

UNITED WISDOM

A Readiness Criterion Before the Work Begins

Freedom and Action

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Epigraph

> *these implementations are highly heterogeneous*

Gabrielle Martins van Jaarsveld and colleagues, 2025, abstract of a systematic review of goal setting in higher education. The authors describe varied implementations studied, rather than declaring every way of finishing equally suitable. This article's practical distinction concerning readiness is a separate authorial proposal not tested by the review. The Russian companion uses a United Wisdom editorial translation.

What this article is about

Lilia wants to make a small collection of family recipes for a gathering. She has photographs of notebooks, voice messages, and her own notes. Initially she imagines a thin printed booklet that can sit in a kitchen and be opened while cooking. As work proceeds, new tasks appear: reconstruct each dish's history, find old photographs, agree on captions, and improve the cover. Every idea seems valuable. After a month, Lilia has plenty of material but no collection that someone can use.

The problem concerns more than a deadline. Lilia has not defined which state of the result is sufficient for its first handover. If readiness means a vague sense that nothing could be improved, every addition reopens the work. A useful first collection could contain twelve chosen recipes, clear amounts and steps, readable wording, and an explicit indication of what still needs clarification. It need not contain all family memory to fulfil its chosen task. These boundaries are better named before tiredness makes an arbitrary result feel acceptable.

This article concerns a readiness criterion that distinguishes a completed result, a substantial shortcoming, and a possible next improvement. It does not demand planning everything beforehand or permit any work to be declared sufficient. The criterion needs to fit the action, its recipients, and actual obligations. The exercise applies to ordinary projects. It does not replace established safety requirements, professional checks, or separate permission from material owners.

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I. Name a result that someone can use

Lilia begins by asking what she will hand over. A folder of photographs, a text file, and a printed booklet are different results, even though all concern recipes. Someone making dinner should not have to decipher a notebook, find a missing amount, or guess the order of steps. If the first version aims to support preparing chosen dishes, describe the result through that use. An account of everything the author did is not an account of the finished object another person will receive.

The collection might contain twelve selected recipes with names, ingredients, amounts, and preparation steps. Uncertain family notes are identified as uncertain rather than presented as checked recipes. The wording is readable at the chosen print size, pages have a clear order, and family-record sources are acknowledged with people's permission. That already shows the work needed. It is more concrete than describing a beautiful, high-quality collection without reducing quality to page counts or mechanically completed fields.

The list also distinguishes the necessary result from a way of producing it. Lilia might transcribe a note herself, ask a relative to explain a step, or leave a recipe out of the first version. A readiness criterion need not dictate one sequence of labour. It defines what should be available afterwards. An inconvenient method can change while the task remains. This matters particularly when the original preparation plan was an expectation rather than a promise to others to complete every item in it.

Readiness cannot be described solely through effort: having spent a month does not establish sufficiency. The effort is real and may indicate a need to stop, reduce the scope, or seek help. It does not make missing information clear to a recipient. If resources are exhausted, an honest result may be an unfinished selection with named limitations. That can also be handed over by agreement. It should not be presented as something intended to fulfil another task simply because its author is tired.

II. Separate readiness from final perfection

A family collection can always gain another recipe, a better photograph, or an interesting story. If readiness depends on having no possible improvements, the task makes it unattainable. That need not mean the person is excessively demanding: family memory itself remains open and continues growing. The first version's criterion therefore needs to concern a limited handover. Lilia is preparing a selection for the current gathering, rather than a final monument that must permanently exclude additions, disagreement, and new information.

A completed result can remain imperfect in relation to secondary preferences. Its cover is simple, photographs few, and a dish's history brief. If these do not undermine the chosen

purpose or promise, they can belong to a future project. A substantial flaw, however, cannot be renamed imperfection to make completion convenient. A missing important step, incorrect amount, or photograph used without permission is another kind of problem. Its significance comes from consequences and handover conditions, rather than the author's wish to finish.

A criterion draws this boundary before a detail acquires emotional power. Lilia chooses recipe clarity and readability for the first version, while a uniform photographic style is optional. A later wish to photograph every dish again can then be recognised as a new task. She need not call the wish wrong. It can be kept for a subsequent version or consciously change the project. What matters is noticing that a requirement has been added rather than treating it as something that was supposedly always obvious.

