

STAGE 3 RESPONSE-WRITING DRILLS

PURPOSE

These drills train the trainee to respond when a client proposes, completes, misses, changes, or questions a commitment.

Stage 3 response writing requires the trainee to integrate two competencies:

commitment design

and

commitment calibration

The trainee must be able to recognize when a proposed commitment is:

vague;

outcome-based;

poorly controlled;

too large;

too small;

misaligned with the goal;

a substitute for the consequential action;

poorly calibrated to actual capacity;

based on aspiration rather than evidence;

based on fear of missing the commitment rather than meaningful progress;

temporarily appropriate;

structurally inappropriate;

or no longer the right commitment at all.

The response must then improve the commitment without taking ownership away from the client.

INSTRUCTIONS

For each scenario:

Write the exact response you would send.

Do not provide a lecture on commitment design.

Address only the issue that matters for the current decision.

Use performance history when it is relevant.

Preserve the client's final ownership of the commitment.

Do not automatically make missed commitments smaller.

Do not automatically make successful commitments larger.

Keep baseline, minimum, and stretch targets distinct.

Define success prospectively rather than retroactively.

Write language that could credibly be used in a real accountability conversation.

SECTION 1 — VAGUE COMMITMENTS

Client:

"I'm going to work on the business this week."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll make some progress on the book."

Your response:

Client:

"I need to exercise more."

Your response:

Client:

"I'm going to deal with my finances."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll do something every day for my job search."

Your response:

Client:

"I'm going to get serious about Spanish."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll get caught up on the course."

Your response:

SECTION 2 — OUTCOME-BASED COMMITMENTS

Client:

"My commitment is to get three new clients this week."

Your response:

Client:

"I want my goal for this week to be losing two pounds."

Your response:

Client:

"I'm committing to getting an interview."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll get accepted into the program."

Your response:

Client:

"I'm going to make the customer renew."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll make \$2,000 from the business this week."

Your response:

SECTION 3 — TOO MUCH SPECIFICITY

Client:

"I will study exactly 43 minutes at 7:12 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday."

Relevant context:

No prior difficulty requires that degree of precision.

Your response:

Client:

"I want to write exactly 682 words at 6:40 every morning."

Relevant context:

The goal is simply to establish a regular writing practice.

Your response:

Client:

"I want every commitment scheduled to the exact minute so I cannot mess it up."

Your response:

SECTION 4 — TOO LITTLE SPECIFICITY

Client:

"I'll study sometime before Sunday."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll contact some people."

Your response:

Client:

"I'm going to make real progress."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll work out when I can."

Your response:

SECTION 5 — WRONG COMMITMENT TYPE

Client:

"I'm committing to finishing this market research this week."

Relevant context:

Neither the client nor Accountabili-Buddy knows how much research will be necessary.

Your response:

Client:

"I'll spend two hours on the application."

Relevant context:

The completed application only needs to be submitted.

Your response:

Client:

"I'll write 2,000 words."

Relevant context:

The client is in an exploratory research phase and output is unpredictable.

Your response:

Client:

"I'll work on deciding whether to continue the course."

Relevant context:

The client has been undecided for two months.

Your response:

SECTION 6 — CONSEQUENT ACTION VS. SUPPORT ACTIVITY

Goal:

Acquire consulting clients.

History:

Website and branding work are complete. No prospect contact has occurred.

Client:

"I'll spend another week improving the website."

Your response:

Goal:

Apply for jobs.

History:

Résumé has been professionally reviewed twice. No applications have been sent.

Client:

"I'll work on the résumé again."

Your response:

Goal:

Submit a proposal.

The proposal meets the agreed requirements.

Client:

"I'll proofread it one more time this week."

Your response:

Goal:

Grow a business.

Client has practiced the sales script extensively but has not made a sales call.

Client:

"I'll practice the script three more times."

Your response:

SECTION 7 — COMMITMENT TOO LARGE

History:

Client normally completes three workouts.

Client:

"I want to commit to ten this week."

