WRITE · KEEP THE READER · LAND IT

The Four-Minute Letter.

Write one people read to the end. Every week.

IN ONE BREATH

Show them the hole.
Show them why they keep falling in.
Hand them the ladder.
Stop.

THE ONE RULE UNDER ALL OF IT

Every sentence has one job: make them read the next one.

~1,000	4 min	1	1 + 1
WORDS	TO READ	BOLD LINE, THE VERDICT	MOVE, THEN ONE OFFER

THE PATH THROUGH THIS GUIDE

02 - 03 · PLAN
- The shape: five steps, four minutes
- Before you write: 20 minutes of prep

04 - 09 · WRITE
- The title and the first line
- Steps 1–5 and the close
- The bold line, the Hook & CTA bank

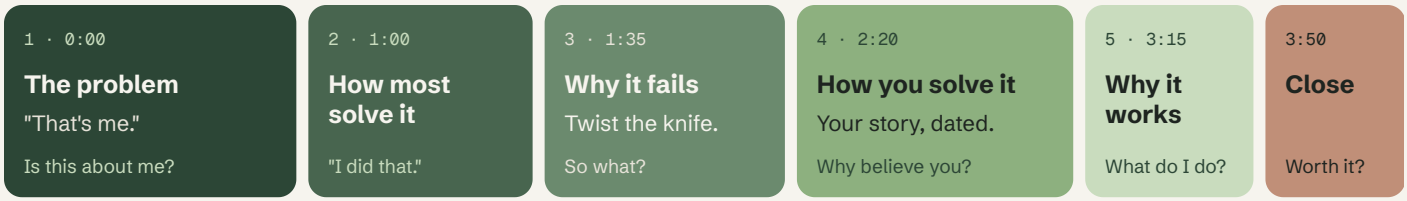
10 - 15 · KEEP THEM
- The engine, the line, the cut
- Twelve drops and their fixes
- The frame, the read, the cheat sheet

> Coverage asks "is it all there?"
> Flow asks "will they keep going?"

FIVE STEPS, HIDDEN INSIDE A STORY

Point at the hole. Hand them the rope.

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE A good letter is a walk to a ladder. The reader never sees the map, only the next step.



THE QUESTION THEY'RE SILENTLY ASKING, PART BY PART

PART	THEIR QUESTION	ANSWER IT WITH
1 · THE PROBLEM	Is this about me?	Their problem in their words, its cost, your scene with a number in it.
2 · HOW MOST SOLVE IT	Did you try what I tried?	The usual fix, best told as you, younger, doing it.
3 · WHY IT FAILS	So what?	What the usual fix costs, in years, money or nerve.
4 · HOW YOU SOLVE IT	Why should I believe you?	One decision, with a date and the price you paid to start.
5 · WHY IT WORKS	What do I do?	One bold line they can screenshot, then one move for this week.
CLOSE	Was it worth it?	A landing of four words or fewer, then one offer or one ask.

> Copy the moves.
> Hide the skeleton.

No subheads naming the steps. No "most people" every week. The reader feels the shape, never sees it. A skeleton that shows reads as a template.

TWENTY MINUTES, BEFORE A SINGLE SENTENCE

Find what you've already said.

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE Empty your pockets on the table before you build. Most of the letter is already in them.

1

Pick one problem

The one your best recent post, reply or conversation already proved people have. One problem per letter.

2

Find your scene and a number

When did you have this problem? A year, a count, a dollar amount, a room. "For a year and a half" beats "for a while."

3

Empty your pockets

Voice memos, notes, old posts, things you said out loud. Copy your own lines word for word. They sound like you because they are.

4

Sort them into the five steps

Each line goes under the step it serves. A line that serves none goes on the bench for another letter.

5

Write the gaps as questions

Never fill a hole with a guess. "What did it cost me, in months?" Answer out loud, then write it down.

6

Title last

The title is a promise. Write it once you know what the body pays.

YOUR PREP SHEET

STEP · WORDS	YOUR LINE, ALREADY SAID	THE GAP, AS A QUESTION
1 · PROBLEM · 230		
2 · MOST DO · 140		
3 · FAILS · 180		
4 · YOUR FIX · 230		
5 · WORKS · 150		
CLOSE · 50		

> Most letters are six answers away from done.

