



The Draft House: Drafter's Guide

Welcome to The Draft House! We're the "Draft Queens," Emily Carpenter and M.J. Pullen. Between us, we have six published books, more than a dozen completed drafts, and hundreds of thousands of words written. Our history of mistakes is long and glorious and occasionally useful. We are both moms and authors, and one of us is also trained as a therapist/facilitator. We love working with writers at all stages of their publishing journeys to develop great writing habits.

Long story short, we believe two basic things about writing novels (and narrative non-fiction):

1. The best way to learn to write a book is to **finish writing a book**.
2. Staying in touch with your writing EVERY DAY will give you the momentum you need to finish said book(s), no matter what else happens.

In The Draft House, you will plan, start and FINISH a book of 70,000 words in under 5 months.

We provide: accountability, encouragement, and a bit of constructive critique along the way, along with a forum of support with your fellow Drafters.

You provide: the idea for your book, willingness to learn, the commitment to show up for every meeting, and 4 ½ months of disciplined hard work. See? Easy.

If you're ready to go from "aspiring" to "accomplished," read on!

First, the Calendar

Planning and prewriting take place from September 10-30, 2017, with two mandatory meetings. **From October through January, you will be writing an average of 750 words per day for 18 weeks.** For most writers, that's an average of about an hour of writing per day, sometimes a little more. You will log your word counts weekly, with monthly required meetings. Please consider your work and family commitments during this time when registering for the program.

Take look at the group meeting schedule below to ensure you will be available and have internet access for each meeting. Attendance at these meetings is a cornerstone of our support and accountability program. **Drafters MUST be able to attend every meeting to qualify for and graduate from the program.**

If you have questions or concerns, please let us know BEFORE you register.
emily@draftyourbook.com, mj@draftyourbook.com)

Meeting	Date & Time (all times EST)
Pre-writing Workshop	Sunday, September 10, 2017 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Pre-writing Milestone Meeting	Sunday, September 24, 2017 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.
Act I Milestone Meeting	Sunday, October 22nd, 2017 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.
Act IIa Milestone Meeting	Sunday, November 17, 2017 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.
Act IIb Milestone Meeting	Sunday, December 17, 2017 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.
Act 3 Milestone Meeting	Sunday, January 21, 2018 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.
Wrap Party/Next Steps Discussion	Sunday, January 28, 2018 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Here's the Deal: Expectations/Benefits

Requirements for All Participants

To participate (or continue participating) in the DH program, you must:

- Register and pay in full by August 31, 2017 (via PayPal invoice)
- Have a basic storyline and most research ready by our kickoff Sept. 10, 2017
- Attend, via Skype, and actively participate in, **all** the milestone meetings listed above (barring documented emergencies)
- Be polite, respectful and constructive to other Drafters (and the Queens)
- Demonstrate a good faith effort to meet your word count goals, help others succeed and improve your writing skills

- Log your written word count weekly on the draftyourbook.com website from October to January. **The deadline is every Sunday night at midnight EST.**
 - Participants are allowed up to four (4) “late logs,” with a 72 hour grace period.
 - Participants may have two (2) “misses” -- planned or unplanned. *Use these carefully.*
 - To remain eligible for the program -- including participation in the Facebook groups, meetings, and milestone critiques -- you **must** respond to emails/outreach from the Draft Queens concerning logins, within 72 hours.
 - Please log your word count even if it’s a zero (0) for that week!

Benefits for All Participants

Active participants who meet the above requirements will receive all the following benefits, regardless of whether they are meeting their word count goals:

- Pre-writing workshop hosted by the Draft Queens and all Skype meetings
- Access to the Private Facebook group solely for this Season’s DH participants
- Monthly “milestone” critiques of up to 1000 words (plus your pre-writing plans and materials), provided you send your excerpt within one week of the milestone meeting
- 30 minutes of monthly one-on-one coaching with one of the Queens (Skype or phone), typically used in tandem with the milestone critique
- Access to the Word Count widget on draftyourbook.com
- Encouragement, accountability and ongoing professional advice on craft/publishing

Requirements to “Graduate”

To **graduate** from the program, Drafters must meet all the requirements above, AND:

- Finish and submit at least 70,000 words of original writing in one work of fiction or nonfiction by January 28, 2018. (This draft is for word verification only, and does not have to serve as your critique draft)
- Attend all milestone meetings
- Stay at or below the allowed limits of four (4) late logs and two (2) missed log-ins.

Benefits for Graduates

Graduates of the Draft House program receive:.

- Celebration, glory and bragging rights
- A Draft House mug with a “WINNER” insignia to commemorate your achievement
- A full critique of your completed 70,000 word manuscript by one or both Draft Queens (a value of \$900-1200)
 - Critique draft must be submitted digitally, within 3 months of the end of the program (April 28, 2018)
 - The Queens will return the draft to you via digital delivery, with comments and critique, within 2 months of submission
- A 50% discount on a future Draft House season (a value of \$325 or more)

Refund/Participation Policy

We **hate** talking about this, but sometimes things go awry, and it's important to be clear up front. Our program is about providing you with a place to be accountable, and to get support for your writing journey. We work really, really hard to do that; and we like to think we provide a great experience for our Drafters. That said, this is a process like any other, in which you will get out what you put in. It takes a village to provide all that great mutual support, but only you can put the words on the page,

By registering for the Draft House, you're committing to not only give it your all for your own writing, but to participate in good faith in a system alongside other writers. This means in the group space (meetings/Facebook group) and in your private communications with the Queens (critique, logging word counts). We will never judge ANYONE for having an off week or struggling. That's why we're here, in a safe space, and we promise never to shame you if you come up short. In return, we expect you to be honest with yourself and with us, and to communicate with us as scheduled, whether you've made your word count or not.