No circumstances have changed.

Your response:

History:

Client typically writes 2,000–3,000 words weekly.

Client:

"I'm committing to 15,000 this weekend."

Your response:

Client:

"I only have four study hours available, but I'm committing to ten because I need to push myself."

Your response:

Client:

"I want six sessions because that is what disciplined people do."

Available schedule supports three.

Your response:

SECTION 8 — COMMITMENT TOO SMALL

History:

Client normally completes four workouts.

No disruption exists.

Client:

"I'm committing to one because I know I can definitely do one."

Your response:

Goal:

Find a new job.

Client has capacity for three qualified applications weekly.

Client:

"I'll submit one application every two weeks."

Your response:

Goal:

Complete a book.

Client already writes regularly.

Client:

"My commitment is to open the manuscript once."

Your response:

Client:

"I want the smallest commitment possible so I can get a perfect accountability record."

Your response:

SECTION 9 — STRATEGIC SMALL COMMITMENTS

Client is returning after a two-month disruption.

Previous baseline:

Four study sessions.

Client:

"I want one short session this week just to get restarted."

Your response:

Normal baseline:

Four workouts.

Client will be traveling extensively this week.

Client:

"I think one workout is realistic."

Your response:

Client is gradually resuming an activity after professional clearance to do so conservatively.

Client proposes a deliberately small first-week commitment.

Your response:

SECTION 10 — BASELINE VS. STRETCH

Client:

"I'm committing to three workouts, but I'd like five if the week goes well."

Your response:

Client:

"Two applications is the commitment. Four is the stretch."

Your response:

Client:

"Three is technically my commitment, but if I don't do five I'll feel like I failed."

Your response:

Client:

"I did four. Baseline was three and stretch was five."

Your response:

SECTION 11 — MINIMUM COMMITMENTS

Baseline:

Four study sessions.

Minimum during a travel week:

One.

Client:

"I did one."

Your response:

Baseline:

Four.

Minimum:

One.

Client has completed only the minimum during six normal weeks.

Your response:

Client:

"I want to make the minimum my normal commitment because I always hit it."

Your response:

SECTION 12 — CLIENT WANTS TO INCREASE AFTER SUCCESS

Client completes three workouts once.

Client:

"Great. Six next week."

Your response:

Client has completed three for 10 weeks.

Three now feels easy and the client wants continued improvement.

Your response:

Client has completed three for six months.

Goal is maintenance.

Client:

"Should I increase just because I've been successful?"

Your response:

Client completes six during one unusually easy week.

Normal history:

Three.

Client:

"I've proved six is my new baseline."

Your response:

SECTION 13 — CLIENT WANTS TO REDUCE AFTER A MISSED COMMITMENT

History:

Four completed regularly for months.

One poor week.

Client:

"Let's make it one."

Your response:

Target:

Five.

Results:

2, 2, 3, 2, 2.

Client:

"I think we should lower it."

Your response:

Client completes one of four because of a documented emergency.

Client:

"I guess four is unrealistic."

Your response:

Client completes one of four despite having adequate time and repeatedly avoiding the action.

Client:

“Let’s make it one.”

Your response:

SECTION 14 — CHRONIC OVERCOMMITMENT

History:

Six study sessions planned weekly.

Results:

2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2.

Client:

“Six again.”

Your response:

Client:

“I know the evidence says three, but six is what I should be capable of.”

Your response:

Client:

“Three feels like admitting defeat.”

Your response:

Client:

“I want you to hold me to six harder.”

Your response:

SECTION 15 — PROTECTIVE UNDERCOMMITMENT

History:

Client can realistically submit three applications weekly.

Client:

"I'm choosing one every other week because I'm tired of missing."

Your response:

Client:

"I just want something I know I cannot fail."

Your response:

Client:

"I know this will not move the goal much, but I like getting the check mark."

Your response:

SECTION 16 — TEMPORARY CAPACITY CHANGE

Normal commitment:

Four workouts.

For the next two weeks, client is caring for a family member after surgery.