Answer one gap a day, out loud. Nothing goes in that you didn't actually live or say.

THE FIRST TWO DECISIONS THE READER MAKES

Six words or fewer. Ends with a period.

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE A title is a door. Small doors, with one word you've never seen on a door before.

FIVE TITLE SHAPES

ORDER

Ask for the raise.

Ship it ugly.

A permission slip. They hear "you're allowed."

TWIST

The habit that works too well.

Flips a thing everyone believes. They read to settle it.

QUESTION

What if it works?

They answer in their head, then check.

SOFT MAYBE

Maybe you're not lazy.

Names the doubt they whisper to themselves.

ODD NOUN

Calendar debt.

Two words that don't belong together.

THREE FIRST-LINE SHAPES

CONFESSION + A NUMBER

"I signed up for the gym four times last year. I went eleven times."

THE DATED SCENE

"Last March, at 6:40 on a Sunday night, I opened a new planner. Again."

THE SMART MISTAKE

"I remembered every deadline. I forgot to start."

A REAL ONE

"For a year and a half, I sat in an analysis paralysis."

Charles, on camera. A confession, a number, a feeling the reader knows. One line and you're in.

> Open on a scene that's already moving. The lesson can't be seen yet.

NEVER OPEN ON

- The lesson or a definition
- A statistic (it's a witness: it comes second)
- "In today's world..." or "I want to talk about..."

STEP 1 OF 5 · 0:00-1:00

The problem: "that's me."

200-250 WORDS · 6-8 PARAGRAPHS, MOST ONE LINE · THEIR QUESTION: IS THIS ABOUT ME?

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE Hold up a mirror. If they see themselves, they keep reading.

WHAT IT DOES

Opens on a scene with a fact in it, then names the problem the way the reader would say it to a friend. They lean in: "I have that," or "I didn't know I had that."

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Opening on the lesson, a definition or a statistic. Naming the problem in your words, not theirs.

EXAMPLE · THE OPENING, THREE LINES

"I signed up for the gym four times last year."

"By March, I'd decided I just wasn't a gym person."

"What else was I supposed to think?"

A confession with a number, then the belief it caused, then a question the reader answers for you.

CARRY INTO STEP 2 *"So I did what everyone does."* A turn, never "and then."

STEP 2 OF 5 · 1:00-1:35

How most people solve it.

120-150 WORDS · 3-4 PARAGRAPHS · THEIR QUESTION: DID YOU TRY WHAT I TRIED?

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE Show the door everyone tries first. You tried it too.

WHAT IT DOES

Describes the usual fix so the reader nods: "That's exactly what I did." Best told as you, younger, doing it. Or one named, dated study of what most people do.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Sneering at "most people." The reader is most people. Make it you, or everyone, never them alone. A witness with no name, year or number doesn't count.

EXAMPLE · THE RUT, SAID THREE TIMES

"A new app. A new plan. A new Monday."

"As long as I was planning, I got to feel like I was working."

Repetition shows the rut. The second line names the comfort the usual way buys them, so they feel caught, not judged.

CARRY INTO STEP 3 *"Everything looked fine on the surface. But..."*

STEP 3 OF 5 · 1:35-2:20

Why that doesn't work.

150-200 WORDS · 4-5 PARAGRAPHS · THEIR QUESTION: SO WHAT?

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE The door everyone tries is painted on the wall. Show them the bump on their head.

WHAT IT DOES

Twists the knife: what the usual fix costs in years, money, health or nerve. A little existential. The reader stops nodding and starts worrying.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Restating the problem louder instead of naming its cost. Shame instead of honesty. A knife with no ladder coming makes people close the tab.

REAL LINES · THE PARADOX AND THE LANDING

"Everything was fine because everything was bad."

"I stopped growing."

Charles, on camera. A paradox, then a landing of three words. The cost, said calmly, lands harder than adjectives.

CARRY INTO STEP 4 *"That might be the same thing for you. This is how I got out."*

STEP 4 OF 5 · 2:20-3:15

How you solve it.

