TAKE-HOME KIT

The Book Finisher's Toolkit

Worksheets, checklists, and a momentum tracker for the book that's been sitting there.



Keep going. You're closer than you think.

Offbeat Ink · Resources for neurodivergent and queer writers

START HERE

Hi. Let's finish this thing.

You came to the workshop with a book that's been sitting there. Maybe it's a draft that stopped at chapter eleven. Maybe it's finished-ish and keeps whispering that something is missing. Maybe it's a folder full of openings, each one better than the last, none of them going anywhere.

This toolkit is what you take home so the work keeps going once the conference coffee wears off. Nothing in here has to be done in order. Nothing has to be done perfectly. Print the pages you need, ignore the ones you don't, and come back to them as often as your book asks you to.

Pick your page

IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE YOU…	GRAB THIS
I can't make myself open the file.	**Restart Checklist**
I open it and stare at it.	**Why It Stalled**
I keep calling it writer's block.	**What Is Blocking It?**
I took a few days off and now I feel guilty.	**Was It Procrastination or Rest?**
I'm running on fumes.	**Self-Care for People Who Make Things Up**
I keep starting over, or I don't know what "done" means.	**Your Finish Line**
Things happen in my book, but it feels flat, or my ending won't land.	**The Emotional Deep Dive**
I'm too attached to cut anything.	**From Drafter to Editor**
I think I might be done?	**Draft Done Checklist**
I'm writing, but I can't tell if I'm getting anywhere.	**Momentum Tracker**

Fill these in with whatever pen is closest. Glitter gel pens are encouraged. xo, A.

WORKSHEET

Why It Stalled

Books stall for real reasons, and laziness is almost never one of them. Check every box that feels true, even a little. Then circle the one that feels the loudest.

- [ ] **Energy**
  By the time I get to the book, there's nothing left in the tank.
- [ ] **Clarity**
  I don't know what happens next, so I don't sit down.
- [ ] **Confidence**
  The inner critic got loud and I started believing it.
- [ ] **Capacity**
  Life got big: work, kids, health, caregiving, moving, a lot.
- [ ] **Interest**
  I got bored, or a shinier idea showed up and moved in.
- [ ] **Polish loop**
  I keep fixing chapter one instead of writing chapter twelve.

The one I'm working on first:

What would make this 10% easier? *Ten percent is plenty.*

One thing I'm allowed to stop doing for now:

My smallest next move *(15 minutes or less)***:**

JOURNAL PAGE

What Is Blocking It?

"Writer's block" is a label that ends the conversation. Let's keep talking. Most blocks are something specific wearing a big, scary coat. This page is for finding out who's under there.

When I picture sitting down to write, the first feeling that shows up is...

The scene I keep avoiding is... *and here's what happens in it*

If this block were a person, who would it be, and what does it keep saying to me?

What am I afraid will happen if I finish this part? *Who reads it? What do they think?*

What do I need that I don't have yet? *Information, time, permission, a plan, a nap*

Name it in one sentence.

I'm stuck because

One way around it, under it, or over it:

Once it has a name, it gets smaller.

WORKSHEET

Was It Procrastination or Rest?

From across the room they look identical: you, the couch, the laptop closed. From the inside they feel completely different. Fill this in after a day away from the book. Be honest, and be nice about it.

Sounds like rest

- [ ] I chose it on purpose.
- [ ] My body or brain was clearly asking for it.
- [ ] I could tell you what I did, and I enjoyed it.
- [ ] I came back a little fuller than I left.
- [ ] The book wandered through my head in a friendly way.

Sounds like procrastination

- [ ] I meant to write and kept doing “just one more thing.”
- [ ] A low hum of guilt followed me around all day.
- [ ] I deep-cleaned something that was already clean.
- [ ] Three hours disappeared into my phone.
- [ ] Thinking about the book made my stomach drop.

The verdict (circle one): Rest Procrastination Honestly? A little of both.

If it was rest: what refilled me? *So I can do it again on purpose*

If it was procrastination: what was I avoiding? *Dig deeper on “What Is Blocking It?”*

My smallest step back in:

Both are information. Neither one makes you a bad writer.

WORKSHEET

Your Finish Line

You can't cross a finish line you haven't drawn. "Done" means something different for every draft, so pick what it means for this one.

This draft is done when...

- [ ] Every scene exists from beginning to end, even the ugly ones.
- [ ] I can read it front to back without stopping to fix things.
- [ ] It's ready for a beta reader or critique partner.
- [ ] It's ready to query, pitch, or publish.
- [ ] Something else:

Soft deadline *(the hopeful one)*

Hard deadline *(only if it helps you)*

Why this book? Why now?

What's left between me and done? *List the chunks, not the whole mountain.*

How I'll celebrate *(be specific; cake counts)*

The first person I'll tell

CHECKLIST

The Restart Checklist

For a draft that's gone cold. Use it the first day back, and any day it feels like the first day back.

