

MODULE #6: CARRYING ON UNTIL YOU REACH “THE END”

IN THIS MODULE:

This week, we'll look at ways to keep up your momentum for the next few weeks or months. We'll be taking a step back, too, to assess how the past four weeks have gone for you – and then we'll set new targets to achieve during the four support weeks.

This is our final week of the On Track course.

Hopefully, you've made some significant progress with your project over the past few weeks. You're probably now in one of these three positions:

#1: You met your targets all or most weeks. You're feeling motivated and keen to continue with your project until you complete it: you want to keep up your great progress.

#2: You met your target some of the time, but it was harder going than you expected. Perhaps your life has ended up busier than you expected, or your project hasn't felt particularly engaging.

#3: You didn't meet your target – and you decided to take a step back from your writing. This is a valid outcome too: sometimes, a period of focus on writing makes it clearer that (right now) you need to take a break.

In today's module, we're going to be looking at ways to keep up the momentum if you're in group #1, how to reassess things if you're in group #2, and also how you can move forward if you're in group #3.

Keeping Up Your Writing Momentum

When you have the accountability and structure of a group challenge, that can be really helpful for meeting your target (or at least working towards it) even on less-than-stellar weeks.

Without the group support in place, though, it's *very* easy to slip back into old habits. One bad week can quickly become several months of not writing at all.

So what can you do to keep up the momentum when you're on your own?

#1: Aim for One Non-Negotiable Writing Session Per Week

If you can fit in one writing session every single week – even if it's only 30 minutes – then you'll keep moving forward with your project.

When you're working on something big, like a novel, a non-fiction book or a thesis, 30 minutes might feel like a drop in the ocean. But the point of doing it isn't just to get more words down on the page – having that weekly session helps you stay in touch with your project, so you don't lose track of where you've got to.

#2: But ... Take Time Off When You Need To

It's fine to take time off from writing during particularly busy spells: perhaps you're going on vacation for a couple of weeks, or you're about to move house or start a new job.

The key thing here is to plan in advance for a break. Block it out on your calendar, so it's something that you've negotiated with yourself rather than something that just happens without you really deciding on it one way or another.

By planning a break in advance, you can make sure you set yourself up for a smooth re-entry into writing: leave yourself some notes about where you got to, and have a clear idea of what your next steps are, *before* you take that break.

#3: Track Your Progress in a Writing Journal

During On Track, you’ve probably been tracking your progress through the weekly check-ins – either by posting on Facebook to share what you did, or by emailing me.

If you want to continue posting in the group (or emailing) indefinitely, that’s fine by me! But you may find it’s a better fit for you to keep a writing journal, for your eyes only, where you record your progress on a daily or weekly basis.

There’s no one “right” way to use a writing journal: some writers write about how they felt about the work; others use it as a way to keep track of plot developments and ideas.

Some writers prefer to use a spreadsheet where they jot down their wordcount and/or length of time spent writing each day.

It’s up to you what you do – but having some way to record your progress can help you stay on track for the long-term.

#4: Share Your Progress With Others

Our Facebook group will remain available for as long as you want ... so you’re welcome to keep posting about your progress there.

There are plenty of other ways you can share your progress, too. You might use a blog or Twitter account to update your friends and followers on how your writing is going, or you might prefer to “buddy up” with a fellow writer to swap emails with on a weekly basis about how you’re getting on.

#5: Fit in Occasional Longer Writing Sessions

I know that many people taking On Track are in a similar position to me, with busy schedules that are prone to sudden disruption – whether that’s due to small children, day job demands, health issues, or anything else.

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One thing that really helps me, both with getting the words down and with enjoying writing more, is to have occasional *long* writing sessions. For me, that means booking an overnight hotel stay about four times a year – I can check in at 2pm, and focus on writing until bedtime! I then get a few hours in the following morning, too.

Even if you can't do long writing sessions on a frequent basis, having a full Saturday afternoon once a month to spend writing, or an overnight retreat once a quarter, could make a huge difference to your progress and to how you feel about your writing.

#6: Go Back to the Planning Stage When Necessary

With big projects, it's easy to get a bit bogged down midway because you haven't quite worked out where you're going. If you find yourself frequently staring at a blank screen wondering what to write, or if you end up writing a lot of meandering bits and pieces that you end up scrapping, **it might be worth stepping back to do some additional planning.**

Although we often see *ideas -> planning -> drafting -> rewriting -> editing* as a linear continuum, and although it does make sense to broadly tackle things in that order, there's nothing wrong in pausing mid-way through a novel's first draft to re-plan how it's going to all play out.

