



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



TRAINING
MODULES

STAGE 3 — WORKBOOK 3A COMMITMENT DESIGN

PURPOSE

A professional accountability process depends on the quality of the commitment being tracked.

A poorly designed commitment creates unreliable information.

If the commitment is vague, the Accountabili-Buddy cannot determine whether it was completed.

If it depends primarily on external outcomes, the client may be held accountable for something they cannot directly control.

If it is trivially easy, completion may provide little useful information.

If it is unrealistic, repeated non-completion may reflect poor design rather than poor follow-through.

If it is imposed by the Accountabili-Buddy rather than owned by the client, the resulting accountability data may be invalid.

The purpose of commitment design is not to create perfect plans.

It is to create commitments that are:

clear enough to review;

meaningful enough to matter;

substantially controllable;

realistically executable;

appropriately challenging;

connected to a current goal;

owned by the client.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this workbook, the trainee should be able to:

distinguish a goal from a commitment;

distinguish outcomes from controllable behaviors;
identify when a commitment is too vague;
identify when a commitment is unnecessarily precise;
choose between completion-, frequency-, quantity-, time-, engagement-, and decision-based commitments;
distinguish baseline commitments from stretch targets;
identify minimum commitments and determine when they are useful;
design commitments that are realistic without becoming trivial;
preserve client ownership;
identify commitments that do not meaningfully advance the goal;
determine whether a commitment is reviewable;
avoid retroactively redefining success.

CORE CONCEPT REVIEW

GOAL VS. COMMITMENT

A goal describes the outcome, direction, or change the client values.

Examples:

Find a new job.

Improve fitness.

Complete a degree.

Grow a business.

Write a book.

A commitment describes what the client agrees to do during a defined accountability period.

Examples:

Submit two qualified applications this week.

Walk three times before Sunday.

Complete Lessons 5 and 6.

Contact four prospective clients.

Write for three 45-minute sessions.

The goal gives direction.

The commitment creates the accountable behavior.

OUTCOME VS. BEHAVIOR

Clients can influence outcomes.

They cannot guarantee them.

Weak commitment:

"Get hired this month."

Stronger commitment:

"Submit four qualified applications and contact two professional contacts this week."

The outcome still matters.

The accountable behavior should usually be something the client can substantially control.

CLEAR ENOUGH TO REVIEW

A useful commitment should allow both parties to determine what happened.

Weak:

“Work on the course.”

Stronger:

“Complete two lessons.”

or:

“Spend two 45-minute sessions on the course.”

MEANINGFUL ENOUGH TO MATTER

A commitment can become so small that completion says little about progress.

Example:

A client who needs sustained outreach chooses:

“Open the contact list once.”

That may be useful as a temporary re-entry step.

It may be too weak as an ongoing standard.

REALISTIC DOES NOT MEAN EASY

A good commitment may be difficult.

The question is whether it can reasonably be executed under current conditions.

OWNED BY THE CLIENT

The client should understand and endorse the commitment.

The Accountabili-Buddy may challenge the number, structure, or logic.

The client makes the final commitment decision.

REVIEWABLE, NOT OVERENGINEERED

Specificity should serve accountability.

It should not become ritualistic precision.

Useful:

“Call the accountant Tuesday.”

Unnecessary unless relevant:

“Call the accountant at 10:12 a.m. from the kitchen while standing beside the notebook.”

COMMITMENT TYPE MATTERS

Different tasks are better measured in different ways.

Completion-based Frequency-based Quantity-based Time-based Engagement-based Decision-based

The Accountabili-Buddy should choose the form that produces the clearest and most useful accountability information.

PART 1 — GOAL OR COMMITMENT?

Choose:

A. Goal B. Commitment

"Improve my fitness."

Answer:

"Walk Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday."

Answer:

"Find a new job."

Answer:

"Submit two qualified applications by Friday."

Answer:

"Learn Spanish."

Answer:

"Complete three Spanish lessons this week."

Answer:

"Build a profitable consulting business."

Answer:

"Contact five prospects by Thursday."

Answer:

"Get out of debt."

Answer:

"Review spending and transfer \$300 to debt repayment Friday."

