



Getting Started with 12 x 12 for New Members

Welcome to 12 x 12! This group is run by Julie Hedlund with her Community Wizard Kelli Panique and Forum Guru Carol Munro. We are so glad you've joined us and we look forward to seeing how you grow in your writing career over the next year. Read this document to get the most out of your membership. Click a topic in the Table of Contents to go straight to the section.

[FIRST THINGS FIRST](#)

[EMAIL MESSAGES](#)

[THE CHALLENGE](#)

[THE FORUM](#)

[THE BADGES](#)

[FULL MANUSCRIPT, ILLUSTRATION, QUERY, AND PITCH CRITIQUES](#)

[CRITIQUE GROUPS](#)

[CRITIQUE NINJAS](#)

[THE WEBINARS](#)

[THE FACEBOOK GROUP](#)

[THE BLOG](#)

[12 X 12 BOOKSHOP](#)

[REQUESTING HELP](#)

[FAQS](#)

FIRST THINGS FIRST

1. Watch the video on how to create a 12 x 12 forum account [HERE](#).
2. Register to join the 12 x 12 forum [HERE](#). Please use the following naming convention for your username: FirstnameLastname (no spaces).
3. Request to join the 12 x 12 in 2024 Facebook Group [HERE](#).
4. We will manually approve you for the forum and Facebook group. This should happen within 48-72 hours of your registration.
5. Bookmark the 12 x 12 blog [HERE](#).
6. Start writing! The main goal of 12 x 12 is to encourage you to write 12 new picture book drafts in 12 months. Our first check-in is on January 31st.

EMAIL MESSAGES

The Forum and the Facebook group are great resources, but the main way we communicate directly with everyone is through email. Take a moment to add support@12x12challenge.com to your list of contacts and/or safe senders.

If you are using Gmail, please look for our messages in your Promotions folder. Drag the message to your Primary folder so Gmail will (hopefully) filter it there in the future. If you are using another email provider and you find our messages in spam, please mark them as “not spam” and help your system learn that you do indeed want our messages.

If your registration was purchased under a different name or email address from the one you prefer to use for 12 x 12 communications, scroll to the bottom of the welcome email and click “Change Subscriber Options.” A window will open that will allow you to change the information in our system. If that doesn’t work, email your receipt to support@12x12challenge.com along with the correct contact information and we’ll make the change manually. You need to do this every year that you register.

If you unsubscribe, you will not get any 12 x 12 messages. So please do not unsubscribe.

THE CHALLENGE

The challenge of 12 x 12 is to write 12 new picture book drafts in 12 months. That’s it! They don’t have to (and probably won’t) be perfect. These are those really bad first drafts that get the ideas out of your head and onto the page where you can actually work on them and make them come to life.

Here are a few things to note:

- Keep track of your new drafts in the way that works best for you. We’ve created tracking sheets to get you started. Download them from the Important Announcements section of the forum [here](#).

- You don't have to turn anything in or post a draft on the forum for it to count.
- Some people find posting a draft in the Manuscript Makeover section on the forum each month keeps them accountable (and gives them usable feedback), but it's not required. (If you do post your manuscript on the forum as a way to track your monthly drafts, be sure to also keep a record outside of the forum. If you request to have a manuscript deleted, it cannot be undone.)
- If you scribbled a draft in crayon on a napkin in your car while waiting in the fast-food drive-thru line, it counts!
- Each month that you complete one or more drafts, you can earn that month's badge on the forum. (You'll find the instructions for requesting a badge below.)
- At the end of each month, we'll have a check-in post on the blog where you can report your progress and enter to win a prize from our Featured Author. (Details below in The Blog section below.)
- While one draft a month sounds great, we know some months are busier than others. So, if you write 12 drafts or more throughout the year—but not necessarily one per month—you'll still be able to claim your spot on the Winners Wall at the end of the year.
- There's a Winners Wall? YES! If you write 12 or more drafts this year, you'll have the opportunity to send us your draft total and picture to be included in our Winners Wall video. See our past winners [here!](#)

THE FORUM

[This video](#) will show you how to register for [the 12 x 12 forum](#).