Realistic capacity:

One or two.

Your response:

Client:

"If I reduce to two for these two weeks, I'm worried I'll never get back to four."

Your response:

The temporary disruption ends.

Client:

"I've been doing two. Should we just leave it there?"

Your response:

SECTION 17 — STRUCTURAL CAPACITY CHANGE

Old baseline:

Five workouts.

Client permanently begins a new job that leaves three realistic workout periods.

Client:

"I want to keep five because that used to be my baseline."

Your response:

Client:

"I feel like changing to three means I'm becoming less disciplined."

Your response:

Client:

"Three is what the new schedule actually supports."

Your response:

SECTION 18 — SUCCESSFUL BUT UNSUSTAINABLE

Client:

"I completed all five sessions."

Further information:

Client slept four hours several nights to fit them in.

Your response:

Client:

"I hit the writing target again."

Further information:

Every week requires a 12-hour Sunday sprint.

Your response:

Client:

"I did everything."

Further information:

Client neglected another stated top priority to do so.

Your response:

Client:

"But I completed it, so doesn't that prove the commitment works?"

Your response:

SECTION 19 — "I COULD IF I REALLY PUSHED"

Client normally completes three sessions.

Client:

"I could do six if I really pushed."

Your response:

Client:

"I don't want to calibrate around average effort. I want to calibrate around my maximum."

Your response:

Client:

"I did seven once, so seven should be the baseline."

Normal history:

Three.

Your response:

SECTION 20 — "I SHOULD BE ABLE TO"

Client:

"I should be able to work out every day."

Sustainable history:

Three weekly.

Your response:

Client:

"Other people can do five study sessions while working full-time."

Your response:

Client:

"I know what my actual schedule supports. I just hate that the number is lower than what I think I should be doing."

Your response:

SECTION 21 — COMPETING ACTIVE GOALS

Client wants:

four hours of fitness;
five hours on business;
four hours on certification.

Available discretionary time:

Six hours.

Client:

"Each of those commitments seems reasonable."

Your response:

Client:

"I don't want to choose. I want all three to stay at full level."

Your response:

Client:

"What if I just make all three a little smaller?"

Your response:

SECTION 22 — CALIBRATION AND AVOIDANCE

Target:

Five sales contacts.

Client has time for three high-quality contacts.

Results:

1, 2, 1, 2.

Client:

"I think one is the right target."

Your response:

Client:

"One feels right because then I know I won't fail."

Your response:

Client:

"Three is realistic. Five is a stretch. One is just safer."

Your response:

SECTION 23 — CALIBRATION AND PERFECTIONISM

Writing target:

1,000 words.

Results:

300–400.

Client spends extensive time revising every sentence.

Client:

"I think we should reduce the goal to 300."

Your response:

Client:

"But 1,000 clearly isn't happening."

Your response:

Client:

"What should we test instead?"

Your response:

SECTION 24 — COMMITMENT DESIGN AFTER DIAGNOSTIC CLARITY

Problem established:

Client repeatedly prepares instead of sending proposals.

Client:

"What should the commitment be this week?"

Your response:

Problem established:

Client has too many active goals.

Client:

"Should I just give each one a tiny commitment?"

Your response:

Problem established:

Current goal no longer matters.

Client:

"What should my commitment be?"

Your response:

Problem established:

Technical prerequisite is missing.

Client:

"Do I still commit to finishing the setup?"

Your response:

SECTION 25 — DECISION COMMITMENTS

Client has debated continuing a degree for two months.

Client:

"I keep setting study goals, but I still don't know whether I want the degree."

Your response:

Client:

"So should this week's commitment just be to decide?"

Your response:

Client knows they want the degree but dislikes this week's study material.

Client:

"Maybe I need a decision commitment about whether to continue."

Your response:

SECTION 26 — ACTIVE GOAL VS. FUTURE ASPIRATION

Client:

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

Your response:

Client:

"I still want it on my accountability list so I don't forget about it."

Your response:

Client:

"I'm pausing the business goal for six weeks and want to review it then."

