

UNITED WISDOM

Preparation that endlessly replaces beginning

Freedom and Action

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Epigraph

> *when, where, and how*

Peter Gollwitzer, “Implementation Intentions” (1999), p. 494; a brief fragment. The passage concerns specifying implementation of a chosen goal, rather than the sufficiency of any plan or an obligation to act.

What this article is about

Preparation can be real work: learning a tool, checking facts, obtaining permission or gathering necessary materials. Yet another situation is possible. Every new preparatory step creates another, while the action for which everything began remains somewhere in an indefinite future. The number of books read or folders created does not explain what is happening. We cannot immediately conclude that someone is afraid, lazy or unwilling to pursue their chosen goal. First, a real dependency needs to be distinguished from a condition that keeps changing.

Through a hypothetical personal short story, we examine when preparation makes beginning possible, when it becomes a separate project and how to describe the boundary between them. Peter Gollwitzer's work on implementation intentions helps distinguish a chosen goal from linking a situation to an action; this is a limited research comparison, rather than a guarantee of performance. Our everyday questions and voluntary trial are editorial proposals. The article urges neither immediate action on everything nor bypassing necessary checks. The appropriate decision now may be obtaining missing knowledge, changing the task, agreeing on another scope or leaving it. What matters is honestly naming the result to which the next preparation belongs.

I. Preparation derives meaning from the chosen action

Imagine Svetlana, who wants to write a short fictional story for herself. She has an image of an empty station and two characters meeting after a long separation. She chooses a notebook, reads about composition and watches analyses of dialogue. These activities can be interesting and useful. Yet after several weeks, no scene exists. Before explaining the delay through her character, it is helpful to ask which action she expected to become possible after each preparation. It may turn out that no such action was named.

If the task is a first draft scene, the structure of the whole book need not already be resolved. Svetlana may not know the ending, eventual length or submission requirements. Those questions matter for other results. However, she may lack a clear way to record a few lines of dialogue, giving a practice example a direct purpose. Preparation becomes more specific when the possibility it opens can be named. Knowledge of composition and a finished scene may be connected while remaining different results.

The purpose itself also needs clarification. Svetlana says she is writing for herself, yet sometimes assesses every idea as if a journal must accept it tomorrow. This does not prove a hidden need for recognition. Perhaps her goal really has changed, or perhaps an unsuitable criterion is being applied to a draft. The difference can be discussed without guessing motives. A personal sketch and a submission manuscript require different conditions; combining them can make the nearest action unclear.

Not all preparation needs to serve another activity. Reading about literature can be an independently chosen pleasure. An honest account would then say that Svetlana is presently reading and learning, rather than obliged to write a story. The problem arises when one activity is endlessly presented as fulfilling another promise to herself or fellow participants. Distinguishing goals does not prohibit changing direction. It allows a change to be named and frees preparation from having to justify a result someone has not currently chosen to produce.

II. A necessary condition has content and a limit

Svetlana wants to use a real family event in her scene. If the text would reveal another person's private information, consent cannot be replaced by advice to write anything at all. Here preparation concerns the permissibility of the content. Permission can be obtained, characters made genuinely fictional or another scene selected. Such a pause cannot be called unnecessary in advance. A real dependency can be described by naming the absent condition and why this particular action should not be performed without it.

Elsewhere in the story there is an unfamiliar technical detail. Svetlana can verify it, remove it or retain an explicit note for later clarification in a private draft. The choice depends on how the text will be used. An unverified claim cannot be presented as fact in publication; an unnecessary detail can be omitted from a private fictional scene. The question is not whether lack of preparation is permissible in general. It is which requirement belongs to the present result and which to its subsequent use.

Conditions involving significant responsibility especially need to be maintained. Required qualifications, safety verification or a decision concerning another person's resources do not become unnecessary because beginning is reduced to a small step. Our literary example provides no grounds for starting treatment, altering a structure or undertaking other work

without required checks. Sometimes the next preparatory result is a confirmed boundary of one's involvement. That boundary may leave the action unavailable, without implying that preparation failed or someone lacked determination.

In a safe personal task, a condition can also have a reasonable limit. If one method of formatting dialogue is needed, a particular worked example addresses the request. A second book might be interesting, but its necessity requires a separate reason. When each book creates a requirement for another without a named new question, the readiness criterion can be reconsidered. Self-accusation of avoidance is unnecessary. It is enough to notice that the condition no longer says when the chosen draft work becomes possible.

III. A general goal does not describe the moment of action

In his 1999 review, Peter Gollwitzer distinguishes a goal intention from an implementation intention. The latter links an anticipated situation with a particular response: where or under which condition a person performs which action. This research distinction concerns organising a chosen intention. It does not establish that a goal is necessarily good, freely accepted or performable by anyone. The portions of the review read give us no right to present our literary example as a validated method or guarantee an end to postponement.