200-250 WORDS · 5-6 PARAGRAPHS · THEIR QUESTION: WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE Show the real door. Tell them the day you walked through it.

WHAT IT DOES

Your story, your dates. What you did differently, when, and what it cost you to start. You're the last witness, the one with receipts.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

A ten-step recipe or a pitch. A claim with no date. One decision told as a story beats a list.

EXAMPLE · ONE DECISION, THEN ITS PRICE

"So, I decided to stop planning on Sundays."

"The first week cost me every excuse I had. I went three times."

The decision in one sentence, the date, the honest price. Show the risk, and they believe the reward.

STEP 5 OF 5 · 3:15-3:50

Why yours works. One thing to do.

130-170 WORDS · 3-4 PARAGRAPHS, 1 BOLD LINE · THEIR QUESTION: WHAT DO I DO?

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE

Say why the door opens, in a line they'll repeat. Then hand them the key for this week.

THE VERDICT

Why it works, in **one bold line** someone could screenshot. Best as a rule with a condition: "Before you ___, make sure ___."

"Before you buy another plan, use the one you have for seven days."

THE MOVE

One move before the week ends, best as one if-then. It starts with "So" or "Instead": it follows from the verdict.

"So: if it's 7 a.m., then shoes on. Nothing else."

THE COMMON MISTAKE

"It works because it works." Two or three moves instead of one. Merging the move with the offer.

THE CLOSE · 3:50-4:05

One fitting offer. Or one ask.

40-70 WORDS · 2-3 PARAGRAPHS · THEIR QUESTION: WAS IT WORTH IT?

A FREE PAGE

When one page finishes the move: a worksheet, a checklist, a template.

MEMBERSHIP

When the change is one they'll need help keeping.

COACHING

When the problem is personal and costly: money, work, a stuck decision.

OR THE ASK, WHEN NOTHING FITS

Reply: "Hit reply and tell me your if-then." **Forward:** to a specific person for a specific moment, never "your lazy friend."

> The move improves their life. The offer grows yours.

Never in one sentence. The move first, always. One offer, never two. No hard pitch in a letter meant to reach new readers. Then your sign-off, the same every week.

THE LINE THEY SCREENSHOT AND SEND

A banger is a confession the reader didn't know they'd make.

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE Take a word people are proud of. Show them it's the thing they're ashamed of.

Building is the new procrastinating.

A virtue
a word they're proud of, a badge

"the new"
says the world changed

A vice
the thing it's hiding

FOUR TURNS. NO TURN, NO BANGER.

THE RENAME

[virtue] is the new [vice]

Busy is the new lazy.

THE SPLIT

[these] get X. [those] get Y.

Planners get ready. Starters get results.

THE FLIP

what it does to you → you do it

Below the line, the algorithm writes you. Above it, you write the algorithm.

THE CONNECT

something far + something in their day

Every computer runs on if-then. Most people run on maybe.

THE BANGER BAR · EVERY ONE YES

1 **True**
You'd stand behind it at dinner.

2 **Yours**
If anyone could have said it, cut it.

3 **Short**
Seven words or fewer. Fits on a mug.

4 **A turn**
Rename, Split, Flip or Connect.

5 **An admission**
The reader thinks "that's me."

> You've already said your best lines. They were buried.

Read your voice memos and notes for lines that pass all five tests. Cut, never rewrite. One or two a day, at most. They become the title, the bold line, the landing and the week's post.

START ONE TODAY. ADD TO IT EVERY WEEK.

Hooks open. CTAs close. Bank both.

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE — A jar for your best lines. When you need one, you reach in instead of staring at a blank page.

