



Proven Framework for Successful Collaboration

A candid, craft-focused session with authors **Lauren Nossett** and **Rea Frey** on how to co-write — from finding the right partner to navigating disagreements and crossing the finish line together.

Writing Can Be Lonely

You brainstorm alone. Draft alone. Revise alone. Maybe — if you're lucky — someone reads the finished product and offers notes before it goes out into the world. But what if the story didn't have to start in isolation?

What if you could **build the story with someone from the very beginning** — sharing the weight, the wonder, and the work?

Co-writing can be transformative. This session will show you how.



We Know What You're Asking

Before we dive in, let's name the fears out loud. Every writer who considers collaboration wrestles with the same questions — and they're all valid.

Will I lose creative control?

The fear that your vision will be diluted or overridden by someone else's ideas.

What if our styles clash?

Worrying that two distinct voices will create a disjointed, unreadable manuscript.

What if one of us writes faster?

The anxiety around pacing differences and uneven workloads derailing the project.

How do we even start?

The paralyzing uncertainty of not knowing the first practical step to take together.

Prompt: Write down your own questions or fears around collaboration.

Good News: There's a Framework for This

We have navigated every one of those fears firsthand. Through our own co-writing journey – from early brainstorming sessions to managing deadlines and dividing responsibilities – we've distilled what works into a practical, repeatable system.

Collaboration is about harnessing your INDIVIDUAL strengths and bringing them together into one cohesive project.

Today, we're sharing how to do this, step by step.

What We'll Cover Today

01

Finding Your Creative Partner

How to identify the right collaborator and where to find them.

03

Setting Expectations

Schedules, roles, and the agreements that keep projects moving forward.

05

Navigating Disagreements

How to handle creative conflict productively — and come out stronger.

02

Brainstorming Together

Collaborative ideation techniques that protect each writer's unique voice.

04

Dividing the Work

Task division strategies based on individual strengths and preferences.

