

## Part One – The Writing Career Plan

In the first chapter of *Creative Writing Career: Becoming a Writer of Film, Video Games, and Books*, we discussed how to position yourself to be a writer, so let's start with creating an early draft writing career plan. In this plan I want you to think about how much writing you hope to accomplish over the next year and then over the next five years, and what you plan on doing with your final products (submitting to managers and agents, self-publishing, or going the small press route). Include where you would like to be as a writer in one year from now and then in five years from now. Do you want to be a full-time author? Work as a writer at a video game company? Make millions every day? Put it in that plan, even if it is more of a dream. What do you plan on doing to get you there? Prioritize this list based on what you can do immediately and realistically. What have you already done, and how can you leverage these experiences? Include as much as you can in this initial plan, and really give it some thought. To get you started, please consider the questions on the next page. Use the space below to brainstorm, and the space below each question to write in your answers, and hang it near your desk to remind yourself each day.

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## *My Writing Plan*

1. How much writing do you hope to accomplish over the next year? Over the next five years?

2. What will you do with your final product over the next year? Over the next five years?

3. Where do you want to end up in the next year? In the next five years?

4. What else can you do to get there over the next year? Over the next five years?

## Part Two – Improving Your Craft

This is where I will task you with looking deep within and asking: Is my writing the best it can be? The answer is never yes, not if you are a real writer, because we can always improve. Therefore, I want you to put together a plan for improving your craft. Look up local classes or writing groups, or find some online classes or critique groups. Watch movies, read books and screenplays, and play some games. Include these methods of improvement on your goal list that sits next to your computer, and get to it. Imagine your favorite filmmaker or novelist or video game company just asked to read your material—now think of this moment as one year in the future, but you know it is coming. How can you reach a level where you will not be hesitant to pass your work on to the professionals? Make it happen.

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## *My Learning Plan*

1. What classes can I take over the next year? Over the next five years?
2. What writing groups or organizations can I join in the next year? In the next five years?
3. What conferences can I attend in the next year? In the next five years?
4. How many books and screenplays can I read, movies can I watch, or video games can I play—and which ones—over the next year? Over the next five years?

### **Part Three - Structure**

If you have already written something without thinking about the above structures, try applying one of these structures to your story now that it's written. What is your inciting incident or first pinch? Does your opening image contrast with your closing image? See what you can do, and then reassess your story to see if you can improve it somehow. When I have done this retroactive application of structure in the past, it has always been helpful. It may not result in large changes, instead leading me to realize that the character's emotions could be amped up at certain points to play with the audiences' expectations, but it's a way of looking at your writing from a new perspective—which is always helpful. If you do not have a story of your own to do this with, take one of your favorite stories and analyze it according to each of the above structures, and then start brainstorming your next story with your favorite structure in mind. You may be surprised with the result.

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## *My Story Structure Plan*

1. Which of the outlined structures resonates for me?
2. What story of my own (or of someone else's) would I like to analyze with this structure?
3. Based on the analysis, what changes might I make to this story? If none, why?
4. How would a story would I come up with using any of the above structures differ from stories I have brainstormed in the past?



## *My Screenwriting Plan*

1. What ideas can I turn into short films over the next year? Over the next five years?
2. What ideas can I turn into feature films over the next year? Over the next five years?
3. What resources can I use to put a crew together over the next year? Over the next five years?
4. How many screenplays can I read while watching the corresponding movie over the next year and what are they? Over the next five years?



## *My Video Game Plan*

1. What story-driven video games will I commit to playing?
2. What is it about games I have loved in the past, and how do the above games relate?
3. What sort of video-game-related blog can I start, and what are some topics for posts I could include?
4. What video game writers can I contact and seek advice from?



## ***My Book Author Plan***

1. What agents can I submit my novels to?

2. What publishers can I submit my novels to?

3. If I want to self-publish, what resources are at my disposal?

4. What literary publications do I like enough to submit my short fiction and poetry to?

## CONCLUSION

Put together your career plan, relook at it after considering what you have read here, and make some changes to the plan. When you are done with it, hang it on your wall where you can see it and make sure to glance over at it every once in a while. It will be so fulfilling when you walk past that plan in a few years (or sooner, or later—who knows) and see that it is time to cross some items off the list of dreams and mark them as realities. Revise your resume and LinkedIn. Build up your network, attend some classes, be open to new ideas and projects, and most of all write like crazy and revise even crazier to improve your craft. Good luck in the job search!

If you are a military veteran or interested in programs for veterans, keep your eyes open for my upcoming book, *Veterans in Entertainment*. As a bonus, if you email me at [SloanArtist@gmail.com](mailto:SloanArtist@gmail.com) with the subject line “Veterans in Entertainment,” I will send you a PDF with Veteran writing program information and interviews. These will serve as chapters in my book.

Best,

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Justin Sloan is a writer at Telltale Games, as well as a screenwriter and novelist. Justin holds an MA in writing from the Johns Hopkins University and a certificate in screenwriting from the University of California, Los Angeles School of Theater, Film, and Television. He interned with Folio Literary Management and *The Doctor T.J. Eckleburg Review*, and has published short stories and poetry in *Separate Worlds*, *Viral Cat*, *Coalesce*, *O-Dark Thirty*, and other literary publications. His screenplays have won or placed well in such contests as ScriptVamp, The-Greenlight, PAGE, and the Austin Film Festival.

The above was accomplished while working first as a US Marine, then living abroad in Japan, Italy, and Korea through his first MA in international relations. Justin was a Presidential Management Fellow and a David L. Borne National Security Education Program scholar, among other non-writing related accomplishments. Justin knows about transitioning careers and understands what it is like to hunger for the life of a full-time writer; he was, after all, wooed away from international trade and international banking to his current position with Telltale Games.

If you would like to follow Justin, you can email him at [SloanArtist@gmail.com](mailto:SloanArtist@gmail.com) or follow him on Twitter [@JustinMSloan](https://twitter.com/JustinMSloan). His website is [JustinMSloan.com](http://JustinMSloan.com), and he writes on the blogs [www.BayAreaScreenwriters.com](http://www.BayAreaScreenwriters.com) and [www.RedwoodsSociety.com](http://www.RedwoodsSociety.com).

For further writing by Justin, check out Telltale Games and specifically *Tales from the Borderlands*. Future books in the creative mentor series are coming soon, as are fiction books to include middle grade novels titled *Bringer of Light*, *Back by Sunrise*, and *Teddy in Monsterland*. His literary novel, *Mohira*, should be available on Amazon within the year.