



# Post-it Planning

Stick Your Way to Success

Struggling with your writing goals—and actually getting anything accomplished? Here is a deceptively simple, non-tech way to plan your goals for the next ninety days and break those goals into manageable tasks. You'll learn an easy—and satisfying—way to visually track what you've done and what's left to do. Stop feeling overwhelmed and hit every target you long to reach.

What writers often do is plan out the entire year (with a hefty dose of optimism!), and then by the end of January or February, if we've gotten behind, we tend to scrap the whole plan and muddle through the rest of the year. Does this sound familiar?

Instead, we're going to set goals for 90 days. The brilliance of this idea is that even if I get off track, I get to start over after 12 weeks.

## Think of the next 90 days. Choose 3 main goals to accomplish during that time.

If it's a really big goal that can't be accomplished in 90 days, state the part that you *will* finish, like the first act of your novel.

These goals should be overarching goals, not super-specific.

Examples:

To finish my novel.

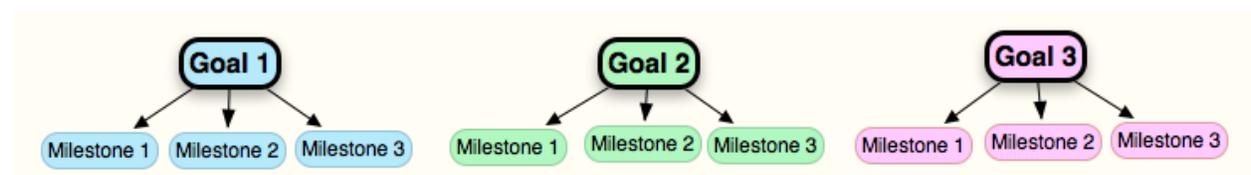
To set up my website.

To edit and publish my nonfiction book.

It's helpful to also note a date by which you want to accomplish your goal, i.e. To finish my novel by December 31st.



## Break each goal into 3 milestones.



Think about what you would like to do in each of the next three months that will move you toward your goal. If you started this plan in October, then milestone 1 would be connected to October, milestone 2 would be completed in November, and milestone 3 in December.

If your goal is to write and submit three short stories in 90 days, your milestones might be: outline three stories, write three stories, and edit three stories.

Now, break those milestones into specific tasks--tasks where each can be completed in a day, a couple days, or within a week. Write each one on a separate sticky note. Use a different color for each goal.



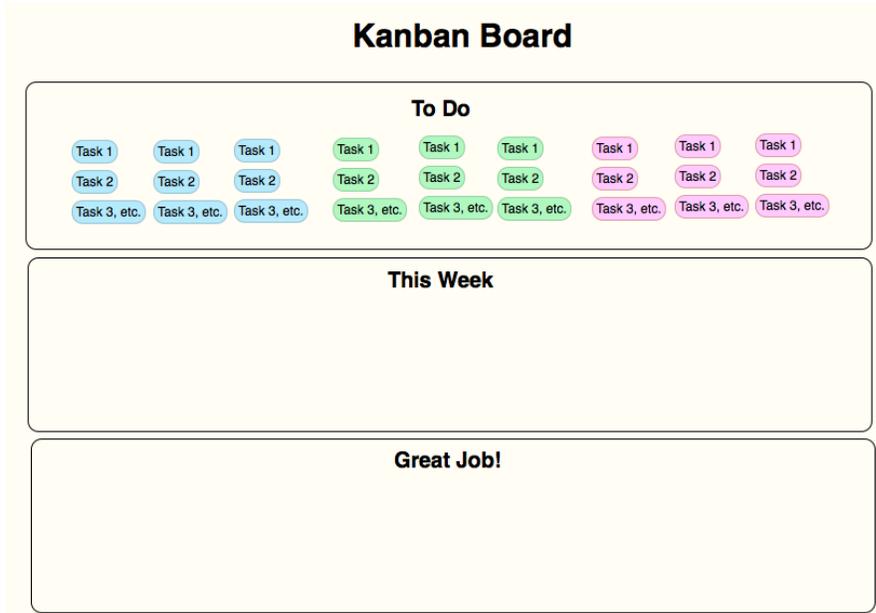
Two-inch by two-inch notes work well, but use what you have.

