# Slay Your Deadlines with a Kanban Board

*Kylie Wolfe*

Kanban is a visual system used to trigger an action. The Japanese name roughly translates to "card you can see." The first Kanban system was developed by Taiichi Ohno for Toyota automotive in Japan in the early 1940s. Toyota wanted to increase productivity and efficiency to better compete with American rivals. The tool quickly became popular in all industries since it is inexpensive and visually displays inventory and production at every stage, thus revealing bottlenecks in product teams and processes.

In this workshop, we'll explore how to use a personal Kanban system to increase the productivity of our writing process by controlling workflow and focusing our planning. Hopefully, this will also inspire creativity.

A simple Kanban board has three major areas (swim lanes): **To Do**, **Doing**, and **Done**. The fun part is that you can personalize these any way you want.

## Planning Your Kanban System

*Roni Lauren*

The key to the Kanban method is flexibility. In order to achieve that, there are three main points to keep in mind when you set up your system:

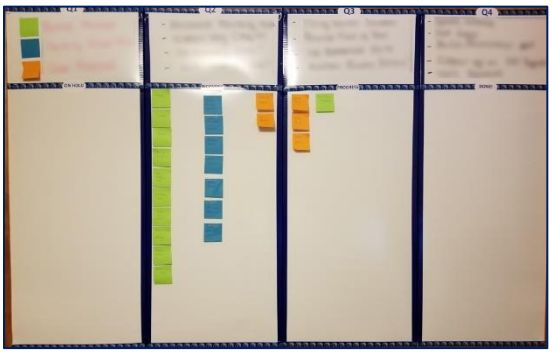
1. Plan Quarterly: Anything longer becomes cumbersome.
2. Use Laser Focus: No more than 3 major goals.
3. Revisit & Reassess: The plan is not set in stone.

Most of us are probably used to working with an annual schedule, which is totally fine. You can still keep your annual overview of what you want to achieve.

However when you set up your Kanban board, only worry about the next three months and *what you can reasonably achieve during that time*. Narrow your focus to as few goals as possible, the recommended number is no more than three. And in order to see whether or not you met your goals, make them measurable. Ideally they will include a number.

For example, one goal could be to increase the number of newsletter subscribers by 50/100/200 people (good/great/fantastic!). Or for a writing goal: working toward building a backlist of 2/4/6 books.

At the end of each quarter, check which goals you met and reassess which goals are the most important going forward. It may be the same goals as the quarter that just ended, or maybe you now have new priorities. *Remember: flexibility!*



☜ *Asa Maria Bradley* ☞

Find a PDF version of this presentation at: www.asamariabradley.com/ForWriters/AMB_Kanban.pdf

# Setting Your Goals and Building Your Board

Goal setting and project planning are topics large enough for a workshop on their own. For the purpose of what we're tackling today, we'll only skim over goals, projects, and tasks. When you go home and set up your "official" Kanban board, spend some in-depth time on this section. (Also, consider signing up for Sarra Cannon's HB90 Bootcamp, link in the resource section).

**Let's do some brainstorming!** Write down what you want accomplish in your writing career. Once you have that list, narrow it down to the two or three goals that seem most important, or most urgent, and make them measurable. That doesn't mean you're never going to work on the other goals, just not right now.

| Goals | Because I want to: | Most Important/Urgent Goals |
|---|---|---|
| | | 1) |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | 2) |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | 3) |
| | | |
| | | |

Next, figure out what projects you can work on that will achieve those important/urgent goals. And then, create the tasks that you have to do to complete the projects. (Tasks = Sticky Notes for your Kanban Board.)

Goal 1: _____

Project 1: _____ Project 2: _____ Project 3: _____

| Tasks | Tasks | Tasks |
|---|---|---|
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |
| ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ | ❑ _____ |

## Goal 2:

Project 1: _____ Project 2: _____ Project 3: _____

| Tasks | Tasks | Tasks |
|---|---|---|
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |

## Goal 3:

Project 1: _____ Project 2: _____ Project 3: _____

| Tasks | Tasks | Tasks |
|---|---|---|
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |

Time to make the stickies! This is the best part. Every goal gets its own color. Yup, not project—GOALS. Transfer the tasks onto sticky notes and—once you have your Kanban board made—mount them all in the **To Do** area of the board. On Monday, pick the ones you think you can reasonably accomplish in a week, and move them into the **Doing** area. Once they are completed, stick them in the **Done** space.

Each week, move more stickies into the To Do area and experience the pleasure of seeing how much progress you're making each week—even if you're only spending half an hour or less some evenings.

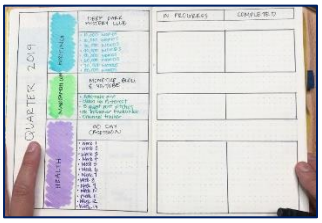
At the end of the quarter, revisit and reassess: go through this worksheet again and fill the board with new stickies. Some notes from the previous quarter may remain, that is totally okay. The point is, **you're making progress and you have visual proof of it**!

## Kanban Board Material Ideas

- Wall Mounted White Board: If you don't need a magnetic board, a very affordable erasable white board can be made out of White Panelboard. You find this in the panel section of any hardware or lumber store. It comes in sheets of 4' x 8', costs less than $15 and for a few bucks—often free—you can have the store cut it to any size you want.
- Flexible Materials: find white board poster board or chalkboard poster board in your stationary store. *Note: The white board poster board isn't very erasable, but it works great for sticky notes.* More permanent flexible materials: "Vinyl Peel and Stick" film for wall or floor tiles from your hardware store.
- Mirrors, Picture Frames, Glass Marker Boards, Standing White Boards, Corkboards, Cabinet Doors, and Plain Wall Space: these can all be made into magnificent Kanban boards.
- Washi Tape and Color Duck/Duct Tape. All the glorious Washi Tape you want!
- Stickies, stickies, stickies in any size and color and shape you want. I recommend getting the ones that has glue on the whole back side.

## Online Resources

- Sarra Cannon's Heart Breathings Free YouTube channel is a marvel of writing and planning videos, here are two where she explains her planning system:
  -How I Create My 90 Day Plan And Use A Kanban Board to Achieve My Goals: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8wbLgmNJbQ (55 min).
  -My 90 Day Plan Review - How Did I Do??: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9CTIemxaN8 (23 min).
  Here's the link to her channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCasYwEzMc7tjKuAS-vtDYPw.
- Sarra Cannon's Heart Breathings 90-Day Bootcamp Class completely changed my (writing) life. Sarra encourages, inspires, and empowers you during the class and beyond. Check it out at: https://heartbreathings.teachable.com/p/hb90-bootcamp. If you want to know when Sarra next runs the class, sign up for her newsletter at: https://heartbreathings.com/newsletter/. (Or follow me on social media because I have taken a big gulp of the Sarra Cannon Kool-Aid and shout about her classes whenever one opens up.☺)
- Some popular online Kanban applications are: Trello.com, Smartsheet.com, Productboard.com, and Clubhouse.io. Most have free trial periods. Clubhouse is permanently. *Note: I have not used or evaluated any of these products.*
- Notebook Kanban: Marissa Mohi's video shows how she uses the HB90 system in a bullet journal:
  -Kanban in a Bullet Journal | The HB90 Planning Method: https://youtu.be/AzDwN92sVIc.



*Marissa Mohi*