Svetlana may sincerely want to write the story without specifying what the nearest free evening is for. She opens the folder, sees unread materials and chooses another analysis. Her general intention does not state what should happen in this situation. A more specific personal arrangement is possible: after a chosen practice example, try recording one exchange of lines. This is an editorial example linking a condition to an action, rather than a literal reproduction of experimental procedures or a promise of success.

The situation needs to be available and the action within the person's participation. A plan to write well upon feeling completely ready defines neither a checkable condition nor a controllable result. Svetlana cannot command future readers to enjoy her work. She can write draft lines, save them and later choose what to do with them. However, the time may be occupied by actually caring for another person. The condition then did not occur, giving no grounds to portray nonperformance as a personality trait.

Specificity requires no rigid surveillance system. One available situation can be selected, what happened examined and the proposal changed. If the general intention no longer fits, a detailed plan should not compel its preservation. If an action is unsafe or violates consent, a clear condition does not make it permissible. Distinguishing the goal from implementation clarifies a question without deciding for the person. Voluntary participation and revision belong to the arrangement of the work itself, rather than a reward for correct performance.

IV. The preparatory boundary should address the present uncertainty

Svetlana notices she is choosing another dialogue textbook. What remains unknown after the previous one can be asked. Does she not understand how to mark a change of speaker, or how to make characters' speech distinct? These are different questions. The first may need a particular technical clarification, the second several draft attempts and examination of their result. A general need to prepare more hides the difference. A detailed request supports choosing the appropriate work, without promising an immediate answer.

Sometimes the question concerns an assessment unavailable without the text itself. Svetlana wants to know beforehand whether the lines will be convincing. New material can provide examples without evaluating an unwritten scene. A circle appears: no text is made before confidence in its quality, while quality cannot be considered without a text. In that case, a safe personal draft can provide the missing object of discussion. This is a possibility in our hypothetical situation, rather than a rule that all uncertainty must be resolved through action.

The extent of needed confidence can also be distinguished. For a first personal sketch, knowing how to save it and avoid revealing private information may suffice. A handover to an editor will bring other requirements. Svetlana can postpone the handover without postponing all writing. A scene can remain imperfect and private. Separating stages does not make the work complete prematurely. It shows that some questions can be left for the result they actually concern, rather than all being moved to the beginning.

If a real obstacle remains after clarification, it should not be renamed an excuse. Svetlana might lack a suitable device, quiet space or energy that evening. Changing conditions, time or the task may be appropriate. A trial must not serve as proof that resources are always sufficient when someone wants correctly. A preparatory boundary is useful only when it respects actual circumstances. Otherwise, it becomes an arbitrary ban on asking questions concealed beneath an attractive promise to move into action.

V. Completed preparation should not be called an unbegun task

Suppose Svetlana has learned dialogue formatting and checked that the saved file opens. This preparation is complete within the stated scope. Yet the scene has not been written. Both facts can be recognised without devaluing actual work or assigning it an absent result. Saying that still nothing has happened erases real work. Saying the story is almost ready hides an important boundary. More precise language states which condition is fulfilled and which action remains a separately chosen next step.

The boundary helps on returning to the task too. A week later Svetlana may forget which formatting she already checked and reopen the same analysis. A short note about the completed check allows her not to repeat it without a reason. The note is no proof of permanent readiness. If the programme or text's purpose changed, some conditions may need reconsideration. A retained basis is more useful than a general label: it shows what changed and which question genuinely opened again.

Beginning need not follow preparation immediately. Svetlana may stop because her free evening has ended. That is an ordinary distinction between time and result. A note naming a draft dialogue exchange as the next available work does not become a promise to perform it under any circumstances. The task can remain for the next chosen period. A pause need not be declared wrong solely because the technical possibility appeared. Availability of an action and agreement to give it present time also concern different questions.

Endless preparation becomes more visible when its already obtained result disappears each time. After every clarification, someone again regards themselves as at the starting point, although particular missing knowledge has been supplied. Instead of generally concluding that fear is present, the new condition and its justification for the current task can be examined. If significant, preparation continues for a new reason. If it concerns remote perfection, a first draft can be chosen. The distinction requires attention to content, rather than an accusatory assessment of repetition.

VI. Draft action needs to permit an imperfect result

Svetlana writes two lines and immediately notices that the characters sound alike. If the rule for beginning requires a good scene, she might consider the attempt invalid and return to textbooks. A draft result has another purpose: showing the current version and the question arising from it. An unsuccessful line can be a real part of a draft without being judged artistically successful. “Written, needs distinct voices” is more accurate than automatically equating imperfection with an absence of beginning.