If one of your goals is to write a significant section of your book, set your tasks by how many words you can reasonably write in a day. If you can write 1000 words a day and you need to write 20,000 words total, make 20 tasks of 1000 words each.

If you are setting up a website, your tasks might be: buy a domain name, write a bio for my 'about' page, outline what I want on each page, write the first blog post, etc.

Now it's time to find a board to keep your tasks. Divide the board into three sections: To Do, This Week, and Done. Place the notes in the first section of your board (To Do).

If your 'office' moves frequently, choose a file folder to hold your stickies. You can also use a dry erase board, bulletin board, or even just a space on your wall. I use antique windows, but you can even use a mirror or a framed picture that you don't mind covering up.



This is called a Kanban board. A Kanban board visually shows work at different stages of the process using vertical columns or horizontal rows. Tasks are moved from one section to another to show whether they are in process, done, or yet to be started.

You'll create three sections on your board, vertically or horizontally. Label them 'to do', 'this week', and 'done'. Place all your sticky notes in the 'to do' section.

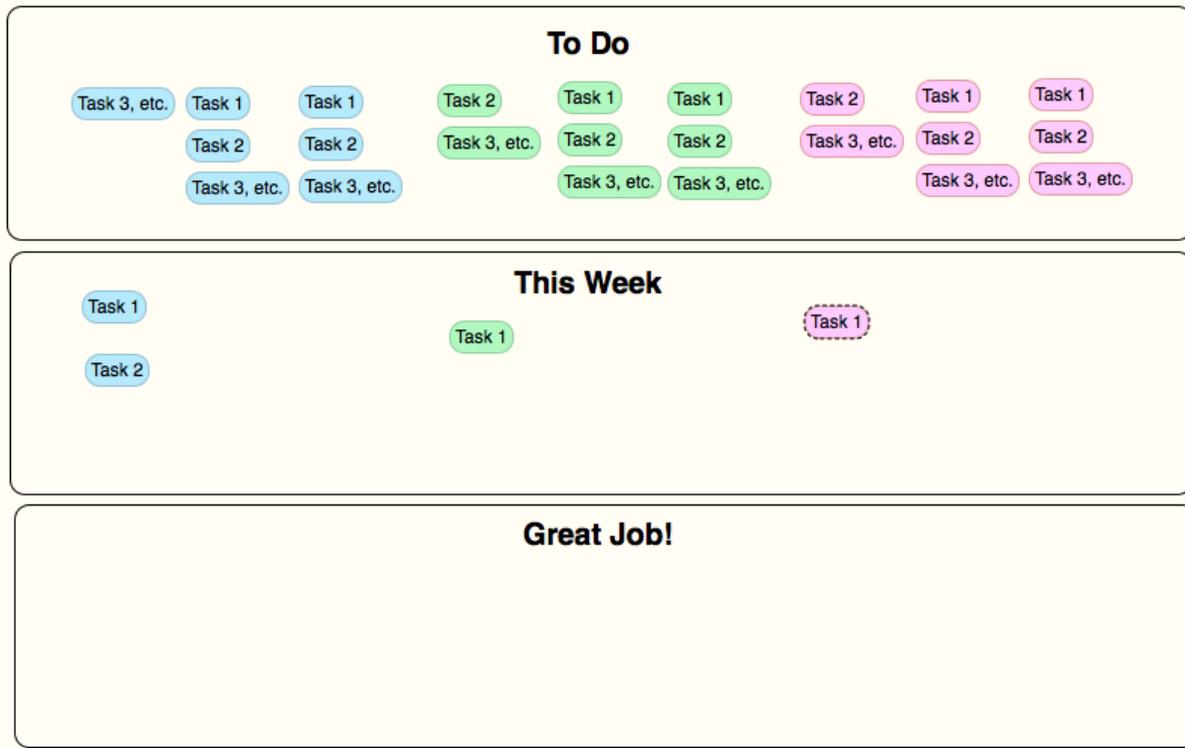
## Now move one or two (per goal) into the 'this week' section.