- Once you arrive on the login page, click "Don't have an account? Create One."
- Your username should be your first name and last name with no space: FirstnameLastname. This makes it easy for fellow members to find you on the forum and makes the approval process move more quickly.
- Enter SILVER in the field where it asks why you would like to join the forum.

Once you create an account on the 12 x 12 forum, your registration will need to be approved. This is a manual process, but we will do our best to get you approved as soon as possible, usually within 48-72 hours on weekdays. (**NOTE:** If you are using a different name or email than the one you used to make your purchase, please list that in the comments of your registration or email us at support@12x12challenge.com so we can easily find you.)

Once you're approved, you will be able to see the sections of the forum available at your membership level. There's a lot here and it can be overwhelming when you first take it in (but so useful to you once you get comfortable!). We **HIGHLY** suggest starting in the [Announcements, Policies, and Tutorials](#) section to get acquainted with the challenge and the forum and how they work.

Our [video tutorials](#) will help you get the most out of your membership. Please watch them! They will show you:

- how to set up your profile
- navigate the forum
- start a discussion
- comment on a discussion
- post your manuscript for critique
- get monthly badges
- and much, much more

These videos were created to answer our most frequently asked questions about how to use the forum, so please look for answers in these videos before posting or sending questions to Julie, Kelli, or Carol.

The forum is divided into categories. The easiest place to start and see all the topics available is the Category Page. [Click here to access the categories.](#) (This page will not be visible until you are approved for the forum.)

From any page on the forum, you can use the top menu to access Categories, Discussions (most recent forum discussions and announcements), or the 12 x 12 Blog (see section below). You can also access Categories from Quick Links in the column on the right side of the forum page. When you aren't on the Categories page, all categories will be listed in this column.

The forum is the place to find critique partners, discussions on the craft of writing, feedback on your manuscripts, illustrations, queries, and pitches, help to promote your published book, and support from other picture book writers. The forum is what the members make of it. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. It is also a place you can use as a resource and easily refer to the information you find useful.

There is a LOT going on in the forum. It has developed, grown, and changed as our members have developed, grown, and changed. Pick one place you want to start and focus there (writing, submitting, promoting your book, etc.). Then you can branch out from there. Take your time and don't be afraid to ask questions on the forum or in the Facebook group. We were all new at one time and are happy to help you learn. The more you participate, the more comfortable you'll get using the forum.

THE BADGES

You can earn a variety of badges on the Forum for participation. Most badges are awarded automatically, but badges for writing a draft, revising a manuscript, or posting a review of a 12 x 12 member's book MUST BE REQUESTED each month those goals are achieved.

To get a draft, revision, or review badge:

- Go to the [Important Announcements](#) section
- Click on the post related to the monthly badge you are looking for, i.e., “January Badges”
- Click on the link to the badge you’ve earned.
- Click “Request Badge” in the upper right corner. (If you are on your phone or are on a smaller screen, this button may show up at the bottom of the screen.)
- Put the name of the manuscript in the box or the name of the book you reviewed.
- Click "Send Request."
- After you hit “Send Request,” you may end up back on the request screen. Look for the small box in the bottom left of the screen that says, “Badge requested.”
- All badge requests are approved manually and can take a few days to be approved. We approve all requests that come through. If you haven’t received your badge after a week, please request it again.
- Once your badge is approved, you’ll receive a notification on the forum and the badge will appear under your profile picture on your profile page. To get to your profile page, click your picture or icon in the top right of the forum. In the window that pops open, click your picture or icon again to go to your profile page.

