

1-2-2024

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eCommons Citation

Clark, C. Hope, "Setting Those Goals" (2024). *Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Blog*. 95.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ebww_blog/95

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Tuesday January 2, 2024

By C. Hope Clark

(This piece appeared in the Editor's Thoughts column in the Dec. 22, 2023, *FundsforWriters* weekly newsletter. Reposted by permission of C. Hope Clark.)

For the most part, people hate goals. They hate making the goals, or they love making them but hate following through on them. It's why New Year's Resolutions catch so much crap. We talk big, then let them fizzle after, what, one week?

What if you don't want to set goals? Then don't. However, if you want to write a book, publish articles or establish your book in a bookstore, you'll need goals. Life doesn't just happen without you planning for it. At least not the type of life you'd like to have.

Instead of omitting goals altogether, try setting your goals via different ways to see if one method works better than another.

1) Word count. Regardless what you write, get in your words. Set it daily or set it weekly. Mark your calendar of your goal, then of your success.

2) Macro. Finish your book in a given number of months. Turn in 12 stories in a year. No details, just big-picture goals. Maybe you happen to be a person who doesn't like being tied down. But keep that goal front and center, and note accomplishments on your calendar to keep track.

3) Dates. By certain dates you will have a list of items written and/or submitted. Make the dates tight if you need bite-sized goals — weekly, for instance. Or make the dates loose if you prefer laissez-faire in your achievements, like quarterly. Maybe a monthly deadline suits you best, and you sit down and analyze your success on a specific date each month.

4) Maintain a number. Keep a dozen (or whatever number you choose — don't make it small) submissions outstanding at all times. I've used this one and it worked well for me. Use it for submitting articles to publications, applying to freelance gigs, entering contests or pitching your book to agents. Let's say it's a dozen. Work hard to get that number pitched and out into the world. When you receive a rejection, stop and submit in order to maintain that number 12 (or whatever number). If you receive an acceptance, stop and submit, again, to preserve that number 12. The task becomes maintaining the number, and you become so focused on moving forward and submitting that the acceptances suddenly happen when you least expect them.

But to have zero goals is to decrease your odds of being successful. Without a destination before you, without something on the horizon to strive for, you tend to wander. Then you get nowhere.

— C. Hope Clark

C. Hope Clark is the author of *The Carolina Slade Mysteries*, *The Edisto Island Mysteries* and *The Craven County Mysteries*. She's the editor of [FundsforWriters](#), one of the *Writer's Digest* "101 Best Websites for Writers." Her work has been published in *The Writer*

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