like Radish or Wattpad).

Authors who succeed in this genre often embrace new technologies and platforms. For instance, some romance writers have leveraged **AI tools** for plot structuring and market analysis, while others explore **interactive fiction** where readers influence the story's direction.

Additionally, authors should continuously monitor market trends and analyze popular subgenres and niche interests. Being informed helps writers craft books that align with readers' desires while maintaining originality.

## 6. Cultivating Resilience and Self-Care

Lastly, while success in romance writing requires business acumen and marketing savvy, emotional resilience and self-care are just as important. Writing is a deeply personal and often solitary profession. Romance novelists who deal with stories of vulnerability, emotion, and intimacy can be prone to burnout if they don't prioritize their mental and emotional health. Cultivating resilience is key to staying empowered and determined in your writing journey.

Practical self-care for romance writers includes:

- Setting boundaries around writing time to prevent burnout.
- Creating **support networks** with fellow writers who understand the unique challenges of the genre.
- Celebrating small victories, whether completing a chapter or receiving positive reader feedback.

In the words of bestselling romance author **Sarah MacLean**, "Romance is about joy. It's about hope." As a romance writer, nurturing your

creative joy is essential—not only for your success but also for the love stories you wish to share with the world. Let this joy and hope inspire you in your writing journey.

## Conclusion

Success as a romance novelist is an artful blend of goal-setting, creative expression, and business acumen. By defining clear objectives, building an authentic brand, innovating with marketing strategies, treating writing as a business, and staying adaptable to industry trends, romance writers can craft a career as fulfilling as the love stories they create. Above all, embracing resilience and self-care ensures that your passion for storytelling remains a sustainable and joyful endeavor.

## References:

- "How to Build Your Author Brand," *Writer's Digest*, accessed 2024.
- MacLean, Sarah. "The Importance of Joy in Romance Writing," *Romance Writers of America*, 2023.
- Roberts, Nora. "On Writing and Building a Lasting Career," *Book Riot*, 2022.

This response was based heavily on real-world examples of best practices from the romance writing industry, including specific strategies used by authors and practical business advice.



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# Five Tips for Turning Your Writing Goals Inside Out and Upside Down When You Feel Stuck

BY ANN KELLETT

There's a lot of great advice for the writing life: write every day, track your progress, write first and edit later, and so on.

But too often, the writing goals that served us well early on suddenly lose their magic. We find ourselves in a creative rut and even the best advice cannot seem to help us make the words flow.

If that's the case with you, you might want to consider these bold—even contrarian—approaches to getting your writing goals back on track.

## **Try forgetting all about your writing goals.**

Consider a “writing goal fast” by deliberately ignoring your goals for a week, a month, or whatever period seems right for you. Once the fast is over, review your list of goals (you ARE writing them down, right?) and update them as needed.

As you think about each one, pay attention to your gut feelings and emotions. You might find that some drain your energy or zap your enthusiasm, leaving you less motivated instead of more. Others might feel burdensome or irrelevant. In these cases, the problem usually is that the goal either is out of alignment with your

strengths and values and therefore obstructs your creative flow or it does not serve your long-term creative vision. These are the goals that need special attention.

Getting the nagging reminders about what you should have done by now out of your head for a while can help you articulate more clearly what you truly want to achieve.

**Try producing “anti-goals” that clarify what you don't want.** Setting “anti-goals” about things you want to avoid will help you refine the goals for what you want to accomplish—especially if you are a perfectionist. This could be anything, from “I will not re-read any of it until I get the entire draft finished” to “I will not worry about my hero's backstory until I get more of the plot finalized and know what would work best” to “I will not rewrite any scene more than two times.”

In addition, many of us struggle with goals that specify an objective, measurable outcome, such as finishing our work in progress by a certain date. In this case, “anti-goals” could instead focus on the creative journey itself by developing the knowledge and skills that lead to those outcomes. This could be learning more about point of view, setting aside time to read more romance best-sellers, or whatever strikes your fancy.

Emphasizing our interior growth and development over arbitrary, external milestones can re-ignite that creative flow. Setting boundaries like this helps you stay focused and thus more creative instead of spending too much time on unproductive efforts.