06

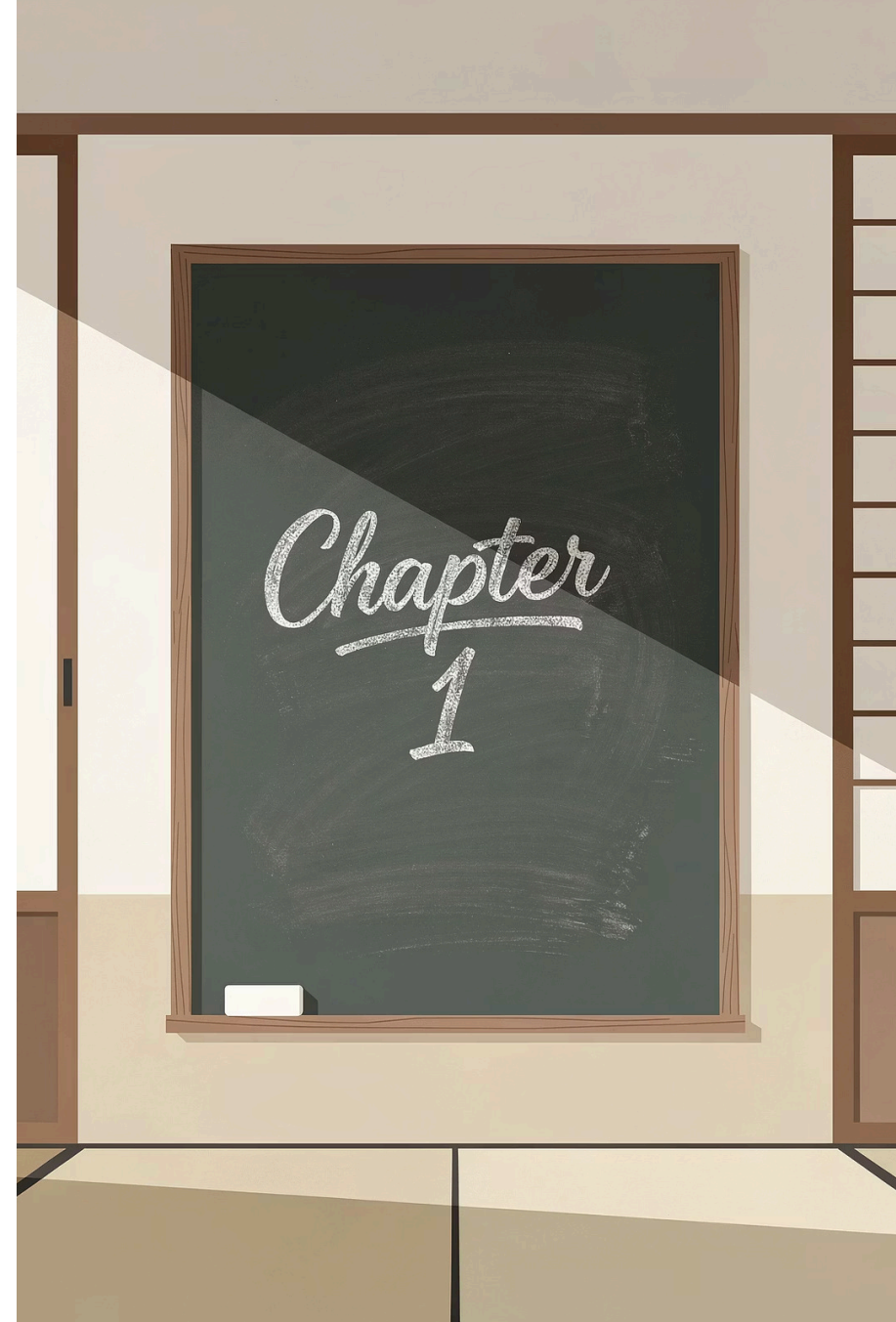
Feedback, Promotion & Next Steps

Constructive critique, expanding your reach, and deciding if co-writing is for you.

CHAPTER 1

Finding the Right Creative Partner

The foundation of every great collaboration is the relationship between the writers.
Choose well, and everything else gets easier.



Why the Right Partner Matters More Than the Right Idea

A brilliant concept can't survive a dysfunctional partnership. Before you think about plot, genre, or market, you need to think about **the person sitting across the table from you.**

The best co-writing partners share a few non-negotiable qualities:

- **Mutual respect** — for each other's time, talent, and boundaries
- **Compatible work ethic** — not identical, but close enough to stay in sync
- **Complementary strengths** — where one struggles, the other shines
- **Honest communication** — the willingness to say hard things kindly
- **Similar goals** — aligned visions for the project's scope, audience, and what success looks like.



Where to Find Potential Co-Writers

Start with the communities you're already part of — and expand from there with intention.



Writing Groups & Workshops

Local or online critique groups let you see how someone thinks about story before you ever pitch collaboration.



Conferences & Festivals

Events like AWP, ThrillerFest, or local literary festivals are fertile ground for meeting like-minded authors.



Online Communities

Platforms like NaNoWriMo forums, genre-specific Discord servers, and author Facebook groups can spark unexpected partnerships.



Local Bookstore Events

Book launches, book clubs, author panels, and meet-and-greets at independent bookstores are goldmines for connecting with fellow writers.

A Checklist Before Collaboration

Don't rush into co-writing with someone. Make sure you have a strong foundation before you engage.



Connect

Attend the same events, engage with each other's work, and have conversations about craft — not just publishing.



Exchange Feedback

Share a piece of your existing work with each other and offer honest edits or notes. How you give and receive feedback reveals a lot about whether you're truly compatible.



Collaborate Small

Try a short story, a blog post, or even a writing prompt together before committing to a full manuscript.



Evaluate Honestly

After a small project, ask: Did we communicate well? Did we respect each other's process? Did the work improve?



Commit Intentionally

If the answer is yes, then — and only then — discuss a larger project together.



