

A STAYCATION RETREAT, JUST FOR YOU

The Quiet Chapter

A five-day writer's retreat at home - Monday to Friday - built around gentle movement, restorative yoga, unhurried meals from M&S;, and real, protected time on your novel.

Five days. One manuscript. No commute.

A calm, printable retreat companion for creating space around your writing - with a rhythm of deep work, gentle movement, good food and deliberate rest.

WRITE • MOVE • REST • RETURN

Welcome to your retreat

Treat this like a retreat you've travelled to, even though you haven't left home. Phone on do-not-disturb during writing blocks. No chores, no errands, no "just quickly" tasks.

Each day balances one solid morning writing block, an afternoon block for drafting, editing or research, gentle yoga, an easy walk or stretch, and simple M&S; meals so you're never thinking about cooking. Sessions are deliberately gentle: the point is steady energy for the page.

Ground rules for the week

- No emails or work Slack during writing blocks.
- Keep exercise and yoga gentle - this is not a fitness challenge.
- Protect Wednesday's rest afternoon. It is there on purpose.
- Eat meals away from your desk.
- Treat the daily journal entry as part of the retreat, not an optional extra.

A simple daily rhythm

MORNING	Wake gently • breakfast • short craft lecture • deep writing
MIDDAY	Fresh air • easy lunch • reset
AFTERNOON	Lighter writing, revision or research • proper rest
EVENING	Gentle yoga • dinner • short reflection

Your job this week is not to produce a perfect manuscript. It is to make enough quiet for the story to become audible again.

Monday

Arrival & world-building

PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. Describe the place your story opens in using only your protagonist's senses - no exposition, no backstory, just what they notice first.
2. Write your opening line five different ways. Read them aloud and pick the one that surprises you most.
3. What does your protagonist want in this very first scene, right now - and what's standing in their way?

7:30am	YOGA	Gentle wake-up flow 15-20 min: cat-cow, child's pose, gentle sun salutations. Watch: Yoga With Adriene - Short Wake Up Flow (15 min).
8:15am	BREAKFAST	M&S; Breakfast Granola with yoghurt and berries, or croissants warmed through, with a proper pot of tea or coffee. No phone at the table.
9:00am	LECTURE	Brandon Sanderson - Worldbuilding, Part One ~50 min. BYU Creative Writing Lecture #5, on building the world your story lives in.
9:55am	WRITE	Opening pages / world-building 2 hr deep work block. Arrive in the story: setting, atmosphere and the world your characters live in. Don't edit - just lay ground.
11:55am	MOVE	Fresh air break 15-20 min gentle walk. No screens - let the last scene settle.
12:30pm	LUNCH	M&S; Lunch A Food to Order or Dine In sandwich/salad, or a Plant Kitchen/Eat Well soup with a bread roll.
1:30pm	WRITE	Character notes & light drafting 90 min: character sketches, backstory, or continue today's scene if the energy is still there.
3:00pm	REST	Tea & a proper break Percy Pigs or a Colin the Caterpillar slice with a cuppa. Read a few pages of a novel you admire.
4:00pm	YOGA	Gentle evening stretch 15 min: forward folds, seated twists, legs-up-the-wall. Watch: Yoga With Adriene - Wind Down Yoga.
6:30pm	DINNER	M&S; Dine In A Gastropub main with sides - treat yourself as the retreat's welcome dinner.
8:00pm	REFLECT	Journal & lights down 5-10 min: jot what surprised you about today's writing. No screens after 9pm.

PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. Write a scene where your protagonist is completely alone and no one is watching. What do they actually do?
2. Give whoever opposes your protagonist a full page to explain, in their own voice, why they're right.
3. Write a piece of dialogue where your character says one thing but clearly means another. Don't explain the gap - let the reader feel it.