Before deciding how many to move, look at your week ahead and choose accordingly. If your week is packed, pick fewer tasks or easier ones. I usually choose one or two tasks from each goal, giving me three to six things to accomplish.

Once you've chosen them, write those tasks into your daily planner so you don't forget about them. Making the time for these tasks is important.

These are the *only* things you need to think about this week, so you won't be overwhelmed. Don't worry about the ones in the top section. You'll get there!

# Kanban Board

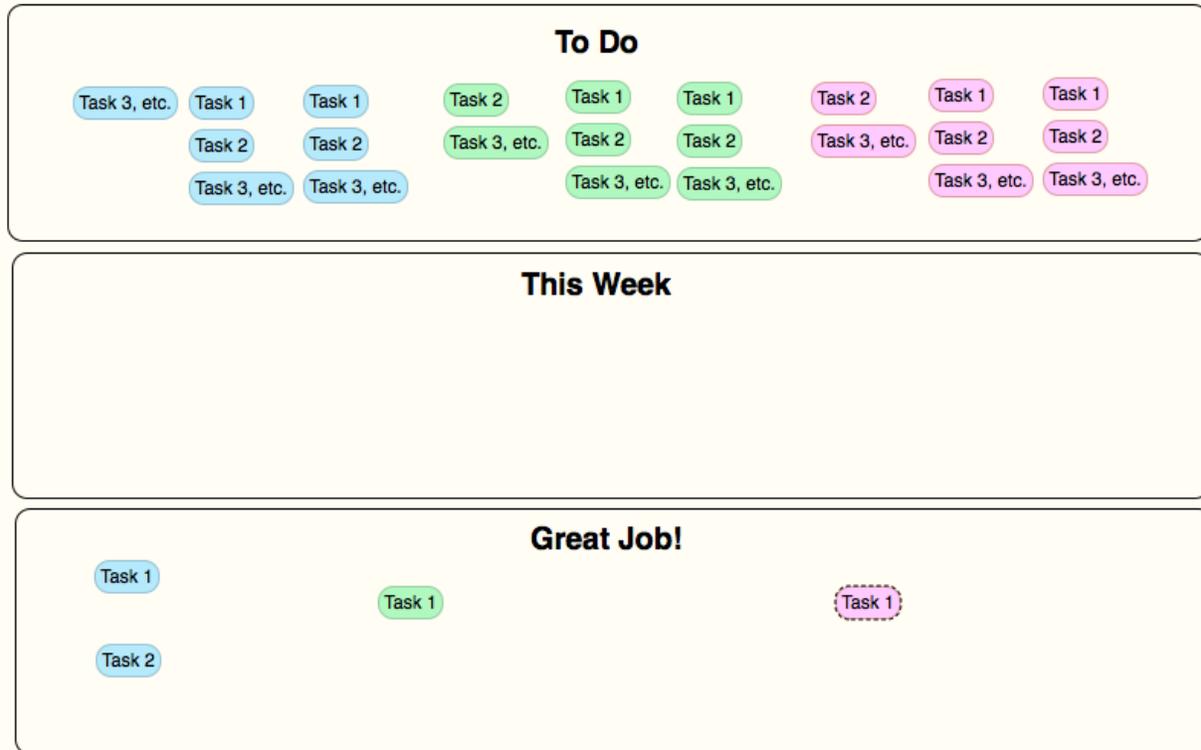


When complete, move each note into the 'done' section.