Your response:

SECTION 27 — DEFINE SUCCESS BEFOREHAND

Client:

"I'll do three applications."

Your response should clarify what counts as completion:

Client:

"I'll write three times."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll complete the report."

Relevant context:

Both parties disagree about what "complete" means.

Your response:

SECTION 28 — RETROACTIVE REDEFINITION

Commitment:

Five workouts.

Result:

Three.

Client:

"Let's count three as complete."

Your response:

Commitment:

Submit Friday.

Result:

Monday.

Client:

"It was basically on time."

Your response:

Commitment:

Send two proposals.

Result:

Two drafted, none sent.

Client:

"I basically did it."

Your response:

Client:

"Why does the exact result matter if I made progress?"

Your response:

SECTION 29 — CLIENT REJECTS COMMITMENT-DESIGN FEEDBACK

Client proposes:

"Work on my business."

Accountabili-Buddy asks for a reviewable commitment.

Client:

"I don't want to overstructure everything."

Your response:

Client proposes six workouts.

Evidence supports three.

Client:

"I hear your argument. I still choose six."

Your response:

Client proposes a trivially small target.

Client:

"I know it's tiny. It's still my choice."

Your response:

SECTION 30 — CLIENT REJECTS CALIBRATION FEEDBACK

Evidence supports three sessions.

Client chooses five.

Your response:

Evidence supports maintaining four.

Client wants one after one poor week.

Your response:

Evidence supports progression.

Client wants to keep a trivially easy target because:

"I like having a perfect record."

Your response:

SECTION 31 — CALIBRATION EXPERIMENTS

Client and Accountabili-Buddy are uncertain whether three or four workouts are sustainable.

Client:

"So what should we do?"

Your response:

Client:

“What would we learn from trying four for two weeks?”

Your response:

Client:

“If four doesn’t work, does that mean I failed?”

Your response:

SECTION 32 — MAINTENANCE

Client has maintained three workouts for six months.

Client:

“Three is exactly what I want long term.”

Your response:

Client:

“Shouldn’t accountability always be pushing me toward more?”

Your response:

Client reports that three now feels routine and requires little deliberate effort.

Your response:

SECTION 33 — STABLE SUCCESS AND COMMITMENT REVIEW

Client has completed three sessions consistently for four months.

Client:

"Three feels easy now. Should I raise it?"

Your response:

Client:

"My goal is maintenance, and three is still enough for that."

Your response:

Client:

"Could I lower it to one since one would be even easier?"

Your response:

SECTION 34 — CLIENT OWNERSHIP DURING CALIBRATION

Evidence supports three sessions as a realistic baseline.

Client: "Just tell me what number I should commit to."

Your response:

Accountabili-Buddy recommends three. Client prefers five.

Client: "Can you make me choose three?"

Your response:

Client understands the calibration concern and says:

"I still choose five."

Your response:

SECTION 35 — RE-ENTRY AFTER LAPSE

Old baseline:

Four sessions.

Client has been inactive for two months because of a major disruption.

Client:

"I guess I should go straight back to four."

Your response:

Client:

"I'd rather start with one for this week and reassess."

Your response:

Eight normal weeks later, client is still using one despite wanting faster progress.

Your response:

SECTION 36 — NEW BEHAVIOR, NO HISTORY

Client wants to start a new habit.

Client:

"How many times should I commit to?"

Your response:

Client:

"So the first commitment is partly a test?"

Your response:

Client:

"What happens if the first number is clearly wrong?"

Your response:

SECTION 37 — KNOWN BEHAVIOR, STRONG HISTORY

Client has six months of stable performance at three sessions.

Client:

"I feel ambitious this week. Let's make it eight."

Your response:

Client:

"But maybe this week I really can do eight."

Your response:

Client:

"So what role should the six months of history play?"

Your response:

SECTION 38 — SAME RESULT, DIFFERENT RESPONSE

Result in every case:

Two of five completed.

Case A:

Only two sessions could realistically fit.