How to Earn a Review Badge:

- Find 12 x 12 member books in our 12 x 12 Bookshop.org [HERE](#) or find ARCs of member books in the Review Request section of the forum [HERE](#).
- You do not have to purchase these books. You may check them out of the library (or read the ARC). You can also review books you hear at a read-aloud or Book Chat.
- If you feel you can give the book a 4 or 5-star review, then review it on GoodReads, Amazon, or Barnes & Noble.
- If you don’t feel like you can give the book a high rating, then don’t review it. The goal is to help increase the visibility of members’ books. Not to bring them down.
- Please do not contact the author to ask to exchange reviews. That puts the author in an uncomfortable situation.
- These books are already published, so please do not contact the author to offer a critique or feedback or to tell them about mistakes you found in the book.

Monthly draft, revision, and review badges are NOT awarded automatically. You must request them each month using this process.

You can request badges throughout the year. So, if you get to July and realize you never requested your March badges, go to the Important Announcements section of the forum and request the badge you need.

The forum allows us to award a badge only one time. So, if you write 5 new picture books in April, we're super impressed, but we can only approve your April draft badge once. Be sure to keep track of all new drafts for your year-end totals

FULL MANUSCRIPT, ILLUSTRATION, QUERY, AND PITCH CRITIQUES

As a 12 x 12 member, you can get critiques and feedback from your fellow writers. You may post as many manuscripts, illustration dummies, query letters, or pitches as you'd like but we ask that you **critique at least three others for every one that you post**. Post one manuscript, critique three manuscripts. Post one pitch, offer feedback on three pitches. (Spread the love! Look for manuscripts that don't have any comments yet!)

Follow the links below for tips on posting and giving critiques:

- Tutorial on how to post a manuscript [HERE](#). (Same process applies for posting query letters and pitches. For illustration dummies, refer to the instruction post in the Illustration Station.)
- Tips for giving and receiving critiques [HERE](#).

Follow the links below to post your manuscript, illustration dummy, query letter, or pitches for feedback:

- [Full Manuscript](#)
- [Illustration Station](#)
- [Query Corner](#)
- [Pitch Perfect](#)

CRITIQUE GROUPS

Some of the most valuable resources in 12 x 12 are other 12 x 12 members! If you are interested in joining a critique group, please go to [Critique Connect](#) in the 12 x 12 Member Forum. Read the reference post in this section to learn how to start a discussion about what you are looking for in a critique group or you can read & respond to others who are looking for partners. Groups form throughout the year.

CRITIQUE NINJAS

"Critique Ninjas" will roam the Forum each month and provide critiques on manuscripts posted in the Manuscript Makeover section. All the Ninjas are agented and/or multi-published authors. Stealthy as these Ninjas are, they will not be able to critique each and every manuscript posted. However, you will learn LOTS from reading their critiques of your colleagues' manuscripts. You will receive at least one Ninja critique on one of your manuscripts posted in the [Full Manuscript](#) section in 2024, if you want one. (Manuscripts must be posted in the Full Manuscript section of the forum in order to get a Ninja critique.)

As we approach the end of the year, there will be an opportunity to request a Ninja critique if you haven't received one previously during the year. Once the request form goes out in August, you will have to fill out the request form by the deadline to ensure you receive a Ninja critique by the end of the year.

Please read the full section on the forum explaining how Critique Ninjas work [HERE](#).

It is our policy that members do not request or approach a Critique Ninja about getting a critique. Occasionally, Ninjas may post in the forum or Facebook group that they are looking for manuscripts to critique. In this case, you may post a link to your manuscript on the forum in response to the Ninja's request.

To find manuscripts already critiqued by Ninjas, look for the code NV in the title of manuscripts in the Full Manuscript section. Do not add NV to your manuscript title or a Ninja will think that manuscript has already been critiqued. For tips from the Ninjas on how to give (and receive) critiques, watch this video on the forum [HERE](#).

Ninja critiques will be available January - October. Meet the Ninjas, find out how to find Critique Ninja critiques, and get tips on critiquing in the All About Critique Ninjas section of the forum [HERE](#).