7:30am	YOGA	Gentle wake-up flow 20 min beginner flow with mobility work for hips and shoulders. Watch: Yoga With Adriene - Sunrise Yoga.
8:15am	BREAKFAST	M&S; Breakfast Porridge pots or crumpets with honey, plus fresh fruit.
9:00am	LECTURE	Brandon Sanderson - Character Creation, Part One ~50 min. BYU Creative Writing Lecture #4, building a character from the ground up.
9:55am	WRITE	Deep dive into character 2 hr block. Focus on voice: dialogue and interiority, even if it doesn't make the final draft.
11:55am	MOVE	Gentle walk 20 min, ideally somewhere green. Let a plot problem turn over quietly rather than forcing it.
12:30pm	LUNCH	M&S; Lunch Simply Fuller Longer salad box or a wrap, eaten outside if the weather allows.
1:30pm	WRITE	Scene continuation 90 min continuing yesterday's and this morning's threads. Aim for momentum over perfection.
3:00pm	REST	Treat break Extremely Chocolatey biscuits with tea. Step away from the desk entirely.
4:00pm	YOGA	Restorative stretch 15-20 min gentle hip openers and a longer final relaxation. Watch: SarahBethYoga - 15 Minute Relaxing Yoga Stretches to Unwind.
6:30pm	DINNER	M&S; Dinner Made Without or Plant Kitchen ready meal, or a Cafe/Bistro-style pasta.
8:00pm	REFLECT	Journal & lights down Note one line each character would say right now, in their own voice.

Wednesday

Midweek push, then rest

PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. Push through the scene you've been avoiding all week - just get the bones down in plain, unpolished language. You can fix it later.
2. Rewrite one beat of today's scene from a different character's point of view. Notice how they see your protagonist.
3. Write the worst possible thing that could happen next, and let your protagonist walk straight into it.

7:45am	YOGA	Slow wake-up flow A slightly later start - 15 min gentle stretch, no rush. Watch: Yoga With Adriene - Sunrise Yoga.
8:30am	BREAKFAST	M&S; Breakfast Pastries and fresh orange juice - a small indulgence for the halfway point.
9:15am	LECTURE	Brandon Sanderson - Plot, Part One ~50 min. BYU Creative Writing Lecture #2, on plot structure and momentum.
10:10am	WRITE	Longest writing block of the week 2.5 hr, your biggest push - chase a difficult scene or a big chapter while energy is fresh.
12:45pm	LUNCH	M&S; Lunch Dine In for lunch - push the boat out a little since the morning's work was heavy.
1:45pm	REST AFTERNOON	Deliberate downtime No writing. A gentle walk somewhere new, a bath, a favourite film, or simply napping. Protect this real rest.
4:30pm	YOGA	Long restorative session 25-30 min: supported child's pose, legs-up-the-wall, gentle twists, finishing with stillness. Watch: Yoga With Kassandra - 30 Min Restorative Yoga.
6:30pm	DINNER	M&S; Dinner Something comforting - shepherd's pie or fish pie, with an Only Deliciously M&S; pudding after.
8:00pm	REFLECT	Journal & lights down No writing notes tonight - just reflect on how the rest felt. It's part of the work too.

PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. In one line, note what your protagonist wanted at the start of the week, what they've got instead, and the gap between the two.
2. Pick one scene and cut it by a third. What has to stay for it to still work?
3. Find one spot where you're telling instead of showing, and rewrite that beat as action or dialogue.

7:30am	YOGA	Gentle wake-up flow 20 min beginner flow with a touch more energy. Watch: Yoga With Adriene - Short Wake Up Flow.
8:15am	BREAKFAST	M&S; Breakfast Granola or overnight oats - whatever felt good on day one.
9:00am	LECTURE	Ellen Brock - Self-Editing Your Novel ~15-20 min. Practical tips from a professional novel editor on approaching a self-edit pass.
9:25am	WRITE	Read-through & revision 2 hr: read the week's pages with fresh eyes, mark what's working, lightly revise - don't rewrite wholesale.
11:40am	MOVE	Fresh air break 15-20 min walk. Think through plot logic or continuity questions from the read-through.
12:30pm	LUNCH	M&S; Lunch Soup and a sandwich meal deal from the Food Hall - quick and easy.
1:30pm	WRITE	Targeted revision 90 min fixing specific scenes flagged this morning, or filling gaps you noticed.
3:00pm	REST	Treat break Colin the Caterpillar slice or a Corner Shop meal-deal treat, with tea.
4:00pm	YOGA	Gentle evening stretch 15 min wind-down flow. Watch: Yoga With Adriene - Wind Down Yoga.
6:30pm	DINNER	M&S; Dinner Gastropub range main - pie, curry or similar - with a side.
8:00pm	REFLECT	Journal & lights down List three things about the manuscript you're proud of so far.