If you regularly fail to meet the group requirements and/or communicate with us about your writing, we will reach out to work with you, and to make sure you understand what's expected. If this doesn't work, or if you fail to be respectful, encouraging and open in group communications, we reserve the right to terminate your participation in the group and retract access to group resources, with no refunds.

Because of the nature of our group and the resources we provide, **please note that we are unable to provide refunds of fees for any reason.** If you must drop out of the DH season for a documented medical issue or other emergency, we'll be happy to work with you on crediting a portion of your registration toward a future season or individual coaching.

If you're not sure whether The Draft House is right for you, or you would like more information before registering, please reach out to either or both of us and we'll talk you through it. We want all our writers happy!

Alright, I'm In. What's Next? (The Process)

1. [Apply for the season](#). Make sure to answer the questions as thoroughly as possible. We will review applications on a rolling basis and reach out with questions as needed.
2. Upon acceptance, we'll invoice you \$650 for the 2017-18 season, which you can pay via PayPal (or Venmo) from your bank or credit card. Partial payments are acceptable, but payment is due in full by August 31, 2017.
3. Emily and M.J. will work with you to establish your writing schedule. We recommend selecting one "down week" with a lower word count to accommodate holidays, etc.
4. Create your own drafting calendar for the next 5 months, including weekly word count submissions and all 7 of our mandatory meetings.
5. Set up a Skype ID and email your username to mj@draftyourbook.com.
6. On Sunday, September 10th at 2:50 p.m. EST, log onto Skype for our first meeting. This will include a full orientation to the program as well as a workshop for plotting/planning your book.
7. Write like crazy!
8. Every Sunday by midnight, log your word count at draftyourbook.com.
9. Attend all the meetings and submit your excerpts for critique as desired.
10. Check the Facebook page regularly for encouragement and support. The more engaged you are, the more others will respond to you!
11. Finish your draft.
12. Celebrate!

FAQs

How much will I be writing?

Your end goal is 70,000 usable words in 18 weeks (by “usable,” we don’t mean perfect -- just a coherent draft that you can revise when you’re done). That’s on the shorter side for most genres of adult fiction, but still solidly qualifies as a novel. It’s slightly longer than most Middle Grade/Young Adult novels. You are free to write more than your goal, but we’ll only hold you accountable for the 70,000.

How does that goal break down weekly? Daily?

Your Draft House goal will be an average 750 words per day, 6 days per week. We have structured the program such that every participant can have an “off” week with a goal of 100 words per day. This can be used for vacations/holidays, or catching up if you fall behind.

You’ll notice that our daily goals also have a little “grace” built in. These extra words give you room to make your novel longer if needed; or you can use them to create character or scene sketches without losing your word count for the week. You may also simply want to get ahead so you can handle unforeseen obstacles.

Session	Duration	Words per Day	Words per Week (6 writing days per week)	Total words
Pre-Writing (Septemer)	3 weeks	varies	varies	n/a
Regular	17 weeks	750	4500	76,500
“Off” Week	1 week	100	600	600
Total Draft House Words				77,100

What are milestones?

Our program starts out with an intensive pre-writing workshop to get you connected to the group and ready to plan and write your book. We’ll check in as you plan, and then again as you finish each quarter of the book, to keep you on track and facilitate learning opportunities with the group.

Does it matter what my skill level is?

Nope. This program is all about getting words on the page and improving your skills through experience and feedback.

Does it matter what kind of book I want to write?

Only a little. All kinds of novels are appropriate, as well as narrative nonfiction: basically any long-form story with a character or plot arc. YA and Middle Grade are fine, as long as the first draft can be 70,000 words. (If you think your book will be too short, let us know and we'll work with you). Not ideal for our program: novellas, children's books, picture books, textbooks, technical manuals, workbooks, etc.

Do I need to know what book I'm writing from the beginning?

Yes. We'll help you flesh out your plot and structure during the prewriting phase; but you need a well-thought out premise to get the most out of pre-writing, and in order to forge ahead at a steady pace.

What happens if I change my mind about the story I'm writing?

Don't. :)

Seriously, it's a common writing trap to get derailed by a shiny new idea, especially when the going gets tough on your WIP (and it will, trust us). Keep working on the book you've committed to, and paid for. The Queens are here to remind you to jot down that new idea for later and go back to work.

What happens if I change my mind about the Draft House? Can I get a refund?

Sorry, no. Because of the intensive nature of this program and limited space available, we are not able to offer refunds for any reason. If you have extenuating (non-literary) circumstances, talk to us about crediting your enrollment toward individual coaching or deferring to next Season.

Do I really have to attend all the milestone meetings?

Yep. Really.

Is this a critique group? How much of the program involves critique?

This is not a critique group; but to ensure you are on the right track narratively, The Queens will be giving you feedback on little chunks (1000 words) of your story as we reach each milestone (¼ of the book). Drafters can also reach out to the group for critique exchanges, within certain parameters. We'll explain that as we kick things off.

Is this group right for me?

We hope so. But to be super honest: the Draft House isn't for everyone. We are serious about accountability and have high expectations for participants. If you dislike checking in with other people or tend to rebel against structure, this program probably isn't for you. We still like you, and we're happy to consider private coaching, but The Draft House is a no-excuses zone. where you'll make writing friends to keep for years. You're going to work hard and **finish your book already**.