Your response:

Case B:

Five fit, but the client avoided three.

Your response:

Case C:

A one-time emergency eliminated three sessions.

Your response:

Case D:

Two of five has occurred for seven weeks and the cause remains unclear.

Your response:

SECTION 39 — PROGRESSION

Client has completed three sessions for 12 weeks.

Current level is easy, recovery is good, and the goal requires progressive challenge.

Client:

"I think it's time to increase."

Your response:

Client:

"Should we jump straight to six?"

Your response:

Client:

"How will we know whether the increase was appropriate?"

Your response:

SECTION 40 — FULL CASE: CHRONIC OVERCOMMITMENT

Client Goal:

Complete professional certification.

Target:

Six study sessions weekly.

Six-week results:

2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2.

Client:

"I need you to hold me to six harder."

Write the response:

NEW INFORMATION

Client has:

three reliable study periods;

a fourth occasionally available;

six only if sleep or important family time is sacrificed.

Write the next response:

Client:

"Six is what serious people do."

Write the response:

Client:

"Three is the real baseline. Four could be the stretch."

Write the response:

Next three weeks:

3, 3, 4.

Write the response:

SECTION 41 — FULL CASE: UNDERCOMMITMENT

Client Goal:

Find a new job.

Demonstrated capacity:

Three to four quality applications weekly.

Client:

"I want one application every two weeks."

Write the response:

Client:

"I know it's tiny. I just don't want another week where I fail."

Write the response:

Client:

"Three is realistic. I'm just nervous about committing to it."

Write the response:

SECTION 42 — FULL CASE: TEMPORARY DISRUPTION

Normal baseline:

Four workouts.

Client will spend three weeks caring for a family member after surgery.

Realistic capacity:

One or two.

Write the response:

Client:

"Let's call two my new baseline."

Write the response:

Three weeks later:

Temporary demand has ended.

Client:

"I'm ready to review."

Write the response:

SECTION 43 — FULL CASE: SUCCESSFUL BUT UNSUSTAINABLE

Client Goal:

Complete a business plan.

Commitment:

Two sections weekly.

Client has completed the target for four weeks.

Every week, all work occurs in one late-night Sunday sprint ending around 3 a.m.

Write the response:

Client:

"But I'm getting it done."

Write the response:

Client:

"So are you saying the target itself is wrong?"

Write the response:

SECTION 44 — FULL CASE: CALIBRATION + AVOIDANCE

Client Goal:

Grow a freelance business.

Original target:

Five prospect contacts.

Results:

1, 2, 1, 2.

Client:

"Five is too much. I want one."

Write the response:

NEW INFORMATION

Client has time for three quality contacts. Five would be rushed.

Write the response:

Client:

"One still feels better because then I know I won't fail."

Write the response:

Client:

"Three is probably the real baseline. Five can be stretch."

Write the response:

Next three weeks:

3, 3, 4.

Write the response:

SECTION 45 — FULL CASE: CALIBRATION + PERFECTIONISM

Writing commitment:

1,000 words.

Results:

300, 400, 250, 350.

Client spends extensive time revising each sentence.

Client:

"I think the target should be 300."

Write the response:

Client:

"But the numbers prove I only do about 300."

Write the response:

Client:

"What should we test?"

Write the response:

Following week:

Client writes 900 words when revision is deferred until after drafting.

Write the response:

SECTION 46 — FULL CASE: COMMITMENT DESIGN FROM SCRATCH

Client Goal:

Find a new professional position.

Client:

"I'm going to really focus on the job search this week."

Write the response:

NEW INFORMATION

Client has:

updated résumé;
complete profile;
12 suitable openings;
time for four quality applications.

Client:

"I'll spend five hours researching companies."

Write the response:**Client:**

"What if I just open one application?"

Write the response:**Client:**

"I'm only saying one because then I can't fail."

Write the response:**Client chooses:**

Baseline: three applications.

Stretch: four.

Write the response:

SECTION 47 — FULL CASE: CREATIVE WORK

Client Goal:

Write a nonfiction book.