HOOKS · FORMULA → EXAMPLE

RENAME	[virtue] is the new [vice]. *Busy is the new lazy.*
SPLIT	[these] get X. [those] get Y. *Planners get ready. Starters get results.*
CONFESSION	I [did the wrong thing] for [a number]. *For a year and a half, I sat in an analysis paralysis.*
SMART MISTAKE	I remembered X. I forgot Y. *I remembered every deadline. I forgot to start.*
THEIR QUESTION	Do you have this feeling that [their words]? *Do you feel like you're meant for more, and stuck?*
PARADOX	[It was fine] because [it was bad]. *Everything was fine because everything was bad.*
FILTER	This is only for [the person who ___]. *This is only for people who plan more than they ship.*

CTAS · FORMULA → EXAMPLE

SIGN-OFF	[The same last line, every week.] *Pick up the pen.*
FREE PAGE	I made [named page] for this. It's free. *The seven-day if-then sheet is free.*
REPLY	Hit reply and tell me your [one thing]. *Hit reply and tell me your if-then.*
FORWARD	Send this to [a person] before [a moment]. *Send this to the friend who starts Monday. Every Monday.*
SAVE OR SEND	Save this or send it to [someone]. *Save this or send it to a friend.*
CLOSING QUESTION	[Their choice, as a question]? *What is one area? Sleep? Relationships?*
LESSON LINE	[The one sentence they'd send.] *A plan you never start is a wish.*
MEMBERSHIP	If this landed, imagine [the whole change] with help. *If this week worked, imagine the next twelve.*

KEEP EACH LINE WITH

The line, its shape, where you said it, and where it goes: title, first line, bold line, landing or close.

FILL IT FROM

Your voice memos, notes, replies that got replies, and lines you said out loud and forgot.

THE RULE

Only lines you'd say. A formula is a mold, never someone else's sentence.

WHY ANYONE READS THE NEXT LINE

Open a question. Hold it. Pay it.

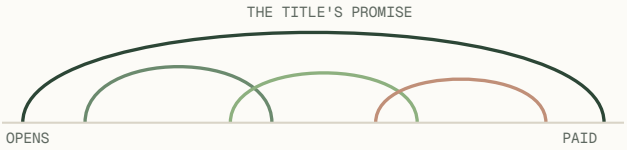
1 · THEIR QUESTION, AT EVERY LINE

A reader is always silently asking something. Flow is answering the question they have now while raising the next one.

- Can't name the question a paragraph answers? It's fluff.
- It raises no new one? They have no reason to scroll.

2 · OPEN LOOPS: THE ENGINE

Curiosity is the gap between what they know and what they want to know.



- Never close one without another already open.
- Every loop opened is paid. An unkept promise reads as a trick.

3 · BUT AND THEREFORE, NEVER "AND THEN"

A list of what happened is a report. A chain of turns and consequences is a story.

~~I saved for years, and then I found a house, and then I bought it.~~

I saved for years. **But** the bank said no. **So** I did the one thing nobody tells you.

If the honest link is "and then", the beats don't need each other: cut one, reorder, or ask what changed between them.

4 · STAKES: WHAT IT COSTS THEM

Nobody reads to the end about an idea. They read about their problem getting solved.

- Every section ties back to what not knowing this costs: money, years, sleep, the life they keep postponing.
- A section with no stake is a lecture.

> The title is the biggest loop. The body keeps that one promise and no other.

THE RULE UNDER ALL OF IT

The title sells the first line. The first line sells the second. A paragraph that answers nothing and asks nothing is where they leave.

SENTENCE BY SENTENCE

Picture first. Explain long. Land short.

5 · CONCRETE BEATS ABSTRACT

A person, a year, a dollar amount, a room keeps a reader. "Mistakes can be costly" loses one.

- Picture first, principle second.
- A principle with no picture? Find the moment.
- Only your scenes and numbers, never made up for effect.

6 · RHYTHM: VARY THE LINE

Same-length sentences are a drone. Long ones carry the explanation; short ones land it.



- Every paragraph ends on its shortest, sharpest line.
- Read it aloud: where your voice speeds up or pauses, the line should too.

7 · PICTURES: METAPHOR, ANALOGY, IDIOM

A picture lets them **see** the idea before they understand it. Make it specific and observable: something you could film.

METAPHOR	*"Short sentences are stepping stones."*
ANALOGY	*"A letter is a walk to a ladder. They see only the next step."*
IDIOM, TURNED	*"Pick up the pen."* Never one used as-is: "think outside the box."

