

Northern Beaches Writers' Group leader, Zena Shapter, shares her team's approach on taking on the Write a Book in a Day challenge:

1. Pick the main character and brainstorm what their problem might be given the parameter setting and issue.
2. Pick the antagonist – what's stopping the protagonist from solving their problem?
3. Decide on the climax: how do protagonist and antagonist clash?
4. Use a four-act screenwriting technique to plot the remaining story.
5. Divide the plot into chapters by the number of writers in the team.
6. Pick start and end points for each chapter.
7. Write individually for 2 hours.
8. Read whole thing aloud and critique each chapter. It's helpful to make notes while someone reads aloud, then discuss as a group at the end.
9. Rewrite individually for 2 hours.
10. Single editor edits (4.5 hours) while the rest of the team do the book's layout, illustrate, write the blurb, title and proofread edited sections as well as from the ending backwards in case the editor doesn't get to the end in time.

The collaborative process on the day is good for so many reasons. It:

- Teaches you to remain flexible as a writer. Writing is a collaborative process between writer – beta readers – editor – and often agent as well. It always will be. So the quicker writers get used to that the better.
- Enables an exchange of writing skills – to see how others actually put their skills into practice. Some team members say this is especially useful for those relatively new to writing.
- Involves creating, so that's always good. It's amazing to watch an idea transform into a book – a whole book – in a single 12 hour period.
- Warms everyone's hearts to see each other pitching in to help out and extend themselves to try new things – all for a good cause. The thrill of raising money for The Kids' Cancer Project is of course amazing too – all the good feelies!