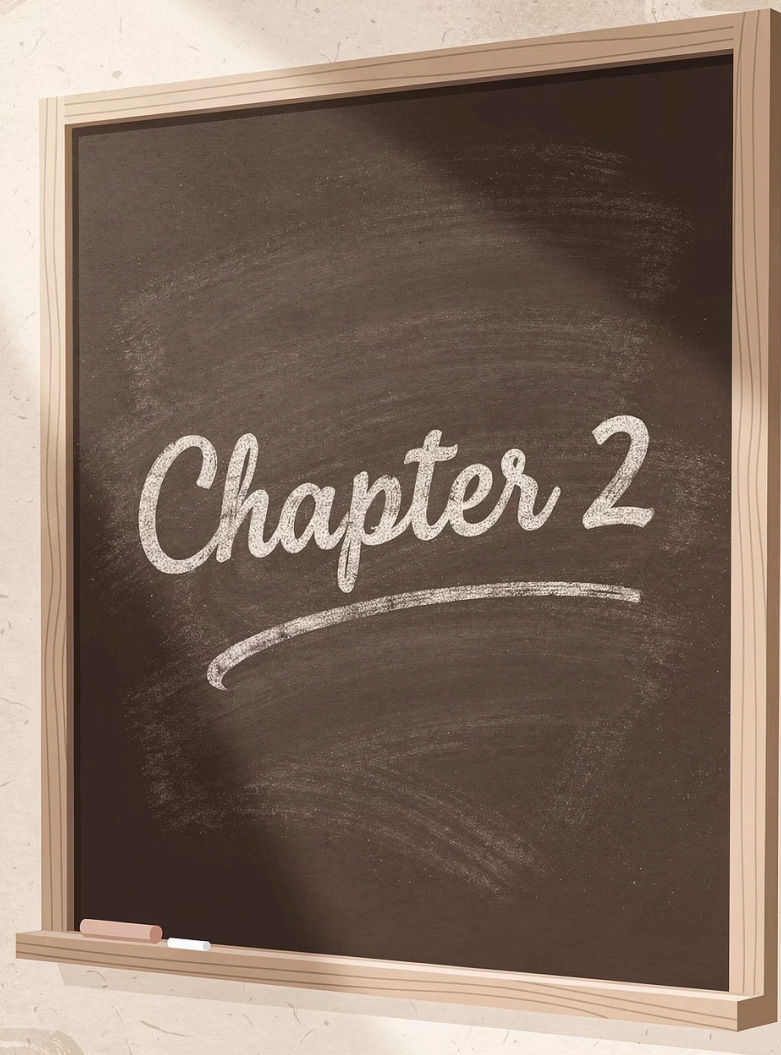
Revisit & Reflect

Periodically check in on whether the partnership is still working for both of you. Great collaborations evolve intentionally.

CHAPTER 2

Brainstorming Without Sacrificing Your Voice

Two imaginations are better than one — but only if both writers feel safe enough to dream out loud.





The Art of Collaborative Ideation

Brainstorming with a partner is fundamentally different from brainstorming alone. It's faster, more surprising, and – if you do it right – more generative than anything you could produce in isolation.

The key principle: **every idea gets voiced before it gets vetted.** Premature editing kills creative chemistry. During early sessions, be open to any and all possibilities.

- 📌 **Lauren and Rea's tip:** Set a timer for 20 minutes. Both writers brainstorm freely – no idea is too wild. Only after the timer stops do you begin sorting what stays and what goes.

The Indispensable Outline: Your Collaborative Blueprint

Even for "pantsers" (writers who prefer to discover the story as they go) or "plantsers" (a mix of both), a collaborative project requires a shared roadmap. This isn't about stifling creativity; it's about safeguarding shared effort and ensuring a cohesive vision.

01

Craft the Book Skeleton

An outline serves as the agreed-upon blueprint for your story, minimizing miscommunication and ensuring both partners are always working towards the same destination.

03

Write Your Book Pitch or Synopsis

This big-picture view allows both collaborators to understand the project's overall flow, ensuring narrative coherence, thematic consistency, and preventing costly rewrites down the line.

02

Getting the Details Right

Focus on high-level elements: major plot beats, character arcs, thematic intentions, and key turning points. This establishes the structural integrity without dictating every detail.

04

Assign Chapters & Sections

With a skeleton in place, you can strategically assign initial ownership for chapters or specific sections, clarifying responsibilities and facilitating efficient parallel development.