Now you can visually see your accomplishments! Over time, your 'to-do' section will become more sparse and your 'finished' section will become crowded with **all** the things you've completed. But the only section you need to focus on is the 'this week' section, which contains a manageable amount of items to do.

It's fine to make the 'this week' section smaller, as you'll only have a few notes there at any given time. The 'to-do' section and the 'done' section will need more space.

# Kanban Board

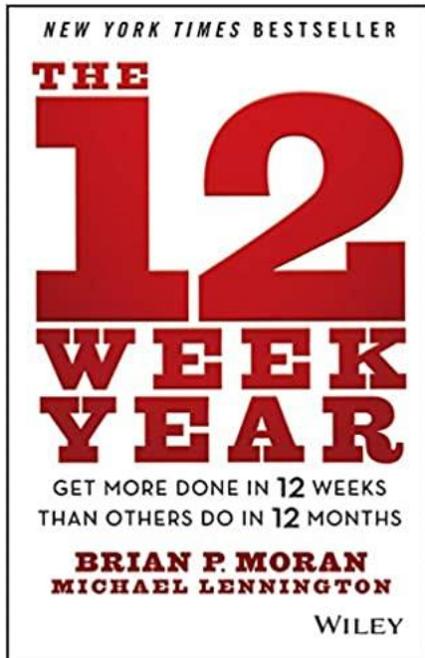


## Tips for Using the System:

- If an idea or a suggestion does not fit with one of your goals, just say no. This can help a great deal with the overwhelm caused by unintended pressure from others--or our own expectations.
- If those additional items seem like a good fit, write them down as a possibility for the next quarter. Try not to get derailed by the 'new and shiny.'
- Focus your goals on the things that only you can do--like writing your book. If possible, delegate or hire out other tasks.
- Write the date for next quarter's planning session on your calendar so you don't forget to plan. (prior to Jan 1, Apr 1, July 1, October 1)
- Lots left undone after 90 days? Don't give up. Pull back on your planning for next quarter to ensure success. Consider fewer tasks, or only two goals instead of three.
- Use an extra column on your board for other goals, like fitness and family activities.

- If you would like to try a free digital Kanban board, check out <https://kanbanflow.com> or <https://trello.com/>.

## Resources:



To help you understand the concept of choosing goals for each quarter, you'll find helpful hints in **The Twelve-Week Year**, by Brian P. Moran.

<https://amzn.to/3flLaE>

Though I was already using a digital Kanban board, author Sarra Cannon at [Heart Breathings](https://heartbreathings.com) is the author who first gave me the idea for a physical board. She also maintains a regular YouTube channel. Here are a few links that may help you.

How I Create My 90 Day Plan And Use A Kanban Board to Achieve My Goals

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8wbLgmNjbQ>

90-day plan template (here you can download the free 90-day template to personalize)

<https://heartbreathings.com/q2-90-day-review-free-90-day-plan-template/>

Kanban board setup

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3TN\\_CsT7Dc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3TN_CsT7Dc)

90-day plan review

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9CTIemxaN8&t=1205s>

Create a writing plan and hit your deadlines:

<https://heartbreathings.com/plan-writing-schedule-hit-deadlines/>

How to create a portable Kanban board (if you're traveling or work away from home):

<https://youtu.be/g85o6NbrJCs>

This video details how Sara set up her 2020 writing schedule. The description has a link to a free downloadable writing planner. Check out Sarra's channel for her 2021 schedule.