**Try “reverse brainstorming” about ways to succeed at failing.** Instead of focusing on ideas for accomplishing your overarching writing and publishing goal, come up with every way imaginable, no matter how crazy sounding, that you could sabotage your success. This could bring to light previously unnoticed issues, fears or obstacles that you could then seek to improve.

First, define what is directly opposite your writing goal, and then list all the things that could make this happen. Next, push yourself to add more ideas to the list, even if they are silly or even impossible. Don't hold back! The idea is to be imaginative, not practical. Then review the list to find any patterns or themes that emerge. If any do, think about whether they indicate real goal-related weaknesses that you might want to overcome.

Whether the adjustment needed is major or trivial, the effort to align your writing goals with your personal strengths and values—and thus make your goal more attainable—will be well worth it.

**Try being mindfully inconsistent rather than mindlessly consistent.** Traditional writing goals emphasize consistency: write for the same amount of time every day, write even when you don't know what comes next, and so on. If this amount of consistency stifles your creativity, don't keep heading down that path to burnout.

Instead, leverage the nonlinear ebb and flow of

your creative juices and the rhythm of your day-to-day life to maximize productivity. You could have the goal of writing more intensively in shorter bursts when you have lots of energy, for example, or dedicate your time to a single focus, such as brainstorming, editing, or writing down your subplot or characters' backstories. For an even greater stretch, try your hand at writing in a different romance subgenre.

The idea is to set goals around the factors that inspire—instead of stifle—your creativity so that you can develop the skill of adaptability in goal setting as your work and creative vision evolve.

**Focus on ridiculously easy “non-goals.”** Set writing goals that are so small and easy that you know you'll breeze through them. Writing a hundred words, for example—less than half of a double-spaced, typed page—is so simple that it might seem unworthwhile. So, too, is writing only in five-minute chunks.

But the beauty of this type of goal is that you'll not only reach it more often than not, but will far





exceed it. Each completed effort builds confidence and creates a sense of progress without the daunting pressure of worrying about achieving your overall writing goal. In addition, it helps overcome the temptation to procrastinate.

Before you know it, these tiny chunks of productivity will add up to something substantial that makes your larger writing goal feel fun as well as achievable and turns your writing goal into a creative habit rather than a momentum-killing mandate.

In short, our writing goals should be tools that aid us, not burdens that weigh us down. Writing goals that emerge from a thoughtful, outside-the-box mindset are likely to help us much more than arbitrary, boring goals that others thrust upon us. And if anyone can turn writing goals into a fun, creative, and productive exercise, we can. After all, we're writers!

## Want to write for the Romance Writers Report?

Submit your pitch and earn up to \$500 if your article is selected and published.

[Click here to submit your pitch!](#)

The Romance Writers Report Committee seeks articles for all levels and tracks of writing. We welcome submissions from beginner to expert authors, and aim to include a diverse array of subject matter expertise, including craft, industry, marketing, business, and more. While articles of all themes are welcome, here are some areas that will be given specific focus in upcoming issues:

- *January 2025 - Book signings (submit by November 30, 2024)*
- *February 2025 - Love Scenes (submit by December 31, 2024)*
- *March 2025 - The 5 Senses (submit by January 31, 2025)*



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# Chart Your Course: Find Direction and Purpose with Goals

BY KRISTINA KNIGHT

## Looking Back to Move Forward

For years, I viewed writing as a relentless pursuit of publication, a destination to be reached at all costs. A destination that would have finality. This mindset, while well-intentioned, often left me feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and ultimately unfulfilled. It was as if I was constantly chasing a carrot dangling just out of reach.

A pivotal moment came when my daughter entered the 8th grade. I had been a Published Author - with a Big 5 House no less - for about seven years. I had published over 15 books, had a small but mighty reader base, and an engaged social media following. By all accounts, I was A Successful Author.

Instead, I felt like I was lost while holding the map that showed I was at my destination.