Sample Collaborative Outline: "The Quiet Kind"

A psychological thriller following a seasoned FBI profiler who realizes the serial killer she's been hunting for a decade may have been hiding in plain sight — as someone she trusts. This outline shows how two co-authors can divide chapters while maintaining a unified narrative arc.

Chapter	Summary	Assigned Author
1	FBI profiler Dana Mercer is called to a crime scene in rural Virginia — the fifth victim in 18 months, all killed with unsettling precision and no forensic trace. The pattern suggests someone with intimate knowledge of law enforcement.	Lauren
2	Dana's team builds a behavioral profile, but every lead goes cold. A handwritten note left at the latest scene is addressed to Dana personally — quoting a case file that was never made public.	Rea
3	Dana revisits the first known victim and discovers a connection she missed: all five victims had brief contact with the same crisis counseling network. She begins to suspect the killer works — or worked — in mental health.	Lauren
4	A sixth murder occurs while Dana's prime suspect is in custody. The copycat theory unravels. Dana starts to question whether someone on her own task force has been subtly steering the investigation away from the truth.	Rea
5	Dana goes off-book, pulling personnel files and old case notes. A pattern emerges pointing to someone she's worked alongside for years — a colleague she considered a mentor.	Lauren
6	Dana confronts her mentor with the evidence. He doesn't deny it. What follows is a tense psychological standoff that ends in a chase through an abandoned psychiatric facility — and a confession that reframes everything.	Rea
7	The case closes, but Dana is left shattered. In the final pages, a new note arrives on her desk — same handwriting, different city. The killings were never the work of one person.	Lauren

Character Sketches: "The Quiet Kind"

Detail the key components of the story's main characters. Include descriptions you need to start writing, including physical descriptions and character personalities.

 DANA MERCER

Seasoned FBI Profiler

Mid-40s, sharp and intuitive, with a history of closing impossible cases. Haunted by past failures, she's driven by an unwavering commitment to justice. Her arc involves confronting profound betrayal and rediscovering her trust in intuition.

Dana is mid-40s with dark eyes that miss nothing. She keeps her brown hair pulled back in a no-nonsense knot, and her face carries the kind of weathered focus that comes from two decades of staring at crime scene photos. She dresses plainly — dark blazers, worn boots — as if she's always ready to leave at a moment's notice.

 THE MENTOR

Trusted Colleague & Adversary

Outwardly a respected and calm figure within law enforcement, secretly a psychologically complex individual. His deep knowledge of Dana's work and personal life fuels a twisted obsession. His arc exposes the chilling depths of his manipulation and the facade he maintained for years.

He's late 50s, silver-haired, with the kind of warm, unhurried face that makes people feel immediately at ease. Broad-shouldered but soft-spoken, he has a habit of folding his hands when he listens — a gesture colleagues read as patience, and Dana will eventually recognize as control.

Protecting Your Individual Voice

One of the biggest fears writers have about collaboration is losing the thing that makes their writing *theirs*. Here's how to prevent that from happening.

Name Your Non-Negotiables Early

Before you start drafting, each writer should identify the themes, tones, or elements that feel essential to their creative identity. Put them on the table.

Assign Voice Ownership

If you're writing alternating perspectives or chapters, let each writer "own" a character's voice. This preserves stylistic distinctiveness within a unified story.

Harmonize, Don't Homogenize

The goal isn't to sound like one writer. It's to create a third voice — something **neither of you could have written alone** — that honors both styles.

The Logistics of Writing Together

When two writers share a manuscript, the tools you use matter as much as the words you write. The right setup eliminates friction, keeps both partners in sync, and makes the day-to-day logistics nearly invisible.