Client:

"I'm going to finish Chapter 4 this week."

Relevant context:

Research requirements remain uncertain.

Write the response:**Three weeks later:**

Research complete.

Chapter substantially drafted.

Two known sections remain.

Write the response:**Client:**

"So now completion makes more sense than an engagement target?"

Write the response:

SECTION 48 — FULL CASE: TOO MANY ACTIVE COMMITMENTS

Client wants weekly commitments for:

five workouts;
four Spanish lessons;
3,000 words;
six sales contacts;

two course modules;
full garage organization.

Client:

"Each one seems realistic."

Write the response:

Client:

"I don't want to drop anything."

Write the response:

Client:

"Then what should I decide first?"

Write the response:

SECTION 49 — CONCISE RESPONSE CHALLENGE

Respond in no more than two sentences.

Client:

"I'll work harder this week."

Your response:

Client:

"I'll get three customers."

Your response:

Client:

"I'm committing to ten workouts because I need to challenge myself."

Normal history:

Three.

Your response:

Client:

"I'll do one application because I cannot fail one."

Your response:

Client:

"I did four. Baseline three, stretch five."

Your response:

Client:

"I completed everything, but I slept four hours a night."

Your response:

Client:

"Five again."

History:

2, 2, 3, 2, 2.

Your response:

Client:

"Three is exactly what I want to maintain."

History:

Six months stable.

Your response:

SECTION 50 — FINAL RESPONSE-WRITING CHALLENGE

Client Goal:

Build a service business.

Initial proposed commitment:

"Work on the business every day."

Write the response:

NEW INFORMATION

Client has already completed:

website;

service description;

pricing;

CRM setup;

invoicing.

Prospect outreach is minimal.

Client:

"I could improve the website again."

Write the response:

Client:

"Fine. I'll contact 20 prospects."

Historical maximum:

Three.

Available capacity:

Approximately five quality contacts.

Write the response:

Client:

"I guess five is realistic, but one would feel safer."

Write the response:

Client:

"Five is a meaningful baseline. Eight could be stretch."

Write the response:

Next week:

Five completed.

Client:

"Great. Let's make eight the baseline."

Write the response:

Following four weeks:

5, 6, 5, 6.

Client:

"Now what?"

Write the response:

STAGE 3 RESPONSE-WRITING SELF-REVIEW

Review selected responses and ask:

Did I clarify vague commitments without overengineering them?

Did I convert outcomes into controllable actions?

Did I select a commitment type appropriate to the work?

Did I ensure the commitment meaningfully advanced the goal?

Did I identify when support activity was replacing consequential action?

Did I use performance history when calibrating?

Did I distinguish isolated misses from repeated evidence?

Did I distinguish temporary from structural changes?

Did I recognize protective undercommitment?

Did I recognize chronic overcommitment?

Did I separate baseline, minimum, and stretch?

Did I evaluate sustainability as well as completion?

Did I avoid automatic escalation after success?

Did I avoid automatic reduction after a missed commitment?

Did I preserve client ownership when I disagreed with the proposed commitment?

Did I define completion prospectively?

Did I keep the response itself simpler than the reasoning behind it?

STAGE 3 RESPONSE-WRITING STANDARD

A strong Stage 3 response should improve the quality of the behavioral agreement without turning commitment-setting into Accountabili-Buddy control.

The trainee should be able to communicate distinctions such as:

"This is measurable, but it does not meaningfully advance the goal."

"This is ambitious, but the evidence does not currently support it as the baseline."

"This is smaller, but smaller is not automatically better calibrated."

"The commitment was completed, but the process used to complete it may not be sustainable."

"This week justifies a temporary adjustment, not necessarily a new baseline."

"The baseline was completed; the stretch target was not."

"I disagree with the commitment you are choosing, but the decision remains yours."

The governing standard is:

Design clearly. Calibrate from evidence. Challenge where necessary. Preserve ownership. Record the result accurately.

END OF STAGE 3 — RESPONSE-WRITING DRILLS