Answer:

PART 2 — REWRITE THE GOAL AS A COMMITMENT

For each goal, draft one appropriate weekly commitment that could be proposed for the client's consideration.

Goal:

Write a book.

Commitment:

Goal:

Improve cardiovascular fitness.

Commitment:

Goal:

Find a new job.

Commitment:

Goal:

Build a consulting practice.

Commitment:

Goal:

Learn conversational Spanish.

Commitment:

Goal:

Reduce personal debt.

Commitment:

Goal:

Complete a professional certification.

Commitment:

PART 3 — OUTCOME OR CONTROLLABLE ACTION?

Choose:

A. Outcome B. Substantially controllable action

“Get five new clients.”

Answer:

"Send proposals to five qualified prospects."

Answer:

"Lose five pounds."

Answer:

"Complete three planned workouts."

Answer:

"Receive a promotion."

Answer:

"Complete the required promotion application and request a meeting with my manager."

Answer:

"Sell the house."

Answer:

"Contact the agent, approve the listing, and complete the required repairs."

Answer:

"Pass the exam."

Answer:

"Complete four practice tests and two review sessions."

Answer:

PART 4 — REPAIR THE OUTCOME COMMITMENT

Rewrite each outcome into a commitment based on controllable behavior.

"Get hired by the end of the month."

Rewrite:

"Lose ten pounds."

Rewrite:

"Get three customers."

Rewrite:

"Get accepted to graduate school."

Rewrite:

"Make the client say yes."

Rewrite:

PART 5 — TOO VAGUE

Rewrite each commitment so it becomes reviewable.

"Work on the website."

Rewrite:

"Exercise more."

Rewrite:

"Study."

Rewrite:

"Get serious about the business."

Rewrite:

"Make progress on the book."

Rewrite:

"Deal with my finances."

Rewrite:

"Do some outreach."

Rewrite:

"Clean up the house."

Rewrite:

PART 6 — SPECIFIC ENOUGH OR OVERENGINEERED?

Choose:

A. Useful specificity B. Unnecessary precision C. Still too vague

"Call the dentist Tuesday."

Answer:

"Call the dentist Tuesday at exactly 10:07 a.m. while sitting at the dining table."

No known barrier requires these details.

Answer:

"Work on the proposal."

Answer:

"Submit the proposal by Thursday."

Answer:

"Write for 45 minutes Tuesday and Thursday."

Relevant history shows unscheduled writing repeatedly fails.

Answer:

"Write exactly 642 words Tuesday between 7:04 and 7:49 p.m."

No evidence supports that precision.

Answer:

PART 7 — WHICH COMMITMENT TYPE FITS?

Choose:

A. Completion-based B. Frequency-based C. Quantity-based D. Time-based E. Engagement-based F. Decision-based

“Submit the application Friday.”

Answer:

“Walk three times this week.”

Answer:

“Write 1,500 words.”

Answer:

“Study for three 45-minute sessions.”

Answer:

“Spend two one-hour blocks developing the chapter.”

Answer:

“Decide by Friday whether to continue the certification.”

Answer:

PART 8 — CHOOSE THE BEST COMMITMENT TYPE

The client is writing a complex chapter and cannot reasonably predict whether it will be complete after three hours.

Best type:

Why:

The client must submit a completed application by Friday.

Best type:

Why:

The client wants consistent exercise behavior.

Best type:

Why:

The client needs to decide whether to continue a project that has remained unresolved for two months.

Best type:

Why:

The client is producing sales calls where number of completed calls matters more than time spent.

Best type:

Why:

PART 9 — COMPLETION VS. ENGAGEMENT

For each scenario, choose whether completion or engagement is more appropriate.

Client must submit a tax form that is almost complete.

Answer:

Client is beginning research for a new book and cannot predict how much will be completed in one week.

Answer:

Client must finish two online lessons.

Answer:

Client is developing a complex strategic plan and the amount of work required remains uncertain.

Answer:

Client needs to send one completed email.

Answer:

Client is learning a new technical skill and progress is difficult to predict.

Answer:

PART 10 — BASELINE OR STRETCH TARGET?

Read each statement and identify:

Baseline commitment Stretch target

"I am committing to three workouts. Five would be a great week."