One picture per idea, carried through. A ladder that turns into a river loses them.

8 · SECTION STARTS AND ENDS

A new section feels like a new decision to keep reading.

- Start on tension: the claim, the surprise, the scene. Never "Now let's talk about…"
- End leaning forward: a question, a turn, the problem the next part solves.

CARRY LINES	NEVER
It got worse.	~~Additionally,~~
That's when it clicked.	~~Furthermore,~~
Then the bill came.	~~In conclusion,~~

9 · TEACH, AND MAKE IT FEEL EARNED

Entertainment keeps them; learning makes them share. Each section leaves one thing they didn't know or couldn't name: the mechanism, a number that reframes it, your name for it. Show the wrong way first, then yours. They should finish feeling smart, not lectured.

1
SENTENCE PER LINE AT THE OPENING AND EVERY LANDING

3
SENTENCES A PARAGRAPH, AT MOST

4
WORDS OR FEWER ON A SECTION'S LAST LINE

10 · NOT FLUFF

If they could skip it without missing anything, cut it.

THROAT-CLEARING

~~In today's world… I want to talk about…~~

Start at the first real line.

SAYING IT TWICE

The same point in a new outfit. Keep the sharper one.

THE WARM-UP

The letter often starts at paragraph two. Delete paragraph one and read.

HEDGES

~~kind of, sort of, I think maybe, very~~

Keep the conviction.

THE RECAP

A summary of what they just read. They were there.

GENERIC EXAMPLES

Anything anyone could write. Only yours.

THE DETOUR

A good story that doesn't serve this letter's promise goes on the bench.

CUT FIRST

Most flow problems are solved by deleting, not adding.

11 · NOT BORING

At least one energy move every section.

Readers don't leave on a decision. They drift. When three paragraphs in a row do exactly what they guessed, the thumb goes to the phone. An energy move is a line that breaks the guess.

REVERSAL

The obvious belief, then why it's wrong.

"Building is the new procrastinating."

HUMOR

Witty, dry, about a stance.

Never about a person.

ADMISSION

The moment you got it wrong.

"I stopped growing."

SURPRISE

The odd detail only you know.

A number worked out beats an adjective.

THE CHECK, EVERY SECTION

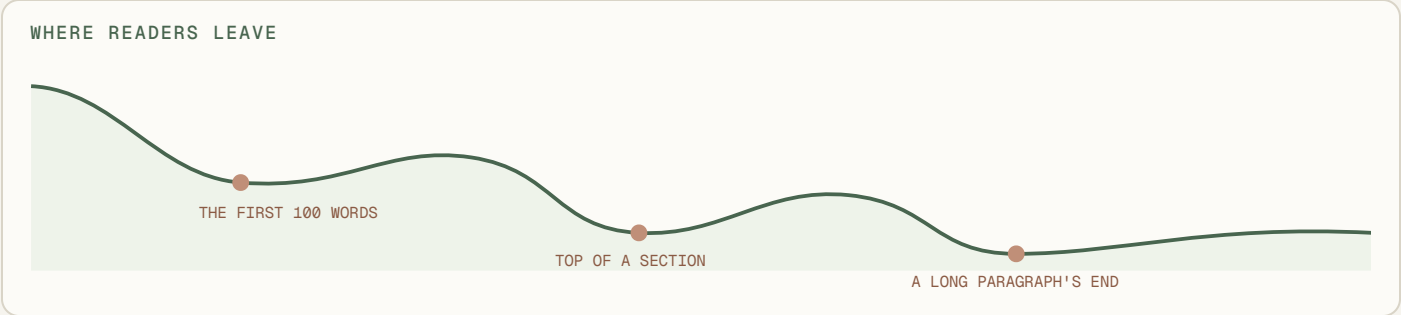
Point at the line the reader didn't see coming. Can't point? That section is where they check their phone.

THE FIX, IN ORDER

- Move your sharpest line up.
- Cut the predictable paragraph before it.
- Ask yourself: where did I get this wrong?

WHERE READERS CLICK OFF

Twelve drops, each with its fix.



Slow open

The first 50 words are setup, or "I" with no reader in them.