Why Google Docs Works

- **Auto-saves constantly** — no emailing drafts back and forth, no "which version is this?" panic
- **Real-time co-editing** — both writers can be in the document simultaneously
- **Commenting & suggestions** — leave inline notes, flag questions, and resolve edits without disrupting the draft
- **Version history** — roll back to any previous state if a change doesn't work out
- **Accessible anywhere** — write from any device, no software installs required, can work offline as well

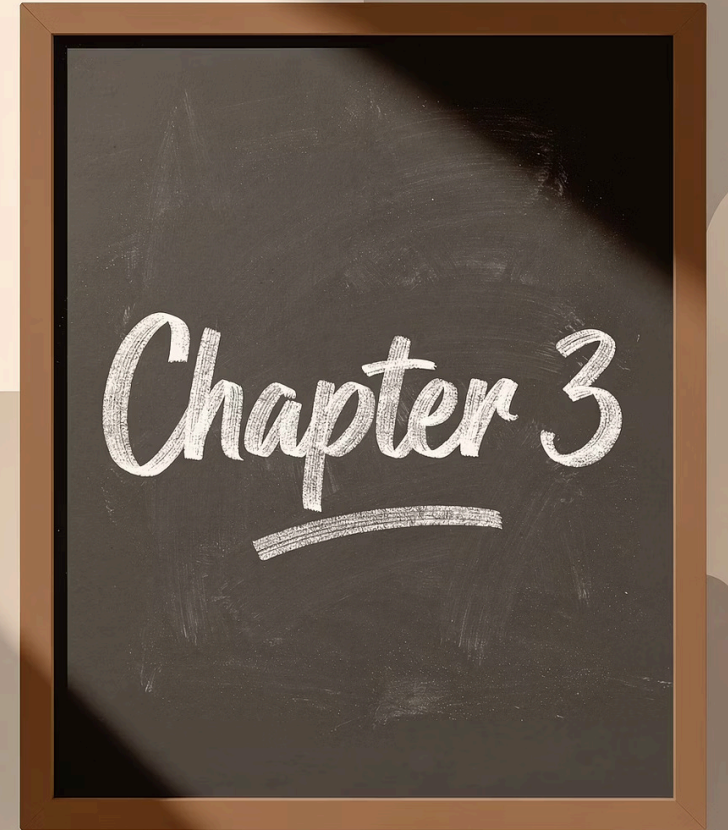
Making It Work in Practice

- **Create one master doc per project** — chapters, outline, and character notes all in one place
- **Use "Suggesting" mode** — propose edits without overwriting your partner's work
- **Agree on a feedback schedule** — review comments and resolve suggestions in an agreed upon timeframe
- **Assign tasks** - google allows you to assign tasks to individualsdual contributors so there's no confusion on responsibility

CHAPTER 3

Setting a Schedule & Clear Expectations

An idea gets a book started. Structure gets it finished.



Why a Writing Schedule Is Non-Negotiable

Without a shared schedule, even the most enthusiastic collaboration will drift. Life gets busy. Motivation fluctuates. And when one partner is waiting on the other with no clear timeline, resentment creeps in quietly.

A schedule doesn't have to be rigid — but it **does** have to exist. It creates accountability, maintains momentum, and gives both writers permission to plan their creative time around real deadlines.

Before setting a schedule, ask yourself:

- How many hours per week can I realistically dedicate to writing — not just in theory, but given my current workload, family, and other commitments?
- Are there specific days or times that are off limits, or does my schedule shift week to week?
- How will I communicate with my partner when life gets in the way of a deadline?

Building Your Collaboration Agreement

Think of this as the "prenup" for your creative partnership. It might feel awkward to formalize, but having these conversations *before* you start writing will save your friendship — and your manuscript.



Deadlines

Agree on draft deadlines, revision rounds, and submission targets.
Build in buffer time for life.



Ownership

Define how credit, copyright, and revenue will be split — in writing, before you draft a word.



Communication

Set preferred channels, response-time expectations, and regular meeting cadence.



Exit Plan

Agree on what happens if someone needs to step away. No one wants to think about it — but you need to.

Sample Collaboration Agreement

A template of key points to customize for your partnership.

Parties: [Author 1 Name] & [Author 2 Name]

Project: "[Novel Title]"

Ownership: Joint copyright, split 50/50 — neither party may sell or transfer their share without written consent.

Profits & Expenses: All revenue (advances, royalties, licensing) split 50/50; shared expenses must be agreed upon in advance.

Creative Control: Major decisions require mutual agreement; each author may be designated lead for specific chapters or POVs.