<https://youtu.be/usRd0aRMyRY>

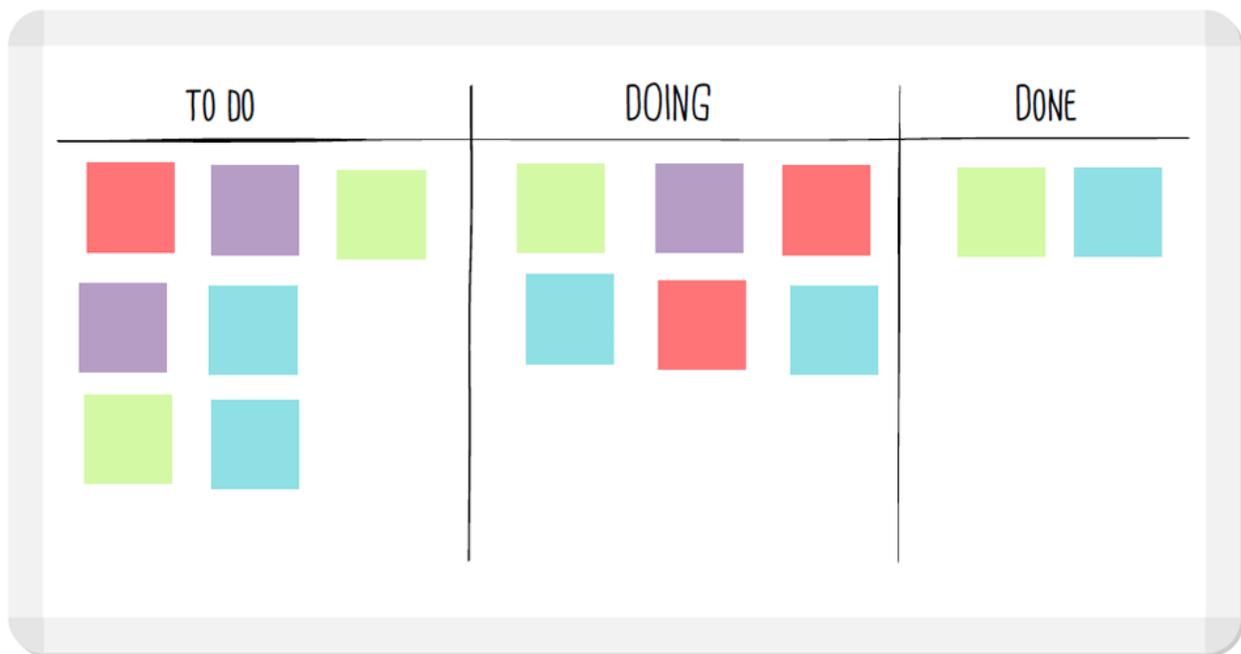
What if everything is up in the air? Sarra Cannon has a video for that too.

[https://youtu.be/dyMoU\\_zSeXQ](https://youtu.be/dyMoU_zSeXQ)

## Pictures of Kanban Boards:

Your board can be a bulletin board, the back of a door, a whiteboard (Amazon sells stick-on whiteboards, like contact paper), or you can get creative with a large framed picture on your wall that you don't mind covering up with sticky notes. To divide the sections, use a marker or washi tape (a wonderful hybrid of Scotch tape and sticky notes--and it comes in ALL the colors and patterns).

Here is a picture of a whiteboard option (this one is formatted horizontally).



And here is a photo of my antique window option.



I'd love to hear how this works for you. Feel free to drop me an email: [dallenco@gmail.com](mailto:dallenco@gmail.com).

If you would like to keep in touch via my newsletter AND receive a free list of all kinds of Reader Magnets to build your mailing list, click on this link. I email infrequently and will never spam you. <http://bit.ly/readermagnetlandingpage>

*Debbie Maxwell Allen writes young adult fiction in the Rockies. She teaches workshops for writers on the craft of writing, productivity, and how to use Scrivener and Vellum software. When not writing, she keeps tabs on her husband, five children, two cats, and the Most Adorable Grandsons. You can check out her website at <https://debbiemaxwellallenbooks.com/>, or catch her blog of resources for writers at <http://writingwhilethericeboils.blogspot.com/>. She also offers substantive editing and proofreading for writers. Contact Debbie at [dallenco@gmail.com](mailto:dallenco@gmail.com) for a free, no-obligation 1000-word sample edit.*