- [ ] Find the newest version of the file. Rename the other six "OLD."
- [ ] Read the last two pages. Only the last two. Step away from chapter one.
- [ ] Write one sentence about where the story is right now.
- [ ] Write one sentence about what happens next, even if it's wrong.
- [ ] Set a timer for 15 minutes.
- [ ] Write badly on purpose. Bracket what you don't know: *[SOMETHING SMART HERE]*.
- [ ] Stop in the middle of a sentence so tomorrow-you has somewhere to start.
- [ ] Put a mark on the Momentum Tracker.
- [ ] Tell one being you're back: a writing friend, a group chat, your dog.

Where the story is right now:

What happens next (probably):

Fifteen bad minutes beats zero perfect ones every single time.

CHECKLIST

Session Bookends

Starting and stopping are the hardest parts of any session. Give both a routine so your brain has less to decide.

Before you start

- [ ] Water, snack, comfy pants
- [ ] Phone face down or in another room
- [ ] Read your breadcrumb note from last time
- [ ] Pick one job: draft, fix, or plan
- [ ] Start a timer, any length

Before you stop

- [ ] Leave a breadcrumb: where you stopped and what comes next
- [ ] Mark the Momentum Tracker
- [ ] Name one thing that went right
- [ ] Close the file on purpose

Today's breadcrumb note *(where I stopped, what comes next)*

CHECKLIST

Self-Care for People Who Make Things Up

The book needs a writer who's been fed, watered, and occasionally let outside. Pick one from each box this week. Bonus points for doing one in the middle of a stuck day.

Body

- [ ] Drink something that isn't coffee.
- [ ] Stand up and shake it out like a wet dog.
- [ ] Stretch your wrists and the back of your neck.
- [ ] Look at something far away for a full minute. Your eyes have been staring at a screen.
- [ ] Eat an actual meal, sitting down, with a plate.

Brain

- [ ] Close fourteen browser tabs. You know the ones.
- [ ] Dump every buzzing to-do onto one sticky note.
- [ ] Play the song that makes you feel like the main character.
- [ ] Take one guilt-free hour of doing absolutely nothing useful.
- [ ] Say no to one thing this week.

Heart

- [ ] Text a writing friend something nice about their work.
- [ ] Reread the note, review, or email that made you glow.
- [ ] Pet an animal: yours, a friend's, or a cooperative stranger's.
- [ ] Cry if you need to. Your characters do it all the time.
- [ ] Forgive yesterday's writing session.

Creative refill

- [ ] Read a book in a totally different genre, just for fun.
- [ ] Make something that isn't words: a doodle, a collage, bread.
- [ ] Build a playlist for your book.
- [ ] Take your main character on a field trip somewhere they'd go.
- [ ] Eavesdrop at a coffee shop for dialogue. Politely.

Write your own *(the weird ones that only work for you count double)*

The Emotional Deep Dive

Readers forget plot points. They remember how a book made them feel. The next three pages work as layers, and each one goes a little deeper into why your story lands, or why it doesn't yet.

LAYER 1 · CAUSE

Plot or Plot-Shaped?

Feelings need consequences to hang onto. Do your scenes connect with "because" and "but"?

LAYER 2 · FEELING

Scene Beat Audit

Does every scene make someone want, choose, change, or reveal something, and make the reader feel a shift?

LAYER 3 · MEMORY

Plant & Payoff Map

What does the reader carry from page 40 to page 280, and does it pay off when they get there?

Before you dive

The feeling I want readers to have when they close the book:

The moment in my draft where I felt the most while writing it:

The moment where I felt nothing at all *(start your dive here)***:**

EMOTIONAL DEEP DIVE · LAYER 1

Plot or Plot-Shaped?

Plot is cause and effect between people with inner lives. Plot-shaped is a list of things that happen. They can look identical from far away. Here's the quick test: if one scene connects to the next with **"and then,"** it's plot-shaped. If it connects with **"because"** or **"but,"** you've got plot.

Try it on a stretch of your draft.

Pick five scenes in a row. Fill in the chain. Wherever you can only write "and then," put a star. That's a scene that needs a choice, a cost, or a consequence.

Scene 1

because

so

but

therefore

but

so

which means

The scenes I starred:

One choice I could give my character to turn "and then" into "because":

EMOTIONAL DEEP DIVE · LAYER 2

Scene Beat Audit

Every scene needs at least **two beats** to earn its keep. A **character beat** is when someone wants, chooses, changes, or reveals something. An **emotional beat** is a moment the reader feels something shift. Then run the removal test: *if I cut this scene, does anything later stop making sense?* If nothing breaks, it's decoration.

SCENE	WHAT HAPPENS	CHARACTER BEAT	EMOTIONAL BEAT	VERDICT
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut
				Keep · Fix · Cut

Love a scene that only has one beat?

Keep the part you love and fold it into a neighboring scene that's missing something. You get to keep the line. The scene can go.

EMOTIONAL DEEP DIVE · LAYER 3

Plant & Payoff Map

Books that feel finished make readers feel something on page 280 because of something on page 40. A plant can be an object, a line of dialogue, a place, a habit, or a gesture. You don't have to outline it in advance. You can wire it in after the draft exists, and nobody ever has to know.