That does not imply that quality is unimportant. It becomes the subject of separate work: a line can be selected, its function examined, its fit with a character considered and the line rewritten. Learning material can now address a particular question from an existing text. Preparation returns with a stated reason. Learning is not prohibited after beginning. Learning and draft actions can support each other while keeping their results clear and not requiring every error to be anticipated in advance.

Draft status needs to be communicated to others in joint work. A finished story cannot be promised and then initial lines offered without clarification. Participants can agree to examine a fragment, name the questions being discussed and retain publication as a separate decision.

Voluntary discussion requires neither disclosure of personal details nor agreement with every suggestion. Another participant may have no time to read. A draft makes assistance more specific without obliging others to provide confidence or continual support for the project.

Where errors have serious consequences, draft status gives no permission for actual use. An unsuccessful scene can be saved privately in the literary example. This cannot establish a right to test an unverified decision on other people. The boundary between making safe material for consideration and using a result needs to remain explicit. Imperfection is permitted within an agreed stage, rather than through cancelling responsibility. The initial version retains its learning function without turning the word “trial” into a universal justification of risk.

VII. A preparatory project can be chosen separately

Svetlana realises that reading analyses currently interests her more than her own story. This can be an honest choice. It need not be explained as weakness or hidden resistance. A new goal can be named: examine several ways of organising dialogue and save notes. That goal also has content and a limit if she wants them. Everything learned need not be immediately applied to a literary work. The possibility of learning is not defined only by the number of completed personal texts.

A significant difference arises when there is already an agreement with another person. If Svetlana promised a scene for shared reading, a change of activity needs to be communicated instead of disguised as an inevitable preparatory delay. A new scope, another date or withdrawal can be discussed. This guarantees no satisfaction in the other person, but actual information allows them to choose their actions. Indefinite promises to study a little more may leave someone waiting for a result Svetlana's present choice does not envisage.

A separate preparatory project can expand too. Someone intended to read one analysis but decided to study the whole history of drama. Expansion can be wanted; it requires more time and changes the result. Every enlargement should not automatically be called avoidance. A freely chosen investigation simply needs to be distinguished from a condition allegedly indispensable for writing one private scene. Broad research has its own value, but it should not quietly become a compulsory entry requirement for an initially modest project.

Sometimes distinguishing goals restores simplicity to the choice. Svetlana can read this evening without writing, recognising that choice beforehand. Another evening can be used to try a scene with the knowledge already available. Neither evening has to justify the other. If each choice painfully diverges from a retained promise, the promise and conditions of participation can be examined. The article determines no winning goal. It proposes keeping discussion of the goal distinct from endlessly increasing preliminary requirements.

VIII. A date can name a decision without creating readiness

Svetlana decides to return to the draft question after one selected analysis. This point distinguishes present preparation from an indefinite someday. Yet a calendar date itself provides no skill, permission or available energy. If necessary material is unavailable, that circumstance can be named and a new decision made. A date is no magical means. It marks a moment for considering the work's state, while the content of that consideration depends on what actually happened.

Several honest possibilities can be named beforehand: preparation suffices for a personal draft; a specific necessary question remains; the goal changed; conditions prevent continuation. Returning to the task need not end in an order to write. It supports choosing a decision corresponding to the observed position. A new question can be named and connected to the present result. Simply wishing to read more can be recognised as choosing an activity, without declaring it a compulsory technical dependency.

Others have their own constraints around a joint deadline. Moving a personal reconsideration point does not automatically move another person's agreement. An intermediate state can be communicated beforehand and available forms of participation discussed. This is an editorial suggestion for safe conversation, rather than a promise of agreement. Someone cannot be required to wait indefinitely just because preparation feels unfinished. Their impatience also cannot prove that a necessary check is no longer needed. Each circumstance needs a separate description.

Under threat or coercion, a voluntary reconsideration point may be unsuitable altogether. Proving an ability to begin under pressure is unnecessary. The proposed trial can be stopped while real conditions of safety and participation are addressed. In an ordinary personal task, a calendar boundary remains a tool that can be removed. If maintaining it takes more attention than the work, a simpler note can suffice. Clarifying the next decision should not become a separate compulsory system controlling an entire life.

IX. Repeated preparation can be examined through new reasons

A month later, Svetlana returns to the same textbook. This is not necessarily the earlier stoppage. Perhaps a scene now exists with a specific problem, and she is seeking a suitable example. Rereading may have a new function. The questions before the first and present uses can be compared: what she wanted to learn then, what she obtained and what is needed now. When content differs, repetition should not automatically be called a pointless circle. The same material can serve different stages of work.

If the question is the same but the answer does not remain usable, the method of using the material can be clarified. Svetlana reads an example without understanding how to apply it to her lines. Further explanation or joint consideration might then be more suitable than another general course. Fear of mistakes need not be assumed beforehand. The observation concerns only a method not transferred into use. Possible explanations differ: difficulty, an unsuitable example, reading conditions, a missing operation or changed interest in the story itself.