Baseline:

Stretch:

"I will submit two applications. If I have time, I would like to submit four."

Baseline:

Stretch:

"I am committing to 1,500 words and aiming for 2,500."

Baseline:

Stretch:

Why should the stretch target not automatically become the accountability standard?

PART 11 — MINIMUM COMMITMENTS

A minimum commitment protects continuity under defined circumstances.

For each scenario, decide whether a minimum commitment is likely useful.

Client is returning after a major three-month disruption and wants to rebuild a routine.

Useful / Not useful

Why:

Client repeatedly lowers commitments after every miss until the goal becomes almost meaningless.

Useful / Not useful

Why:

Client has a demanding travel week but wants to preserve some study continuity.

Useful / Not useful

Why:

Client uses “minimum” as the normal standard even though the larger goal requires substantially more activity.

Useful / Not useful

Why:

PART 12 — TOO LARGE OR TOO SMALL?

Choose:

A. Too large B. Too small C. Potentially appropriate D. More information needed

Client normally writes 2,000 words per week and commits to 15,000 next week with no change in available time.

Answer:

Client with a serious job-search goal commits to opening LinkedIn once this week.

Answer:

Client recovering from a major disruption commits to one 20-minute study session as a temporary re-entry step.

Answer:

Client has historically completed three workouts and commits to three.

Answer:

Client commits to one sales email per month despite needing substantial client acquisition.

Answer:

Client commits to five workouts.

No performance history or schedule information is available.

Answer:

PART 13 — DOES THIS ADVANCE THE GOAL?

Choose:

A. Directly advances the goal B. Potentially useful support activity C. Low-value substitute activity D. More information needed

Goal:

Find a new job.

Commitment:

Submit two qualified applications.

Answer:

Goal:

Find a new job.

Commitment:

Redesign desktop folders.

Answer:

Goal:

Build a business.

Commitment:

Contact three prospects.

Answer:

Goal:

Build a business.

Commitment:

Redesign the logo for the fourth time.

Answer:

Goal:

Complete certification.

Commitment:

Download the course materials.

The client has not yet accessed them.

Answer:

Goal:

Complete certification.

Commitment:

Spend another week choosing a notebook.

Answer:

PART 14 — COMMITMENT OWNERSHIP

For each scenario, identify the problem.

Accountabili-Buddy:

"You are doing five workouts this week."

Client:

"Okay, I guess."

Problem:

Client:

"I think three applications is right."

Accountabili-Buddy:

"I disagree. You are doing six."

Problem:

Client:

"I want to commit to four."

Accountabili-Buddy:

"Your recent history supports two or three. I want you to consider whether four is realistic."

Is this appropriate?

Why?

Client:

"I understand the evidence. I still choose four."

What should the Accountabili-Buddy do?

PART 15 — RETROACTIVE REDEFINITION

Identify the error.

Commitment:

Five workouts.

Result:

Three.

Client:

"Let's just say the goal was three."

Error:

Commitment:

Submit by Friday.

Result:

Submitted Monday.

Client:

"It was basically on time."

Error:

Commitment:

Two applications sent.

Result:

Two drafted, none sent.

Client:

"I did the work, so I count it."

Error:

Why should commitments not be redefined after the accountability period ends?

PART 16 — COMMITMENT QUALITY CHECK

For each commitment, evaluate:

Clear Controllable Realistic Meaningful Owned Reviewable

"Get more customers."

Clear: ____ Controllable: ____ Realistic: ____ Meaningful: ____ Owned: ____ Reviewable: ____

Primary design problem:

"Send three proposals this week."

Clear: ____ Controllable: ____ Realistic: ____ Meaningful: ____ Owned: ____ Reviewable: ____

What information is still needed?

"Write for two 45-minute sessions."

Clear: ____ Controllable: ____ Realistic: ____ Meaningful: ____ Owned: ____ Reviewable: ____

What goal would this appropriately support?

"Become successful."

Clear: ____ Controllable: ____ Realistic: ____ Meaningful: ____ Owned: ____ Reviewable: ____

Primary design problems:

PART 17 — COMMITMENT REPAIR

Rewrite each poor commitment.

"I will finally get my life together."

Rewrite:

"I will get ten customers."