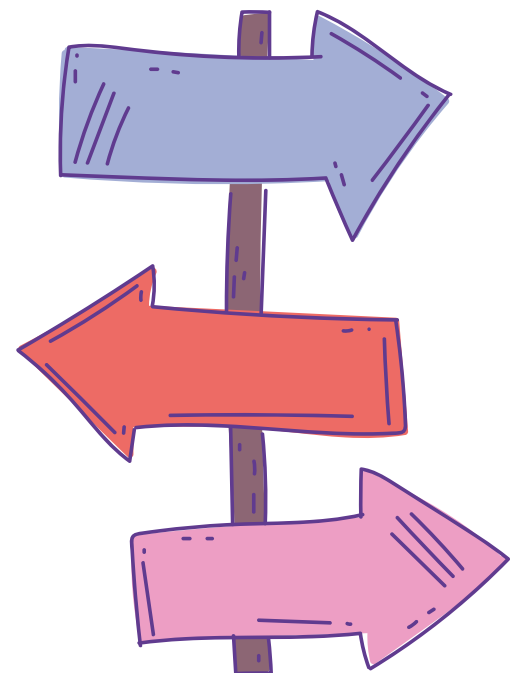
What happened when my daughter started 8th grade? I learned about the Growth Mindset. My daughter's teacher was very focused on learning, but didn't seem to care about grades. Imagine my shock when he said grades were not part of his curriculum, and instead "mastery of subject" - and excitement and enjoyment of the class - were paramount. I didn't get it. How did he expect to measure mastery of a subject without a gradable baseline of points allotted to correct answers? And how can excitement and enjoyment be graded?

She grumbled. I grumbled. And then a weird thing happened.

She stopped grumbling.

She started talking about the subject matter - without being asked. She asked questions about how something at home was similar in scope to class. Made connections that she hadn't in previous years when she was focused on getting the answers right instead of learning the why of the subject matter.

By encouraging students to embrace challenges, persevere through setbacks, ask more questions, and view mistakes as opportunities for learning, this teacher taught my daughter to stop thinking of the grade as her destination.



Inspired - and honestly sick and tired of feeling stressed out when it came to this career I love - I began to reframe how I approached writing. I shifted my attention to the process of writing itself and started to reflect on and celebrate small victories along the way. I also became more forgiving of myself when I encountered obstacles, recognizing that setbacks are a natural part of the creative process.

By adopting a growth mindset, I not only achieved my writing goals but also rediscovered the joy of writing. The journey, with all its twists and turns, became more rewarding than the destination itself.

### **Flexibility and Adaptability: The Navigational Tools of a Writer**

Along the map of a writer's life, goals are the guiding stars. They illuminate the path, offering direction and purpose. Finish The Book. Publish The Book. Sell The Book. Sell X Books To Hit a List. You know these goals. The problem is that the journey of writing is vast and ever-changing, and rigid, inflexible goals can often lead to frustration and disappointment. Instead, we need to embrace the power of flexibility and adaptability, allowing our goals to evolve with us.

Just as a skilled hiker adjusts their course to account for bad weather or rough terrain, so too must a writer be willing to adapt their goals. Life's unexpected twists and turns can derail even the most carefully laid plans. Perhaps a pressing deadline arises, a health issue intervenes, or a sudden burst of inspiration diverts your attention. Rather than viewing these obstacles as setbacks, consider them opportunities for growth and redirection.

By remaining flexible, you can adjust your goals to accommodate these changes. For example, if a major project is looming, you might temporarily scale back on smaller commitments.

Conversely, if a creative surge strikes, you could seize the moment and write more than originally planned.

Remember, the goal is not merely to reach a specific destination, but to enjoy the journey. By embracing flexibility and adaptability, you can navigate the winding roads of the writing world with grace and ease.

### **Small Wins: The Fuel for Your Writing Journey**

With the journey being the goal, how do you keep yourself motivated to keep going - especially if it's started to rain and you forgot the rain gear? It's easy to get caught up in the pursuit of grand achievements, overlooking the smaller victories that fuel our writer fire and shelter us along the writer's journey.





Every completed page, every polished paragraph, and every finished chapter is a cause for celebration. By acknowledging and appreciating these small successes, we cultivate a sense of accomplishment and motivation. This is writer fuel. When we focus on the journey, rather than solely on the destination, we're more likely to stay inspired and engaged.