Similarly, if you're writing an epic blog post that's getting away from you a bit, it might make sense to re-plan and take a look at whether you need to refocus the topic, or whether the post might work best as an ebook or a series of shorter pieces for your blog.

If Your Writing Didn't Go Too Well

This part of the module is for those writers in On Track who came up against some major struggles or roadblocks.

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These could be related to your project. Maybe you realized that:

- Your enthusiasm for your initial idea just hasn't carried over into the actual execution of that idea.
- You've been working on this project, on and off, for so long that you desperately want to start something brand new instead.
- You're finding your project particularly draining or difficult.

Alternatively, you might have run into issues that are about more than this particular project. Perhaps:

- Something's changed unexpectedly – perhaps your health, or the health of a family member, has taken a turn for the worse.
- You're lacking in energy and enthusiasm for writing in general.
- You've had less writing time than you anticipated – and it doesn't look like getting easier any time soon.

I know that “I gave up on my novel” might sound like an awful outcome for taking On Track ... but sometimes, setting a project aside is the right decision for you.

So please don't feel in any way that you've done things “wrong” if On Track has helped you to decide that, right now, you need to refocus your energy away from this particular project – or away from writing in general.

Don't see the progress you made as wasted time, either: **sometimes, investing a bit of time into a project is the only way to be sure whether you actually want to carry on with it or not.**

It's fine to take a break from writing. You might want to take a specified length of time away from your project (e.g. “I'm going to take three months off from working on my novel while I focus on bringing in more freelancing business”). Alternatively, you might want to simply set your writing aside during a busy or difficult period, without a specific “restarting” date in mind: that's fine too.

How Did the Last Four Weeks Go?

Assuming that you do want to continue with your project, or with *a* project, then it’s worth taking a look at how the last four weeks went for you.

Maybe everything went super-smoothly: you met – even exceeded – your goal every week and had lots of fun along the way.

But maybe things didn’t go quite how you’d hoped. If that’s the case, please don’t blame yourself, and don’t tell yourself that you need to “work harder” or “focus better”.

Instead, think about what would help you to achieve your targets next time.

Perhaps:

- Your targets were a bit too ambitious, and you need to adjust those if you have a realistic hope of meeting them every week.
- You had several writing sessions unexpectedly disrupted, so you want to plan for an extra session each week just in case you need it.
- You got distracted when you did have writing time, and you want to adjust your workspace to try to minimize those distractions.
- You had a lot of interruptions (e.g. from family members), so you’re thinking about ways you can enlist more help and persuade your family to actually leave you alone to write.

Setting Targets for the Next Four Weeks

While the On Track course itself is over, we’ve got four more weeks together. I’ll be around to support and encourage you during this time. I won’t be sending out new modules, but I will email every Wednesday to remind you to keep updating us with your progress.

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I encourage you to set your new targets when you check in this week. Let us know what you’re hoping to achieve – whether that’s the same target as before, a slightly different target, or a fresh target on a new project.

If you didn’t do so before, remember that it’s fine to set a “minimum” and “ideal” target – this can be particularly helpful if your schedule, or your energy levels, tend to fluctuate a lot.

If you’ve decided to take a writing break, do come and let us know that too if you can.

How the Assignments Work

This is your final assignment for On Track – in future weeks, you’re welcome to keep checking in, but there won’t be specific assignments or reward card stamps.

ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment this week is to reach the target that you set for yourself in week two, and to tell us what your new target will be for the next four weeks.

Even if you don’t quite get there, it’s fine to “check in” for your reward stamp anyway – just tell us how you got on:

[facebook.com/groups/ontrack2019/learning_content/?filter=368280617270401](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ontrack2019/learning_content/?filter=368280617270401)

If you prefer not to use Facebook, you can email me (ali@aliventures.com) with “Module #6 check in” or similar in the subject line.

What’s Happening Next:

We’ve finished the course! Congratulations on making it through. 😊

Our four week support period begins immediately after the course (from Mon 25th Feb). I’ll be around in the Facebook group from then until Sunday 24th March to encourage you as you continue to work towards your targets, and to share my own progress with you.

Each Wednesday during that time, I’ll send out a quick email to remind you to bring your questions / struggles / triumphs to the group. Of course, you can email me at any time as usual at ali@aliventures.com.