Stopping at a sufficient criterion does not make an author indifferent. It permits a useful result to be handed over and leaves space for a next action. Lilia may value the booklet precisely because it leaves her folder and becomes part of the gathering. Care can take the form of further improvement or clear completion of a promise. No universal scale should punish someone for extra work or an early pause. The criterion clarifies a task and choice; it does not judge character by an ability to stop on time.

III. Agree on the criterion with those promised a result

If Lilia makes a gift from her own idea, she chooses some boundaries herself. If relatives jointly requested a particular collection, readiness already belongs to an agreement. An agreed section cannot be removed at the end and the work declared complete without discussing the change. Nor is every other person's preference binding if it was outside the shared intention. The criterion concerns an actual promise. It does not arise automatically from the loudest evaluation or the greatest amount of time spent preparing.

Clarify the purpose before details. Who will use the booklet, when, and in which form? Does everyone need a printed copy or a file available to those interested? May family photographs circulate beyond the gathering? Such questions can change what the result contains. Agreement need not mean voting on every comma. Significant expectations and permissions should be named where their absence would change the handover's meaning. Different understandings of a collection are better discovered before weeks of work than through finding someone to blame afterwards.

The criterion needs to preserve permission not to participate. A relative may not want a photograph in a shared file or a story prepared for publication. That is neither a lack of openness nor an obstacle the author must overcome. Lilia can change the material selection. Attending a family gathering does not authorise every use of personal information. These are

separate ethical conditions in this article. Goal-setting effectiveness does not establish them or make them optional for the sake of an attractive complete version.

Where there was no agreement, one can sometimes be made now without pretending the work began with a clear criterion. Lilia explains that the first version will be limited and asks whether its form is suitable. This changes the present project rather than rewriting its history. Retaining the initial promises and the new conversation helps clarify responsibility. If someone expected something else, the remaining obligation can be discussed separately. Readiness of the chosen new version does not erase an unfulfilled part of the old promise without separate agreement.

IV. Choose a check that fits the criterion

A clear recipe needs a way of checking, rather than only an author's tick. Lilia might ask a relative unfamiliar with the original notebook to read one recipe and describe the steps they would take. Missing amounts or steps can become visible. This guarantees no cooking outcome and replaces no specialised food-safety knowledge. It only helps reveal a particular aspect of clarity. This is the author's example of a proportionate check, rather than a scientifically established acceptance method.

Readability needs a different question: how does the wording appear in the chosen printout, are lines cropped, and can names and steps be distinguished? Permission for a photograph requires actual agreement, rather than an opinion about its attractiveness. Different criteria need different evidence. Combining them into an overall judgement of beauty may miss an important problem. Trying to express everything numerically can create unsupported precision. A check's sufficiency depends on its subject and the significance of error, rather than identical reporting for every condition.

In chapter six of How We Think, Dewey considers examining a possible explanation in relation to a difficulty under investigation. A proportionate check is useful here: it should concern the conclusion being drawn. This historical educational perspective does not establish the effectiveness of the family exercise. Lilia checks for an understandable sequence, rather than asking for proof that her family loves her work. The latter may matter emotionally, but is not evidence that the collection's conditions have been fulfilled and should not quietly enter its acceptance criterion.

Checking also has limits. One reader does not represent every user, one recipe does not show the other eleven's quality, and one printout cannot establish accessibility in every format. Lilia can choose a sufficient checking scope for the promised version and name its limits. A result intended for a wider audience needs more grounds. Ordinary gifts do not require endless

rechecking. The point is to keep the claim proportionate: a particular condition was checked within a particular scope, rather than quality universally confirmed for every future situation.

V. Do not confuse formality with substance

A criterion chosen beforehand can be fulfilled outwardly while losing the task. Every recipe has an amount field filled with an unclear phrase; each photograph has a caption but an unknown source; all pages are present but unreadable. Ticks produce the appearance of readiness. The criterion therefore needs a relationship with use. Lilia can ask whether the presence of a part enables the action for which it was included. If it does not, formal presence has not supplied the result's substance.

Gabrielle Martins van Jaarsveld and colleagues' systematic review of goal setting in higher education describes varied implementations and limited consensus in the field considered. That limits confidence in a universal formula. The review does not study family collections or establish that every detailed criterion improves an outcome. Here it supplies research caution: defining a goal can clarify a task, but the form of recording it cannot automatically be credited with an established effect in every project.