Here are a few examples of small wins that you can celebrate:

- Hitting your daily writing goal
- Finishing a draft of a short story or essay
- Receiving positive feedback on your work
- Overcoming a specific writing challenge - like conquering the Oxford Comma
- Joining a writing group or attending a workshop

To celebrate these small wins, try the following:

- Reward yourself: Treat yourself to something you enjoy, such as a favorite snack, a relaxing bath, or a short break
- Share your accomplishment with others: Tell a friend, family member, or writing buddy about your success
- Reflect on your progress: Take a moment to appreciate how far you've come
- Visualize your future goals: Imagine yourself achieving your long-term writing aspirations
- Set another objective: Use your small win as momentum to push on to the next reflection point on your journey

## **The Art of Celebration: Nurturing Your Writing Journey**

Every pushpin marked on your writer's map, every piece of thread connecting one reflection

point to the next, contributes to the map's detail. Think of it as changing a topographical map into a 3-D representation of the places you've been so far. To do this, you have to first learn to recognize each of the individual threads on the journey. Do you know all of your small wins? If not, here are a few to get you started:

- Overcoming writer's block
- Experimenting with a new writing style or genre
- Learning a new writing technique
- Finding a quiet, productive writing space
- Building a strong writer's network

To celebrate these small wins, consider the following:

- Take a break: Reward yourself with a short break to rest and recharge
- Share your accomplishment with others: Tell a friend, family member, or writing group about your success
- Reflect on your progress: Take a moment to appreciate how far you've come and the obstacles you've overcome
- Visualize your future objectives: Where do you want to go next? Maybe it's a bestseller list, but maybe you want to stretch your writing wings and try a new genre, or a new style of storytelling
- Set a new goal: Use your small win as momentum to set a new, achievable goal for your journey

By celebrating these small victories, you'll stay motivated, build confidence, and ultimately achieve your larger writing goals.

## The Journey as the Destination: A Writer's Perspective

We've all heard the phrase, "It's the journey, not the destination." But how often do we truly embrace this philosophy in our lives, especially when it comes to our writing goals? We set our sights on the distant horizon, a published novel, a bestseller list, or a prestigious award. While these aspirations can provide motivation, they can also create undue stress and anxiety.

Remember the last time you set a major life goal? Perhaps it was graduating college, getting married, or buying a house. Did you find that once you reached that milestone, the satisfaction was fleeting?

That is because the true reward lies not in the final product, but in the journey itself.

Growth Mindset, as my daughter's teacher said, is about the learning process and not the ability to choose a correct answer.

Instead of fixating on your end goal, shift your focus to the present moment. Embrace the process of writing, the joy of exploring ideas, and the satisfaction of crafting words. Imagine your writing journey as a scenic hike. Along the way, you'll encounter breathtaking vistas, challenging climbs, and peaceful plateaus. Each milestone, from the first tentative step to the summit, is an opportunity for growth and reflection.

As you navigate the winding paths of your writing journey, remember to pause and appreciate the view. Celebrate your progress, no matter how small, and savor the unique experience of bringing your ideas to life. By embracing the journey, you'll not only achieve your goals but also discover a deeper sense of fulfillment.



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# How to Make the Most of Your Writing Time

BY LESLIE J. WYATT

Assuming you've been able to carve out a dedicated writing time from your allotted twenty-four hours and figured out where you'll do that writing, congratulations! Those crucial pieces of the overall picture are essential to writing success. With your **when** and your **where** now in place, it's time to address some aspects of **how** to make the most of that precious window of creativity.

## CONQUER DISTRACTIONS

None of us want to squander any of our writing time on aspects that produce little results and may hamper us in the writing process, AKA distractions. I cannot be the only person who finds themselves snagged by emails, text messages, and those "two minutes on instagram" dips stretching into fifteen or twenty. By the time I refocus and settle back into my manuscript, I'm almost out of time to write and feel guilty to boot. The internet, though a wonder of a research tool, can be an insidious time suck and a huge temptation to while away our minutes doom scrolling, watching YouTube or trolling FaceBook. This is not merely a lack of self control as we might feel. Such activities are so dang attractive for a reason, one we can employ to good effect once we understand it.

## HARNESS DOPAMINE RELEASE FOR THE WIN

"Dopamine hit" is a current buzz phrase, but the phenomenon is by no means a new one. Simply stated, dopamine is often called the "feel-good"

neurotransmitter because it's released during pleasurable activities, such as eating, socializing, or other enjoyable pursuits. This release of dopamine reinforces those behaviors by making them feel rewarding. The problem arises when other things besides writing feel more pleasurable than writing does. Thankfully, this is an issue we can address, because dopamine is crucial for motivation and goal-directed behavior such as writing sessions, helping to reinforce behaviors by creating a sense of pleasure or satisfaction when achieving a goal.

