**TWR - episode 106**

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You're listening to think right revised episode 106. Hey there, and welcome to think right revised a podcast that offers a peek behind the scenes of productive writing life. I'm your host. Dr. Kitty litter. On this episode. I want to talk about the power of granular to-do lists. This is something that I think could be the number one productivity tool for people when they are working on writing and publication projects and I am so surprised when I talk with people in my writing groups and when I talked with my coaching clients that they are not using this as a strategy and we almost always go over this in every writing group.

I lead to make sure that people are doing this from the very beginning or. I'm working together. So basically what I mean by the granular to-do list is instead of saying today. I'm going to work on chapter one. You actually have a granular to-do list of what in detail you plan to work on in a particular chapter or writing project.

So the equivalent of this would be instead of saying on your to-do list. I'm going to clean my kitchen you would say I'm going to wipe down all of the counters. I'm going. Put the dishes in the dishwasher and going to unload the dishwasher with the clean dishes. I'm going to clean out my refrigerator.

I'm going to take out the trash. I'm going to wipe down the floor. You would really go into detail about what are all the things you're going to do in order to clean your kitchen. Now over and over again, one of the common mistakes that I see with academic writers is that they just put writing dates on their calendar, which is awesome.

You definitely want to be a scheduling that stuff in but when they put the writing dates, they don't have that to-do list. And so by the time they get to that point in our calendar, they just kind of sit there and look at their document or they look at this notation on their calendar that they're supposed to be working on a particular project, but they're not entirely sure what.

Post to do so I wanted to talk about how to actually construct one of these granular to-do lists, and there's a couple ways to do it. One of the ways is just to write down everything you could possibly know of what you need to do with a particular project. And eventually you will have to put it in the correct order where you can decide certain things need to happen first before other things, but you really should try to break this down into the smallest, like easiest manageable pieces and people will say well if I have five articles to read should I put each article as a to-do item and my answer is always yes because each of those.

Things is an individual thing that you need to check off in order to move forward with the project. So you want to even put down printing out that article so that you can read it or downloading it to your computer. Like that would be a to-do item because you can't read it until you actually have access to it.

And you found it. So having each of these items broken out is a really important thing because then when you get to a specific writing date with yourself, you can go to that list and say well, what do I want to accomplish in this? A period of time that I have in front of me now a question, I often get from writers is well, what if I'm working on a project but I don't really know what the tasks are like maybe you're doing something for the first time and this is especially something that I hear from people who are doing grant writing for example, or they're doing dissertations or a larger project and book proposals.

You know, they just never really encountered it before and what I always say is. Try to figure out what you should do, like figure out a next step and then ask yourself. Can I do that next step right now and if the answer is no then you would say why can't I do that next step right now? And you may say for example, I need to write out a section on the competing literature in my book proposal and you might say but I can't do that yet.

Well, why can't you do that yet? And you might say well, I don't know what that section is supposed to look like so that might lead to a to do of finding other proposals so that you can see examples of what that section is supposed to look like or you might say well, I don't know what the competing texts are.

So that might lead you to a to do of going on Amazon and researching some of the competing text that might have the same keywords in the searches that you would use for the text that you're planning on drafting. So you can always kind of work your way backward from a particular task that you know, you're eventually going to have to do with in that writing assignment and you can work your way back to say well what's the thing that I would have to do before that if I can't do that task yet?

Now I recommend having these granular to-do lists for every project that you have on your plate and it doesn't mean that some of these aren't going to get back-burnered eventually. I mean, you might set some of these aside because you're working on prioritizing certain of these projects, but when you do pick something up again the easiest way to make sure that you're going to be able to efficiently move forward with it is if you have that to-do list right there and you know exactly what it is you need to do next.

Next now, this is also a great tool when you're working with collaborators because you can split up the to dues everybody knows what's going on you can assign deadlines to each of the to do is on your list and you know how to move things forward. The other thing that I think can be a really effective way of doing this is if you have a paper file for a particular writing project or if you have a digital file have the first page of that project be The To Do List and then you can literally be kind of Crossing things off.

If you want to use the strikethrough tool in your word document or you want to literally cross things off if it's a paper document. But this is something that you can keep with each project and then it becomes almost a template for the next time that you do this project again, and you'll know what are all the granular to do list items that went into writing a literature review or writing a book chapter or researching a grant proposal and then you can kind of start over with that granular to-do list the next time you have a project that's similar to that now.

This is definitely about learning as you go. So you're not always going to know exactly the kinds of things that go on this granular to-do list, but you can also ask your colleagues. You can just sit down and pick the brain of a couple of people that you know who've done a project before you've done that kind of project and say well what are some of the things that go into this in terms of granular to do items and have them kind of give you the ideas of what might go on that.

This is something that I have utilized for years. I always have these to-do lists for all of my projects and then I'm able to kind of pick and choose what I want to work on in any given time period that I have some time for my writing and I never sit down and just kind of look around and not know what I'm supposed to be doing because I always know the next step of what's going on with each of my writing projects.

So I would love to hear if you are using these kinds of granular to do lists with your writing and publication. X and what works for you in terms of keeping track of where you are with each of these items you can always email me at contact to Katie lender dot work. You can tweet to me. I KT double underscore lender.

You can connect with me on Instagram @ KD underscore lender, or you can write me a letter at Katie lender at PO Box 1621 in Albany, Oregon nine seven, three two one. I would love to hear from you and especially if you're using these kinds of granular to-do list to move your projects forward. Thanks so much for listening to this episode.

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