THE WEBINARS

The 12 x 12 Webinar Series is a highlight of membership. Don't miss your chance to learn from industry experts live. There's no need to register. 12 x 12 Webinars are automatically included in your membership. We will send save-the-date emails about a week before each webinar. Login instructions are sent the morning of the event. If you can't attend live, replays of each webinar will be available for one month after they are posted. The link to the replay will be sent to the email address associated with your membership. Once the replay is released, we recommend making an appointment with yourself to watch the 90-minute replay and count it as continuing your writing education!

If you'd like lifetime access to a webinar, you'll have a limited-time opportunity to purchase that webinar for a discounted rate before it's available to the public on our Teachable site. See past webinars on our Teachable site [here](#).

THE FACEBOOK GROUP

The [Facebook Group](#) is a social place for 12 x 12 members to gather online. It is a wonderful place to post about your successes or get quick help to find just the right word or phrase. It has a very friendly atmosphere and the place to go for quick interactions. We also post announcements and reminders in the Facebook group.

You can join the 12 x 12 in 2024 Facebook group [HERE](#). If your Facebook name is different from the name you used during the payment process, please indicate this in the answers to the questions when you make your request to join. (Please note: The group only accepts profiles, not pages, for

membership.) This is also a manual approval process. We will get you in the group as quickly as we can, usually within 24-48 hours on weekdays.

The Facebook group is optional, and members are not required to be on Facebook to watch webinars, use the forum, or participate in monthly check-ins.

If you need assistance with your 12 x 12 membership, please do not message Julie, Kelli, or Carol on Facebook. Instant messages are easily lost if we're not at our desks when we get them. Please email us directly at support@12x12challenge.com to get the most efficient service.

THE BLOG

Here are some of the features you will find on the [12 x 12 blog](#):

***Monthly Featured Author** – On the 1st of each month, we will host a guest post from our featured author. These posts are chock full of usable advice and tips you can use in your writing today. Each month, our Featured Author offers a prize to the 12 x 12 group during that month's check-in.

***Monthly Check-In** – On the last day of each month, we will post the Monthly Check-In post for that month. There will be a Rafflecopter where you can enter yourself into that month's prize drawing by confirming that you commented on the Featured Author Post for that month (1 point), wrote a new picture book draft (1 point), revised a picture book draft (1 point), and/or reviewed a 12 x 12-member book.

Unless otherwise noted, the Rafflecopter is open until midnight US Eastern on the 7th of each month.

NOTE: You do NOT need to send us any drafts or post your monthly draft on the forum for it to count toward your 12 x 12 goal. Keep track of your drafts in the way that works best for you! (Find our 12 x 12 Tracking Sheets [here](#).)

*** Monthly Check-In Winner** – The day after the Rafflecopter closes, we will post the winner of the previous month's check-in post along with instructions on how to claim your prize.

*** Agent Profile Post** – During the last week of the month, we will post a profile about the Featured Agents for the following month. Two agents will be profiled, and GOLD members may choose ONE to submit to that month. We fill these posts with as much information as we can find about our agents including input straight from them. While only GOLD members may submit to agents during the 12 x 12 submission period, following these posts can be beneficial to any 12 x 12 members who are researching agents. [Click here](#) for ways to use these profiles, no matter your membership level. [Click here](#) to see past Agent Profiles.

*** How I Got My Agent** – Over the course of 12 x 12, we have celebrated with dozens and dozens of our members who have obtained agent representation! This continuing series allows us to brag on our fellow 12 x 12 writers and lets them tell us about their journey. Not all the newly acquired agents are 12 x 12 Featured Agents, but all of the writers will agree that taking the

time to focus on writing new drafts, revising existing ones, and working with a critique group within the context of 12 x 12 helped tremendously in landing their agent. [Click here](#) to see How I Got My Agent posts.

12 X 12 BOOKSHOP

We have a 12 x 12 bookstore at Bookshop.org! You can find 12 x 12 member books in a variety of genres. A portion of the proceeds from the bookstore will go to support diversity programming and the 12 x 12 Scholarship Fund. Find your next favorite book here: <https://bookshop.org/shop/12x12>

If your book came out prior to 2024 and you'd like it to be added the 12 x 12 Bookshop, please fill out the form [HERE](#).