Because this reinforcement helps us learn and repeat behaviors that lead to positive outcomes, defining our writing goals and breaking large goals into smaller, achievable tasks help create a sense of progress and accomplishment. That fact alone coupled with celebrating these smaller successes can trigger dopamine release and help keep us motivated, thus making the most of our writing time.

Building a system in which you give yourself small rewards for completing tasks or reaching milestones brings positive reinforcement, correlates effort with reward, and enhances dopamine release, thus encouraging continued effort. These rewards can be anything you find enjoyable, starting with praise each time you accomplish a goal. Share that success with a writing buddy, friend, or partner for added oomph. (Front-load this enhancement by



sharing your goal with that person ahead of time, so they can be poised to celebrate your win). Other rewards may be a treat, a short break, or a favorite activity. If we can resist an easier dopamine hit (scrolling Instagram or YouTube, for instance) for an ultimately more rewarding one of goal achievement, we earn a larger “rush” when we reach a short-term target such as finishing the chapter we’re writing, completing 1500 words, or some such measurable.

### DEEP FOCUS

Good news—we needn’t feel guilty over how good dopamine makes us feel. That’s why it exists. We simply need some way to prevent our writing window from dribbling away while we’re distracted by lesser dopamine-offering options. To that end, it helps to understand the true value of what is often referred to as deep focus—substantial, uninterrupted blocks of time for deep work, typically ranging from one to four hours, in which interruptions and distractions are kept at a minimum while routine, focused scheduling and ritual begin to pave the path from start to finish.

For a definitive dive into the importance of maintaining a single focus during your writing time, a great read is Cal Newport’s book, *Deep Work*. He notes, “A 2005 study by the University of California at Irvine found that it takes, on average, twenty-five minutes to regain focus after an interruption.” Twenty-five minutes to get back into that deep focus state every time I snag on an incoming text or email? Yikes. No wonder it’s hard to make progress on my WIP! Newport argues that the quality of output increases when you concentrate intensely over a set period, as opposed to fragmented or brief periods of focus. Thus this importance of scheduling specific blocks of time dedicated solely to deeply focused

writing is going to give us the most bang for our time buck.

### MANAGE YOUR TIME BY MANAGING YOUR ENVIRONMENT

As an inveterate introvert, this is perhaps the easiest piece for me, as I’d rather work in solitude than in a peopled location (exception being tucked in a corner of a coffee shop, a killer vanilla cappuccino at hand along with noise-blocking headphones and my laptop). Environment also includes setting boundaries for when and how you handle email and other communications as referenced above. Optimally, avoid those activities during your scheduled deep focus. Instead, plan a time for those tasks, possibly just before your writing session so that for your period of deep work, those loose ends are relatively shelved for the moment and less likely to distract you from the scene you’re working on. Silencing notifications so all the buzzing and chiming and other sorts of interruptions don’t jerk you out of focus every three minutes is a simple yet effective way to address these environmental factors as well.



Time management can also be enhanced with the proper tools. I'm referring to non-internet dependent programs and/or equipment which can help us avoid the temptation to net-surf while in our writing session. Tools like Scrivener, Microsoft Word offline, and LibreOffice Writer are useful programs for writers and have all sorts of built-in features to plan, track, format manuscripts and more. Using them off-line helps eliminate the scrolling/surfing option while writing.

Another powerful time management aspect that perhaps we don't hear too much about is ritual and routine. Newport emphasizes the role of establishing habits that facilitate deep work. Consistent routines help condition our minds to enter a state of deep concentration more effectively and efficiently. Mine? I start with coffee at hand, quiet surroundings, and a leap into my WIP, leaving research, ideation, and other vital aspects of the craft for segments of time that may not offer the same level of focus. Some writers include a music playlist that helps them drop into the zone. A favorite candle (mine is Winter White, by Illume), white noise, the brush of air on skin from an open window or fan—whatever helps you center into your space of deep focus adds to your arsenal. The more you do this combination day after day, the faster you find your deep focus groove and make the most of your writing window.