Rewrite:

"I will work on my health."

Rewrite:

"I will complete the whole course this weekend."

Relevant context:

The course normally takes 20 hours and the client has five available.

Rewrite:

"I will open the manuscript."

Relevant context:

The client has an active book-completion goal and already opens it regularly.

Rewrite:

"I will decide someday whether to keep doing this."

Rewrite:

PART 18 — SAME GOAL, DIFFERENT COMMITMENT DESIGN

Goal:

Develop and complete a book project.

Create one example of each.

Completion-based:

Quantity-based:

Time-based:

Engagement-based:

Decision-based:

Which would be best for an early exploratory phase?

Why?

Which would be best when one chapter is almost complete?

Why?

PART 19 — DESIGN FOR UNCERTAINTY

Client:

"I want to finish the research this week, but I do not know how much research is actually required."

What commitment type may be better than completion?

Write the commitment:

Client:

"I want to finish this technical setup, but I do not know how long the unfamiliar portion will take."

What design problem exists?

Write a better commitment:

Why can engagement-based commitments be useful when completion cannot be predicted?

What is the risk of using engagement commitments when completion is actually predictable and necessary?

PART 20 — DESIGN FOR HABIT VS. PROJECT WORK

Goal:

Establish consistent walking.

What commitment form fits best?

Why?

Goal:

Submit one grant application.

What commitment form fits best?

Why?

Goal:

Develop a new business concept.

What commitment form may fit during exploration?

Why?

Goal:

Choose whether to continue a stalled project.

What commitment form fits best?

Why?

PART 21 — COMMITMENT DESIGN WITH PRIOR PERFORMANCE

History:

Client completed three workouts weekly for six weeks.

Proposed commitment:

Three.

Assessment:

History:

Client completed three workouts weekly for six weeks.

Proposed commitment:

Eight.

Assessment:

History:

Client completed three workouts weekly for six weeks.

Proposed commitment:

One.

Assessment:

What additional information could justify either eight or one?

PART 22 — ACTIVE GOAL OR FUTURE ASPIRATION?

Choose:

A. Active goal B. Deferred/future aspiration C. Paused goal D. Closed goal

"I want to learn Italian someday, but I am not allocating time to it this year."

Answer:

"I am actively studying for the exam this month."

Answer:

"I am stopping the business project for six weeks during a family transition and plan to review it afterward."

Answer:

"I no longer want to pursue this certification."

Answer:

Why does active-goal status matter for commitment design?

PART 23 — COMMITMENT STACKING

Client wants to:

exercise;

study Spanish;

write a book;

build a business;

complete a course;

organize the house.

What is the risk of creating weekly commitments for all six immediately?

What should be established first?

If the client insists all six are active, what should the Accountabili-Buddy examine?

PART 24 — COMMITMENT DESIGN AND AVOIDANCE

Client Goal:

Build a business.

Proposed commitment:

“Improve the website.”

History:

Website work consistently occurs; outreach does not.

What design concern exists?

Write a commitment that better targets the consequential behavior.

Why can a technically legitimate task still be a poor accountability commitment?

PART 25 — COMMITMENT DESIGN AND PERFECTIONISM

Client Goal:

Submit a proposal.

Proposed commitment:

“Make the proposal perfect.”

What design problems exist?

Write a better completion commitment.

What standard should be established before the accountability period begins?

PART 26 — DECISION COMMITMENTS

Client has spent six weeks debating whether to continue a degree.

What might the commitment become?

Why can “make a decision” be more useful than continuing to assign execution tasks?

When would a decision commitment be inappropriate?

PART 27 — MINIMUM VS. MEANINGFUL

Client says:

“I want my commitment to be one minute of writing.”

History:

The client is capable of sustained writing and has no current disruption.

What should the Accountabili-Buddy examine?

Client says:

“I want one 10-minute walk because I am returning after surgery and my clinician has cleared me for gradual activity, including the proposed 10-minute walk.”

What is different?

What determines whether a small commitment is strategic or merely protective?

PART 28 — CLIENT PROPOSES A POOR COMMITMENT

Client:

"I will try harder this week."

Your response:

Client:

"I will get three clients."

Your response:

Client:

"I will do something for the business every day."

