CourseMints

GUIDE

Goal Execution Map

Finish What You Start

SELF-PACED PDF COURSE

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Finish What You Start

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INSIDE THIS GUIDE

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How to Use This Guide

Most people do not have a shortage of goals. They have a drawer full of half-finished ones: the course bought and abandoned at module three, the business plan with a great first page, the garage halfway sorted, the novel stuck at chapter six. Starting is exciting and gets plenty of attention. Finishing gets almost none. This guide is about finishing.

It treats a goal as a project with a finish line, and it gives you a single page, the **Execution Map**, that carries a goal from a vague intention to a completed result. The map does not depend on feeling motivated. Motivation rises and falls through every project, and the map is designed to keep you moving when it falls: you always know what "done" means, where you are, what the next physical action is, when you will do it and what you will do when the predictable obstacles show up.

Who this guide is for

Anyone with a goal that has an end point and takes weeks or months: a certification, a creative project, a side business launch, a home project, a job search, a big work deliverable, a fitness event, a decluttering push. If you want to build a daily routine that runs forever (flossing, reading at night, a morning walk), that is a habit, and our guide *Habit Master* covers it. This guide is for goals you can tick off as finished.

The Execution Map at a glance

Step	Chapter	Question it answers
Diagnose	1	Why do my projects stall?
Choose	2	Which goal do I finish first, and what do I park or drop?
Define	3	What exactly does "done" look like, and by when?

Step	Chapter	Question it answers
Map	4	Which milestones lead there?
Act	5	What is the next physical action, and when will I do it?
Pre-empt	6	What will get in the way, and what will I do then?
Track	7	Am I on course this week?
Persist	8	How do I get through the slow middle, or decide to stop?
Support	9	Who will I report to, and how?
Finish	10	How do I close it out and learn from it?

Chapter 11 puts it all on one page and gives you a 30-day start plan.

How each chapter works

Each chapter explains the mechanism in plain language (why projects stall at that point), gives you numbered steps, shows an example, and ends with an exercise, common mistakes and key takeaways. The people in the examples are fictional composites written to show the method; they are not real customers or testimonials.

How to get the most from it

- **Pick one real goal before you start Chapter 2.** Work through the guide with that goal, not in the abstract.
- **Write everything down.** The map only works on paper or screen, not in your head.
- **Expect to redraw the map.** Your first version will be wrong in places. Updating it is the method working.
- **Work in order the first time.** Later, you can jump straight to the chapter that matches where a project is stuck.

CHAPTER 1

Why Projects Stall

01

When a project stalls, people usually blame themselves: not disciplined enough, not motivated enough, "bad at finishing." Look closely at stalled projects and you usually find a more specific cause, and a specific cause has a specific fix. Most stalls happen at one of six points.

The six stall points

1. The plan was fiction. The psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky named the *planning fallacy*: people underestimate how long their own projects will take, even when they know similar projects ran late before. A plan built on best-case estimates falls behind in the first few weeks, and falling behind feels like failing, so people stop.

2. There was no finish line. "Get fit," "start a business" and "write more" have no end point. Without a clear definition of done, you cannot tell how far you have come or how far you have left, so the work feels endless.

3. There was no next action. "Work on the website" is not something you can do in the next hour. It is a cloud of tasks. When you sit down and do not know exactly what to do first, you lose the session to thinking about it, or to anything easier.

4. The middle sagged. Energy is usually high at the start (it is new) and near the end (the finish is in sight). In between lies a long stretch where progress feels slow and the end is not yet visible. Chapter 8 explains why this happens and how to shorten it.

5. Too many projects were open at once. Every open project competes for the same limited time and attention. Five projects moving at 10 percent speed feel like failure on all five, even when the total effort is large.

6. The ending was scary. Finishing means being judged: submitting the application, publishing the work, showing the client, asking for the money. Endless polishing and “one more thing” keep the project safely unfinished.

THE SCIENCE

Why unfinished goals keep nagging

Unfinished goals tend to stay on your mind and intrude on other tasks. In 2011, E. J. Masicampo and Roy Baumeister reported studies in which an unfinished goal interfered with performance on an unrelated task, but the interference largely disappeared when people made a specific plan for completing the goal. You do not have to finish a project to quiet it. A concrete plan is often enough to stop it from nagging, which is one reason this guide puts so much weight on the map.

How to diagnose a stalled project

1. **List your unfinished projects,** everything you started and did not finish in the last two years that still matters to you.
2. **For each one, find the moment it stopped.** Not the excuse, the moment: “after the second module,” “when I had to choose a logo,” “after the holiday.”
3. **Match it to a stall point.** Most projects stalled at one or two of the six.
4. **Look for your pattern.** Many people stall at the same point every time. That point is where your map needs the most care.

EXAMPLE

Nina’s unfinished list

Nina, 41, a pastry chef, had three projects on hold: an online cake-decorating course she wanted to sell, a food safety manager certification and a half-painted spare room. Diagnosing them took twenty minutes. The course stalled when filming got hard and she had no clear list of what was left (no next action, no finish line). The certification stalled in the middle, after the exciting first unit. The room stalled when she started the course. Her pattern was clear: she stalled in middles, and she let new projects start before old ones ended. That told her where to focus: Chapters 2, 3 and 8.

EXERCISE

Your unfinished list

Project	Started	The moment it stopped	Stall point (1 to 6)

My most common stall point:

What usually happens to me at that point:

Common mistakes

- **Diagnosing character instead of causes.** “I’m lazy” leads nowhere. “I never know what the next step is” leads to a fix.
- **Blaming the last stall point only.** Many projects had a weak finish line from the start; the stall just showed it.
- **Treating a stall as permanent.** A stalled project is paused, not dead, until you decide otherwise (Chapter 2).