→ Cut to the first real line.

Fluff

A paragraph they could skip.

→ Cut it.

Repeat

The same point twice.

→ Keep the sharper; cut the other.

Stall

Three long paragraphs, no landing, no turn.

→ Break one; land short.

Jump

They can't see why this follows. The link is "and then."

→ Reorder, or a carry line.

No stakes

An idea with no cost to the reader.

→ Say what it cost you, or them.

Abstract

A principle with no picture.

→ The moment, the number, the name.

Lecture

Telling them what to think, with no proof or story.

→ Show the wrong way first.

Dead loop

A promise or question never paid off.

→ Pay it, or cut the promise.

Flat landing

A section ends on explanation, not a line.

→ Move your shortest line to the end.

Early exit

It feels finished before the move.

→ Move the payoff later, or the move up.

Limp close

The end summarizes instead of landing.

→ End on the banger. One ask.

FIX FIRST

A drop in the first 100 words. Most readers decide there.

THEN

A drop in the middle. It beats one at the end: fewer readers ever get there.

ALWAYS

Mark the exact line, so you can find it on the page in a second.

WEEK AFTER WEEK

The frame repeats. The story never does.

LIKE YOU'RE FIVE Same house, new furniture. They know where the door is. They never know what's inside.

REPEATS · THEIR TRUST

- The five steps, in order
- About four minutes, the same day every week
- One bold line, one move, one offer
- Your sign-off, word for word

NEVER REPEATS · THEIR SURPRISE

- The opening scene and its number
- Who stands in step 2: you younger, a study, someone else
- The cost in step 3, the date in step 4
- The opener's shape and the bold line's turn

ROTATE IT	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3
FIRST LINE	Confession + number	Dated scene	Their question
STEP 2 WITNESS	You, younger	A named, dated study	Someone you know, by name
BOLD LINE	Rename	Split	Connect

THE READ · AS THE READER, NOT THE EDITOR

1 Top to bottom, once, at reading speed. Mark where you'd stop.

2 Name the question each paragraph answers and the one it raises.

3 Mark every loop: where it opens, where it's paid.

4 Check every link: but, therefore, or "and then."

5 Read the first 100 words twice.

6 Fix the worst drop first. Then read again.

> A letter flows when someone about to close the tab reads to the move without deciding to.

Before you choose this week's opener and bold line, look at your last two letters. If they started the same way, this one doesn't.

The Four-Minute Letter.

~1,000 WORDS · 4 MIN · 1 BOLD LINE · 1 MOVE · 1 OFFER

1 · Problem	2 · Most do	3 · Fails	4 · Your fix	5 · Works	Close
scene + number · 230	you, younger · 140	the cost · 180	dated · 230	bold line + move	≤4 words · 1 offer

BEFORE YOU WRITE

- One problem a post already proved.
- Your scene, with a number.
- Your own lines, sorted by step.
- Gaps as questions. Title last.

TITLE · FIRST LINE

- Six words or fewer, ends with a period.
- Order, twist, question, maybe, odd noun.
- Open on a scene already moving.

THE ENGINE

- Answer their question; raise the next.
- Never close a loop with none open.
- But and therefore, never "and then."
- Every section has a stake.

THE LINE

- Picture first, principle second.
- Explain long, land short.
- 1–3 sentences a paragraph.
- Last line of a part: 4 words or fewer.

BANGER BAR

- True · yours · short
- A turn: Rename, Split, Flip, Connect
- An admission: "that's me."

EVERY SECTION

- Starts on tension.
- Has one energy move.
- Ends leaning forward.

DONE WHEN · EVERY ONE YES

- [ ] The first line is about the reader or your scene.
- [ ] Every paragraph answers a question and raises the next.
- [ ] Nothing could be cut without losing something.
- [ ] Read aloud in about four minutes.
- [ ] The move fits in one line. The bold line could be a screenshot.

NEVER

- Open on the lesson or the stat.
- A line you wouldn't say out loud.
- A story or number you made up.
- Two moves, or two offers.
- The offer before the move.

THE WHOLE METHOD

The hole. Why they fall in. The ladder. Stop.