Your response:

Client:

"I will do ten workouts because I need a big goal."

Your response:

Client:

"I will open the application."

Relevant context:

The application is already complete and repeatedly remains unsent.

Your response:

PART 29 — CLIENT REJECTS COMMITMENT DESIGN FEEDBACK

Client proposes six sessions.

Evidence supports three.

Client:

"I hear you. I still choose six."

Your response:

Client proposes:

“Work on the business.”

Accountabili-Buddy asks for more specificity.

Client:

“I do not want to overstructure it.”

Your response:

Client proposes a trivially small target.

Client:

“I know it is tiny. I just want something I know I can complete.”

Your response:

PART 30 — INTEGRATED COMMITMENT DESIGN CASE

Client Goal:

Launch a freelance photography business.

Client says:

“I need to start getting clients.”

Proposed Commitment:

“Work on the business every day.”

What is wrong with the proposed commitment?

What information is needed before redesigning it?

NEW INFORMATION

The client has already completed:

- website;
- portfolio;
- pricing;
- invoicing;

CRM setup.

Very little prospect outreach has occurred.

What behavior now appears most consequential?

Design one completion- or quantity-based commitment.

Is this commitment substantially controllable?

Why?

Is it meaningful?

Why?

What historical information would help calibrate the quantity?

NEW INFORMATION

Client says:

"I want to commit to contacting 20 prospects this week."

Client has never contacted more than three in one week.

What design concern arises?

What should the Accountabili-Buddy ask?

NEW INFORMATION

Client says:

"I have time for about five quality contacts. Twenty is just what I think a serious business owner should do."

What is the better commitment-design direction?

Write the Accountabili-Buddy response.

NEW INFORMATION

Client says:

“Five is realistic. I would like 10 to be the stretch target.”

What should be recorded as the commitment?

What should be recorded as the stretch target?

Why must those remain distinct?

PART 31 — COMMITMENT DESIGN SELF-REVIEW

- Do I tend to make commitments too vague?
- Do I overengineer commitments?
- Do I confuse the desired outcome with the accountable action?
- Do I choose completion commitments when engagement would be more appropriate?
- Do I use engagement commitments when the actual completion point is already clear?
- Do I mistake very small commitments for automatically good commitments?
- Do I push ambitious commitments without enough capacity evidence?
- Do I allow stretch targets to become hidden baseline commitments?
- Do I preserve client ownership?
- Do I ensure the commitment meaningfully advances the goal?
- Do I define success before the accountability period begins?
- Do I avoid retroactively redefining completion?

PART 32 — STAGE 3A COMPETENCY CHECK

I can distinguish goals from commitments.

Yes / Not Yet

I can distinguish outcomes from controllable actions.

Yes / Not Yet

I can create commitments that are clear enough to review.

Yes / Not Yet

I can identify when specificity becomes unnecessary precision.

Yes / Not Yet

I can choose among completion-, frequency-, quantity-, time-, engagement-, and decision-based commitments.

Yes / Not Yet

I can distinguish baseline commitments from stretch targets.

Yes / Not Yet

I can identify when minimum commitments are strategically useful.

Yes / Not Yet

I can identify when a commitment has become too small to provide meaningful accountability.

Yes / Not Yet

I can identify when a commitment does not materially advance the goal.

Yes / Not Yet

I can preserve client ownership while challenging weak commitment design.

Yes / Not Yet

I can define success before the accountability period begins.

Yes / Not Yet

I can resist retroactive redefinition of the commitment.

Yes / Not Yet

STAGE 3A CORE STANDARD

A well-designed commitment should answer six questions:

What is the client trying to accomplish?

What behavior is the client actually agreeing to perform?

Is that behavior substantially within the client's control?

Will both parties be able to determine whether it happened?

Is the commitment meaningful and realistically executable?

Does the client actually own the commitment?

The purpose of commitment design is not to remove uncertainty from human behavior.

It is to create a sufficiently clear and credible behavioral agreement that later accountability produces useful information.

A commitment should not be designed merely to maximize the probability of success.

It should be designed to make meaningful follow-through observable.

END OF STAGE 3 — WORKBOOK 3A: COMMITMENT DESIGN