### TAKING BREAKS

Our brains are amazing in their ability to focus given optimal conditions. They also need breaks. Otherwise, productivity declines until we eat up more and more time while achieving less and less. In his book, *REST: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less*, Alex Soo-jung Kim Pang emphasizes the importance of giving our brain

regular breaks to improve overall productivity and well-being. Whether it's an alarm reminding us to stand, a restroom break, or some other opportunity, engaging in activities that allow our mind to rest and rejuvenate between our sessions of deep focus is crucial for maintaining high levels of creativity and productivity.

Pang advocates engaging in non-work related activities. For writers, this could include hobbies, physical exercise, playing with a pet, even folding a load of laundry (we do what we must). The key is to choose activities that are not directly using the same part of your brain writing employs so that sector rests while other parts not actively used during writing time have their moment to engage. This allows our brain to recover and thus perform better when we return to writing. As a bonus, our bodies will thank us if we get up and move around more.



Keeping in mind UCI's findings on how long it takes to regain a state of deep focus, be strategic with breaks. If you can focus longer than 45 minutes at a time, go for it. In the writing world, no rule exists



mandating a break after X number of minutes. We're all individuals, and while averages exist, finding our own optimal session length will yield our highest productivity. Thankfully, it does seem like our brains have an innate timer—they focus until suddenly they can't or won't. If we heed this subtle shift, leaning into it by giving our brains the rest Pang references, we can dive deep again afterwards if we still have time left in our writing session, and have a second or third round of creative productivity.

With awareness of the above elements in your arsenal, time management needn't be as daunting as it often feels. Harnessing dopamine release through the power of achievable goals and tiny celebrations, you set the stage for success. By adding in the power of ritual and routine to fast-track you into your deep focus and also giving your hard-working brain strategic rest activities, you're positioned to extract the most out of your writing session every single time.



FIND YOUR RWA  
**CHAPTER**

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# Contests & Conferences

## CHAPTER CONTESTS

### **RWA/NYC Blurb Contest**

Sponsor: Romance Writers of America-New York City

Want to know if your cover blurb will sell your book?

Let our cover blurb contest teach you the what and how of a cover blurb with an instructional video before you submit your blurb for our blurb specialists, Kate Richards, publisher and editor of Decadent Books to judge:

- Does the first sentence make the reader want to know more
- Does the blurb give the reader an idea of the story without telling them the story
- Is it grammatically clean
- Does it SEO well

Dates Video available January 8. Submissions January 15 – February 15, 2025

Guidelines - <https://www.rwanyc.com/rwanyc-blurb-contest.html>

Entry - <https://www.rwanyc.com/contest-entry-form.html>

## ONLINE WORKSHOPS

### **Xena, Wonder Woman and You—How to Create Classic Tough Chicks**

Instructor: Jacqui Jacoby

Date of Event: Monday, January 6, 2025 – Friday, January 31, 2025

Fee: Member \$15 | Non-member \$25

Location: Groups.io platform

FMI: [Click here](#)

### **Dumping the Info Dump**

Instructor: Elizabeth Flynn

Date of Event: Monday, January 13, 2025 – Friday, January 24, 2025

Fee: Member \$10 | Non-member \$15

Registration Link: [Click here](#)

### **Writing with Chronic Illness**

Presenter: October K. Santerelli

Date of Event: Saturday, January 18, 2025

Fee: Member \$10 | Non-member \$15

Registration Link: [Click here](#)

### **How to Fix the "Funny" in Your Romance**

Date: Saturday, January 11, 2025, 11:00 AM ET

Fee: Member \$10 | Non-member \$20

FMI: [Click here](#)



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### **Into the Wormhole: Time Travel, Parallel Worlds, Alternative Dimensions, and Space Travel Story Worlds**

Date: Monday, January 6, 2025 - Friday, January 31, 2025

Fee: Member \$20 | Non-member \$25

FMI: [Click here](#)

### **Missing Puzzle Piece-Core Wounds**

Date: Monday, January 6, 2025 - Friday, January 31, 2025

Fee: Member \$20 | Non-member \$25

FMI: [Click here](#)

### **Hot Premise**

Date: Monday, January 6, 2025 - Friday, January 31, 2025

Fee: Member \$20 | Non-member \$25

FMI: [Click here](#)