If you have a book coming out in 2024 or 2025 (and you have your book cover and finalized release date), fill out the form [HERE](#).

REQUESTING HELP

If you need help in a category on the forum, you can tag the elf for that category. Use the "@" symbol and the elf's name to notify them you need assistance. . Elf names can also be found in the description of each category or you can find the Elf Directory [here](#). The directory will show you which elves oversee which category. We aren't in the forum 24/7 but we will be happy to assist you as soon as we can.

If you need assistance with any other part of your 12 x 12 membership, please contact support@12x12challenge.com.

FAQs

I didn't get an email from you about...(this month's webinar, the latest special announcement, etc.)

Please check your spam or Promotions folder. Our emails come from an automated system to the email associated with your registration payment and are sometimes filtered to spam. Please add support@12x12challenge.com to your list of contacts and/or safe senders. If you need to change your email address, click on "Change Subscriber Options" at the bottom of any of our messages.

Where do I submit my monthly draft?

Congrats on getting your draft done! You do not need to submit your draft to us or post it on the forum for it to "count" toward your yearly total. On the last day of each month, there will be a check-in post on the 12 x 12 BLOG where you can enter the Rafflecopter to let us know you've written your draft and be entered for that month's prize. You can also request a badge on the forum to celebrate your

accomplishment. Keep track of your drafts throughout the year so you can send us your total at the end of the challenge. Tracking sheets are available on the forum [here](#).

How do I get a badge for writing and/or revising my drafts?

You can get a badge by following these steps:

- Go to the “Important Announcements” section of the forum.
- Find the discussion for the monthly badge you’re looking for and click on it.
- Click on the link to the badge you’d like to request. (Draft, revision, or review)
- Click on “Request Badge” in the upper right corner. (The “Request Badge” button may be at the bottom of the screen if you are on your smartphone or other smaller screen.)
- Put the name of the manuscript in the box.
- Click "Send Request."
- The forum may stay on the Request Badge page. Look in the bottom left corner for a small box that says, “Badge Requested.”
- Badge approvals are a manual process. Please allow up to a week for your request to be approved. All requests are approved.
- Once approved, your badge will show up under your picture on your profile page. To get to your profile page, click your picture or icon in the top right of the forum. In the window that pops open, click your picture or icon again to go to your profile page.
- If your request isn’t approved within a week, please send the request again.
- Please note: The forum will only allow us to award a badge one time. For example, if you write 5 new picture book manuscripts in March, we can only award you the March Draft Badge one time. (But we are super impressed with your overachieving superpowers!)

You must request a badge in order to receive one. It is not automatic. Entering the Rafflecopter does NOT automatically get you a badge. Posting your manuscript in the forum does NOT automatically get you a badge. Commenting on the check-in blog or the badge post does NOT automatically get you a badge. Badges must be requested using the above steps.

Badges can be awarded at any time throughout the year. If you realize in March you forgot to request a January badge, you can still request it by going to the January Badges post in the Important Announcements section of the forum.

Where do I check in for the month?

On last day of each month, you will find the check-in post on the 12 x 12 blog [HERE](#). You will check in by using the Rafflecopter at the end of the post. Be sure to check in even if you haven’t written a new draft,

revised a previous draft, or reviewed a 12 x 12 member's book. You are eligible to enter the drawing just by commenting on the Featured Author post. Prizes are awarded the day after the Rafflecopter ends.

The forum says my manuscript has too many characters, even though it is way below the limit, and it won't let me post it.

If you are copying your manuscript from a word processing program like Word or Pages, all of your formatting is being copied too. There are three ways to solve this problem:

- To remove the formatting, copy from your word processing program to a text editor program (Text Editor for MAC or Notepad for PC). Then copy from your text editor into the forum.
- If your computer allows, copy from your word processing program. Right click in the forum and select "Paste as Plain Text."
- Type your manuscript directly in the forum.

I have a question that's not answered here. Who can ask?

Email us at support@12x12challenge.com.