THE PLANT	FIRST SHOWS UP	PAYS OFF	STATUS
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan
			Planted · Paid · Orphan

Orphans I'm adopting *(I'll pay these off)*

Orphans I'm releasing *(I'll cut these)*

WORKSHEET

From Drafter to Editor

Drafting-you loves every sentence like a newborn. Editing-you has to read those same pages as if a stranger mailed them over. A little emotional distance is what lets you cut, move, and fix without feeling like you're hurting someone.

Ways to make the switch

- [ ] **Let it rest.** At least a week. Longer if you can stand it.
- [ ] **Change its outfit.** New font, new size, new page color, so the pages look unfamiliar.
- [ ] **Change the screen.** Print it, or send it to your e-reader.
- [ ] **Hear it.** Read it out loud, or let text-to-speech read it to you.
- [ ] **Rename the file** "Manuscript by Someone I Admire" and edit it as a favor to them.
- [ ] **Start a Darlings Jar.** A separate file where every cut line goes to live. Cutting from the book never means deleting forever.
- [ ] **Move.** Edit somewhere other than where you draft: a different chair, room, or café.

Dear draft, thank you for...

Darlings I'm already nervous about cutting:

The Editor's Oath

I promise to be honest with this book and kind to the person who wrote it.

Signed _____ **Date** _____

CHECKLIST

The Draft Done Checklist

Before you call it finished. Some of these will take an afternoon. Some will take a month. All of them count.

- [ ] Every scene exists start to finish. No *[FIGHT GOES HERE]* left behind.
- [ ] Every scene passes the two-beat test, or has a note saying how it will.
- [ ] The ending pays off something planted early.
- [ ] Every major plant has a payoff, or got cut.
- [ ] I know what my main character wants on page one and whether they get it.
- [ ] Names, ages, dates, and timelines match. (Make a cheat sheet. Future-you says thanks.)
- [ ] I read it once all the way through, taking notes and fixing nothing.
- [ ] I let it rest for at least a week.
- [ ] **I celebrated.** This one is mandatory.

What I want my first reader to tell me:

Where this book goes next *(beta readers, an editor, agents, a drawer for a month)***:**

MOMENTUM GUIDE

How to Keep Going

Word counts are great until they aren't. Some days you write 3,000 words. Some days you move a comma and stare at a wall for an hour, and that wall-staring was doing something important. The Momentum Tracker counts **sessions**: any time you touched the book on purpose.

1. Every size counts.

There are three marks, and a tiny one is worth exactly as much as a big one on the tracker. Showing up is the habit you're building.

2. Often beats big.

Three fifteen-minute sessions a week will carry a book further than one heroic Saturday every month.

3. Gaps are information.

A blank week tells you something about your life. It says nothing about your talent. Your only job after a gap is the next mark, any size.

4. Make it fun on purpose.

New pen color every week. Stickers. A body-double video call. If your brain loves novelty, feed it.

The three marks

● **Full:** I drafted or revised. ◐ **Half:** I planned, outlined, reread, researched, or did a worksheet.

◯ **Ring:** I opened the file and sat with it for five minutes.

Your weekly check-in

Once a week, same day if you can, answer three questions in the notes column of the tracker:

- ☐ **What moved?** Even an inch counts.
- ☐ **What got in the way?** Name it without scolding yourself.
- ☐ **What's one thing I'll make easier next week?**

Treat yourself every ten marks.

Count every mark on the tracker. Each time you hit ten, you earn the treat you wrote here:

TRACKER · 12 WEEKS

Momentum Tracker

● Drafted or revised ◐ Planned, reread, or worksheet ◯ Showed up for five minutes

WEEK OF	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	WEEKLY CHECK-IN
Wk 1 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 2 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 3 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 4 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 5 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 6 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 7 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 8 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 9 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 10 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 11 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	
Wk 12 ___	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	

Print a fresh one every twelve weeks. Keep the old ones. They're proof.

Total marks:

MONTHLY CHECK-IN

Look How Far You've Come

At the end of each month, flip back through your tracker and fill in one block. Be specific and be kind. You're the project manager here, and also the employee of the month.

Month 1

Marks this month:

What moved:

What got in the way:

What I'll adjust:

Month 2

Marks this month:

What moved:

What got in the way:

What I'll adjust:

Month 3

Marks this month:

What moved:

What got in the way:

What I'll adjust:

Three months from the workshop, my book is...

ONE LAST THING

When you type THE END

Stop. Look at it. You did the thing so many people only talk about doing. Save three copies, email one to yourself, and go eat the cake you wrote down on page four.

Then come tell me about it. I mean it. Finished books are my favorite kind of news.



Proud of you already. xo, Amy

Offbeat Ink

Coaching, workshops, and digital resources for neurodivergent and queer writers who are brilliant, a little chaotic, and ready to finish something. Home of the Offbeat Writers Collective.