Friday

Wrap-up & celebration

PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

1. Write the final line of this chapter or section - even if it's not the story's real ending, write it as if it were.
2. Write a short letter to yourself as you were on Monday morning, telling them what changed this week.
3. Sketch the very next scene - the one you'll write when you sit back down after today - in three sentences.

8:00am	YOGA	Slow, easy flow 15 min gentle stretch - a relaxed final morning. Watch: Yoga With Adriene - Sunrise Yoga.
8:45am	BREAKFAST	M&S; Breakfast Whatever felt like the best breakfast of the week - repeat your favourite.
9:30am	LECTURE	MK Williams - How to Submit Short Stories to Literary Magazines ~15 min. A practical walkthrough of how she got a short story accepted.
9:50am	WRITE	Final push & tidy-up 1 hr 40 min: finish the scene in progress, tie off loose threads, and note where the story goes next.
11:30am	MOVE	Celebratory walk 30 min somewhere you enjoy - a proper outing to mark the end of the retreat.
12:30pm	LUNCH	M&S; Celebration Lunch Dine In or a Food Hall spread - a small celebration lunch, maybe with a nice drink.
1:30pm	RESEARCH	Short story markets & competitions 45 min-1 hr: browse Reedsy, Duotrope or Submittable Discover and shortlist 3-5 realistic homes. Note deadlines and word counts.
2:30pm	WRITE	Read it all back 1 hr, low pressure: read the whole week's output start to finish. No editing - just notice how far you've come.
3:45pm	REST	Retreat close Percy Pigs or cake, tea, and a closing journal entry: what you wrote, what surprised you, what's next.
7:00pm	DINNER	M&S; Celebration Dinner A full Dine In deal - starter, main, side, dessert and a drink - to close the retreat properly.

Before Monday

Your M&S; shopping list

Buy enough to make food effortless rather than ambitious. Tick things off as you go.

BREAKFAST ■ Granola, yoghurt & berries ■ Porridge pots ■ Croissants / crumpets ■ Orange juice, tea & coffee	LUNCH ■ 2-3 Food to Order / Dine In sandwiches ■ Plant Kitchen or Eat Well soup ■ Simply Fuller Longer salad box ■ A couple of meal-deal wraps
DINNER ■ 2 x Dine In deals (Mon & Fri) ■ Gastropub range main (x2) ■ A comforting ready meal (shepherd's/fish pie) ■ Plant Kitchen or Made Without option	TREATS & SNACKS ■ Percy Pigs ■ Colin the Caterpillar slices ■ Extremely Chocolatey biscuits ■ Only Deliciously M&S; puddings ■ Fresh fruit for movement breaks

A note before you begin

Set up your writing space on Sunday evening. Put the food away, choose the notebook or document you'll use, leave your yoga mat somewhere visible, and decide where you'll take your first walk. Monday morning should feel like arrival, not admin.

Your intention for the week

Enjoy the quiet chapter.

Video links

All YouTube videos used in the five-day retreat, shown as full URLs for easy reference.

Yoga With Adriene - Short Wake Up Flow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8bEWn2E9uo>

Brandon Sanderson - Worldbuilding, Part One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATNvOk5rIJA>

Yoga With Adriene - Wind Down Yoga

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiWDsfZ3zbo>

Yoga With Adriene - Sunrise Yoga

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7xsYgTeM2Q>

Brandon Sanderson - Character Creation, Part One

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

SarahBethYoga - 15 Minute Relaxing Yoga Stretches to Unwind

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysOXmEjXT7Y>

Brandon Sanderson - Plot, Part One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrlogch5DBU>

Yoga With Kassandra - 30 Min Restorative Yoga - Legs Up The Wall

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGZdaH_fvNE

Ellen Brock - Self-Editing Your Novel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-e82SouYns>

MK Williams - How to Submit Short Stories to Literary Magazines

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