Knudsen and colleagues' review of healthcare PDSA projects offers another limit: a method's name and description do not ensure a strong conclusion about adherence or effectiveness. The analogy is narrow. A readiness criterion also does not work through its name. If Lilia makes a list without comparing it with the actual booklet, readiness remains an assertion. The medical protocol need not be transferred into family work. We simply should not replace checking with the presence of a document intended to support it.

A substantive check may reveal that the criterion itself is unsuitable. A dish may need a description of consistency while the list includes only exact cooking time. Lilia can change the condition, inform those affected, and check the relevant part. Revisability keeps the criterion connected to the aim. A fixed list defended against an evident difficulty ceases to support completion. Honest change matters more than an illusion that the author necessarily knew everything significant before beginning.

VI. Leave room for a reasoned revision

Naming readiness beforehand does not forbid new knowledge. During transcription, Lilia learns that one recipe needs an explanation absent from the notebook and her memory. She may exclude it from the first version if no promise is broken, or postpone handover pending clarification. If it was important to a shared request, agreement is needed. A new fact affects the criterion without permitting an old requirement to be silently declared optional. The change should be visible to anyone whose decision relies on the result.

The book III context read in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics concerns choice and deliberation about available means of action. This historical distinction helps show that a desired outcome and a chosen route differ. It does not forbid investigating aims or turn readiness into an unchangeable command. Preserving useful family memory may remain important to Lilia while the first version's printed form changes. Such revision should be judged through agreement and purpose, rather than solely by loyalty to the original method.

New information should also be distinguished from a wish to avoid an uncomfortable check. Removing clarity as a condition because a reader found an omission does not fulfil the task. Discovering that the chosen format is genuinely unnecessary may reasonably reduce the project. Both involve change, but their grounds differ. The question is not whether criteria may ever change. Can the change be honestly explained as fitting the aim and obligations, rather than merely making the current file easier to call ready?

Revision may expand the project, in which case its cost deserves separate consideration. Family histories mean new conversations, permissions, and editing. A good idea is not a free improvement. Lilia may retain it for later, reduce other content, or ask to change the date. The criterion reveals new work without extinguishing interest. Completing a limited version and consciously choosing the next differs from unending growth in requirements that someone notices only through exhaustion.

VII. Complete the handover as well as your labour

A file may meet the chosen conditions while remaining in the author's folder. For a gift collection, readiness includes an accessible handover: a final version in a clear location, recipients who know how to open it or receive a copy, and stated limitations. Lilia need not provide perpetual support for every copy unless she promised that. She needs to fulfil the substantial handover that belonged to the task. Finishing her own editing and completing an action for others can happen at different moments.

A version can be identified simply: the first family selection, a date, its contents, and a short note on unresolved points. That distinguishes the current result from drafts and future expansion. Twelve recipes need no elaborate recording system, but a recipient should not have to guess which of five files is final. Clear handover is part of care for use, rather than a technical formality that automatically appears after the last edit.

A substantial mistake found after handover remains open to correction. Lilia can inform recipients and issue a corrected version. This is specific responsibility, rather than proof that finishing was wrong in principle. Distinguish a mistake relative to the stated criterion from a new preference. An incorrect amount needs a different response from a wish to add another

family story. Treating everything as a reason to reopen all work empties readiness of meaning and can obstruct correction of what actually matters.

Finishing also identifies what is outside any continuing obligation. Lilia may receive comments without promising to add every new recipe immediately. Relatives can use the first version without demanding a complete family archive. Permission to stop need not depend on unanimous admiration. The booklet fulfils a particular task and people may value it differently. Authorship remains when improvements are separate choices rather than hidden debts automatically created by each expressed idea.

VIII. Use the criterion without passing judgement on yourself

Readiness can become a measure of personal adequacy: complete every item and deserve respect; fail one and let everyone down. A task's tool then becomes punishment. It describes a particular result and obligations, rather than Lilia's worth. If the work is unfinished, she can understand what is missing, what continuing would cost, and whether revision is needed. These are real questions. They need no overall conclusion about laziness, weakness, or inability to care for one's family.