Simple forgetting is possible too. Svetlana need not remember every conclusion from several weeks. A short note about the chosen method can help if needed to return to the work. Saving notes guarantees no application and does not become a compulsory archive of everything read. One example can be tried to see whether the method is available now. If not, particular information remains for the next choice. Recordkeeping should support the task, rather than create another endless preparation in the name of memory.

Repetition need not become a personal accusation. Saying that preparation is happening again can identify a new necessary question, independent learning or a return to an old condition without a clear limit. These states have different consequences. Distinguishing them in the present case can suffice, without deriving a general law about oneself. Sometimes preparation should end, sometimes continue and sometimes be recognised as another chosen activity. Examining content names grounds for the decision without promising that one conversation will remove every future difficulty in beginning.

X. Beginning does not remove the right to reconsider the task

Svetlana saved a first scene, noticed similar character voices and decided to work on one line now. Preparation acquired a particular connection to draft action. This confirms neither completion of the story nor easier subsequent scenes. A limited result can be recognised: a text exists where none existed before, and a question about its further structure has been named. That result is specific enough to require no general declaration of victory over procrastination or transformation of the author's character.

Another ending to the trial is possible: Svetlana realises she does not want to write this story. Interest in reading and discussing literature remains. Without actual obligations to others, withdrawal needs no proof of a psychological cause. Where obligations exist, they need separate resolution. A started text does not compel completion of the whole plan. The saved scene can remain a private experience of work, and choosing not to continue an honest decision, rather than a hidden failure under another person's productivity standard.

The preparatory boundary is not drawn once and forever. A later stage may require new knowledge, permission or verification. The distinction can be retained: name the result for which a condition is needed, how its fulfilment will be visible and what remains open

afterwards. This does not remove uncertainty. It permits working with a particular part of it without moving every future stage's requirements onto each present action. Reasonable preparation can continue alongside a project already begun.

Endless substitution for beginning becomes clearer when invisible compulsion is removed. Complete readiness for everything is unnecessary to choose a safe personal draft; a draft is unnecessary to justify an interest in preparation. Necessary conditions remain in force. Between these statements, room remains for a decision about a particular task. It can be made, reconsidered or postponed with a named reason, preserving respect for one's own conditions and others' actual agreements.

What this means in practice

For a safe task chosen voluntarily, name the nearest action and ask which particular condition is still needed beforehand. Separate a necessary question from merely interesting material and requirements of a later stage. A personal draft might need a clear way to record dialogue; publication brings other checks. Do not transfer this trial to actions lacking required permission, qualifications or safety verification. Reducing scale does not remove these conditions.

If the condition can be clarified, choose a limited preparatory result and an available point for returning to the decision. Then ask what was actually learned and which action is now possible. A draft can remain imperfect, a remaining question be named or learning be recognised as the activity presently chosen instead of the original project. No calendar of every action or proof of absence of fear is required. This is an editorial invitation to clarify work, rather than a scientifically validated treatment or motivation-change procedure.

The invitation can be declined, shortened or stopped under threat or coercion. Personal writing need not be shown to others. If real disagreement with the goal, missing resources or necessary external verification becomes apparent, another decision can be chosen instead of forcing a beginning. Existing agreements are discussed separately; a new personal boundary does not cancel them automatically. Starting creates no obligation to finish the whole project, and further preparation needs no invented justification when honestly named as a chosen activity.

Key quotation

> *subordinate to goal intentions*

Peter Gollwitzer, “Implementation Intentions” (1999), p. 494; a fragment concerning implementation intentions. A particular plan serves the named goal. It does not establish the goal's desirability, the person's agreement or the presence of necessary conditions.

Connections between traditions

The research distinction between goal and implementation intentions is compared here with editorial questions about dependencies, preparation's purpose and agreement to act. A psychological research review and a personal literary draft retain different grounds. A specific plan is not declared a universal virtue, religious rule or proof that the goal was freely chosen. The comparison supports a precise question about the nearest action, without creating a general doctrine of life's proper pace.

Sources

• Peter M. Gollwitzer. Implementation Intentions: Strong Effects of Simple Plans (1999). American Psychologist, 54(7), 493–503; DOI 10.1037/0003-066X.54.7.493. Specified definitions and selected discussion of conditions, action initiation and goal revision were read; not every study cited in the review was independently read. The primary journal PDF is available through the author's university site. Copyright APA; no open licence established. Our voluntary literary examples and questions do not reproduce an experimental procedure.

Tags

preparation, beginning, intention, goal, implementation, plan, condition, dependency, draft, personal story, learning, skill, uncertainty, readiness criterion, permission, verification, safety, consent, voluntary participation, right to decline, revision, assistance, resources, deadline, agreement, privacy, repetition, Gollwitzer, editorial example, chosen action

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