### **How to Be Your Own Authorpreneur**

Presenter: Joan Ramirez

Date of Event: Saturday, February 1, 2025

Fee: Member \$10 | Non-member \$15

Registration Link: [Click Here](#)

### **Guide to Writing a Historical Series**

Instructor: Beth Daniels

Date of Event: Monday, February 5, 2025 – Friday, February 28, 2025

Registration Link: [Click here](#)

Price: Member \$15 | Non-Member \$25

### **Writing Your ID**

Instructor: Tere Michaels

Date of Event: Monday, February 5, 2025 – Friday, February 16, 2025

Registration Link: <https://www.heartsthroughhistory.com/product/writing-your-id-feb-25/>

Price: Member \$10 | Non-Member: \$15

### **Unlock Your Story's Inciting Incident**

Instructor: Jacquelin Cangro

Date of Event: Monday, February 17, 2025 – Friday, February 28, 2025

Registration Link: <https://www.heartsthroughhistory.com/product/unlock-your-storys-inciting-incident-feb-25/>

Price: Member \$10 | Non-Member: \$15

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*To have your chapter's contest, conference, or online workshop included in the RWR and on this web page, please send the pertinent information (following the format above) to [info@rwa.org](mailto:info@rwa.org).*

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# New Members

JOIN US IN WELCOMING THE PEOPLE WHO JOINED/REJOINED  
RWA IN NOVEMBER 2024

Addison Fox

Alexandra Guccione

Christie Williams

Dawn Fowler

Eileen Bobek

Gabi Coatsworth

Joan Donaldson

Julia Litton

Kristine Lynn

Laralyn Gill

Libby Gill

Lisa Coughlin

Melanie Neal

Melyssah Colerangle

Nan Reinhardt

Szonja Kiss

Teri Brown

Tresha Ruttan



*Welcome to RWA!*

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# Debut Authors

**RWA congratulates the following authors on  
the publication of their first romance  
novel/novella**

###

*To submit your information for publication in the Debut  
Author column, complete the online form at [https://  
www.surveymonkey.com/r/RWAdebutauthor](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RWAdebutauthor).*

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# Association Purpose and Ethics

## RWA BYLAWS, ARTICLE 2, PURPOSES AND LIMITATIONS

The corporation is hereby organized for the following purposes:

- To advance the professional and common business interests of career-focused romance writers through networking and advocacy and by increasing public awareness of the romance genre; and
- To carry on such other activities as are permissible for Texas nonprofit corporations exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c) (6) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as the same may be amended or supplemented ("IRC").

Notwithstanding any other provision of these Bylaws, RWA shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under IRC Section 501(c) (6) or by a nonprofit corporation formed under the Texas Business Organizations Code, as the same may be amended or supplemented (the "Act").

## MEMBER CODE OF ETHICS

The RWA Member Code of Ethics ("Code of Ethics") serves as a code of professional conduct for RWA members. Its purpose is to encourage RWA members to exhibit integrity, honesty, and other sound industry practices, thereby elevating the professionalism of the RWA's membership.

The principles of this Code of Ethics are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision-making. The RWA Code of Ethics is a framework and is not intended to dictate behavior in particular situations.

Any member found to be in violation of the RWA Code of Ethics may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to the Code of Ethics.

- RWA members support the preservation of authorial and intellectual property rights.
- RWA members strive for excellence and integrity in the profession of romance writing.
- RWA members strive to treat fellow members, RWA staff, and others with respect through adherence to the RWA Antidiscrimination Policy and the RWA Antiharassment Policy.

View the full Code of Ethics at <https://www.rwa.org/code-of-ethics>

## RWA'S OPERATING VALUES

### External Values

- Romance writers have the right to reasonable remuneration and preservation of authorial and intellectual property rights.
- Literacy is individually and culturally vital.
- Storytelling is fundamental to human experience: romance fiction explores issues of universal and eternal human interest.
- United, romance writers are a powerful community.

### Internal Values

- RWA belongs to its members.
- RWA fosters an environment of creative and professional growth.
- RWA thrives through the free exchange of ideas, knowledge, and diverse career experiences. [n](#)

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# 2024-2025 Board of Directors

RWA was founded in 1980 in Houston, Texas.

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Send letters for the Board  
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