Resources, illness, another obligation, or new information can change conditions. Someone need not execute an old plan at any cost to retain respect. A resource change also does not make an old promise disappear. Lilia can explain that the full version cannot be completed on time, offer a limited selection, and discuss consequences. Self-respect and responsibility towards others need not require choosing only one side. An honest boundary can be more useful than a late handover called complete despite its limitations.

Readiness criteria do not require turning every part of life into a project. A family conversation, walk, or meeting with someone close may need no checklist for completion. The exercise fits a handover, task, or promise that would otherwise remain unclear. Lilia can gather stories simply for conversation without a finished booklet. That is a different action and need not pretend to be a completed product. People retain the right to act without constant measurement; a criterion is offered where it actually helps clarity.

Lilia can finish the first selection while retaining interest in family memory. She knows what she promised, checked, and left for a later version. This removes neither error nor the possibility of mixed reactions. A new preference no longer automatically cancels what is done, and exhaustion need not determine sufficiency. The criterion keeps intention, result, and handover connected while preserving permission to revise openly and finish without a verdict on the self.

What this means in practice

Choose one piece of work with a particular result or promise. Describe what its recipient can do with the outcome, rather than only how much effort you will spend. Name a few necessary first-version conditions: contents, clarity, important information's accuracy, accessibility, and significant permissions. Record possible improvements separately. Do not turn preferences into requirements without grounds or remove actual requirements for an easy tick of completion.

Choose a proportionate way to see each necessary condition fulfilled. One may need reading, another a factual check, and another actual agreement. State the scope checked. If others await the result, agree on substantial boundaries and changes in promises. A long document is unnecessary. A few clear sentences may suffice when they actually name the object, purpose, and handover conditions.

Keep new ideas separate from necessary completion during the work. Revise the criterion openly when a substantial fact appears and explain the grounds. If the wish is merely for greater beauty, that improvement may be chosen while recognising its cost and increased scope. Before handover, compare the actual result with the conditions, name limitations, and identify the current version. A list, relief, or praise for an idea does not replace substantive checking.

After handover, distinguish a substantial mistake from a new possibility. Correcting an error may remain your responsibility; expansion is a separate decision unless promised. A project may be reduced, a different result agreed, or work completed without further development. This exercise guarantees no productivity and measures no person. It names a sufficient state for a particular action without making worth depend on every tick or demanding final perfection.

Key quotation

> *there is little consensus*

Martins van Jaarsveld and colleagues, 2025, abstract of the review: limited consensus about implementing goal setting in higher education. This concerns the field studied rather than implying that agreements are impossible. Here it reminds us not to present an authorial approach to readiness as the only scientifically established formula. The Russian companion uses a United Wisdom editorial translation.

Connections between traditions

Aristotle distinguishes wishing for an outcome, choosing, and available means. Dewey considers examining a thought in relation to a difficulty. The contemporary goal-setting review describes a heterogeneous research field. In our project, these perspectives distinguish result, route, and grounds for checking. Their subjects and arguments differ; historical philosophy does not experimentally validate acceptance of a family booklet.

The PDSA review adds limits concerning formal labels and causal conclusions. People's agreement, clear promises, and the author's permission to revise remain separate conditions in this article. We do not claim that all traditions taught a shared readiness list or that detailed recording automatically improves any work. A sufficient criterion remains a chosen, discussable, and checkable boundary for a particular result.

Sources

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• Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics, book III, W. D. Ross translation. III.2–3 were read in context, alongside II.1–4 and selected II.6. Historical distinctions of choice and means neither forbid revising aims nor establish the exercise's efficacy. The printed translation version is unidentified; paraphrase only, without quotation or import.

• John Dewey. How We Think, 1910, chapter VI, pp. 68–78. The complete chapter in the university transcription and its note were read. A historical inquiry argument, rather than an everyday-project acceptance protocol; brief paraphrase without quotation or worldwide-permission claim.

• Søren Valgreen Knudsen and colleagues. Can quality improvement improve the quality of care?, 2019. The abstract, methodological context, selected results, discussion, and CC BY 4.0 rights were read. Healthcare projects; a limited analogy about formality and checking without quotation or transferring findings to the family collection.

Tags

readiness, criterion, completion, work, result, aim, first version, promise, handover, agreement, checking, sufficiency, perfection, limits, resources, time, responsibility, consent, clarity, accuracy, revision, improvement, authorship, dignity, family memory, recipes, Aristotle, Dewey, goal setting, PDSA

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