Deadlines: Chapters due [date] each [week/month]; notify partner at least [X] days in advance if a deadline can't be met.

Communication: Respond within [X] days via [platform]; standing check-in every [day] at [time].

Termination: [30] days written notice required; remaining author may complete the work with departing author credited and compensated.

Signatures: [Author 1] & [Author 2] — **Date:** _____



Sample Weekly Rhythm

We work from our outline and batch our writing by chapter — alternating who drafts, then editing together before moving on. Here's how that flow looks in practice:

Assign

Both authors review the outline and agree on who drafts the next chapter. Assignments are based on POV, voice ownership, or whoever has bandwidth that week.

1

Edit Together

Authors review and edit the chapter — leaving comments, suggestions, and notes in Google Docs — until it's in a shape you're both happy with.

2

Draft

The assigned author writes the full chapter draft independently, then shares it with their partner when complete.

3

Repeat

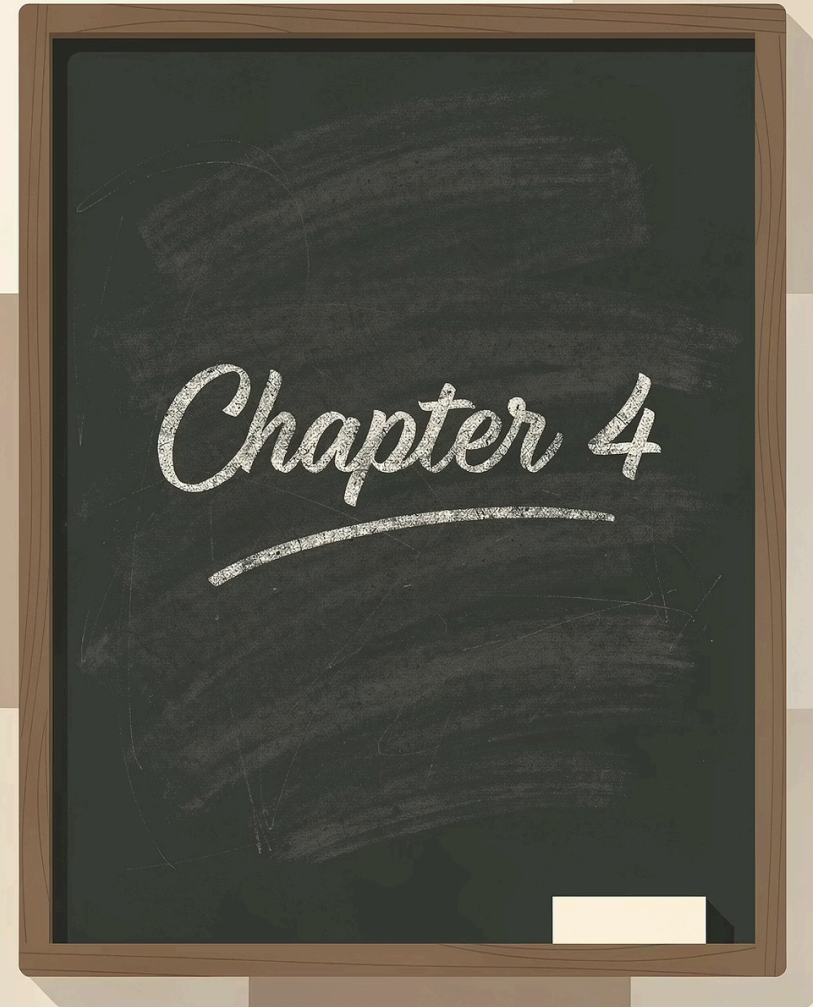
Once the chapter is locked, the other author takes the next chapter. The cycle continues until the manuscript is complete.

4

CHAPTER 4

Dividing Tasks Strategically

Play to each other's strengths. The best collaborations don't split work evenly — they split it *smartly*.



Strengths-Based Task Division

Not every writer is good at every part of the process. One of the greatest advantages of co-writing is that you can **lean into what you do best** while your partner covers the rest.

1 Writer A Strengths

- World-building and setting
- Plot architecture and pacing
- Action sequences and tension
- Research and fact-checking

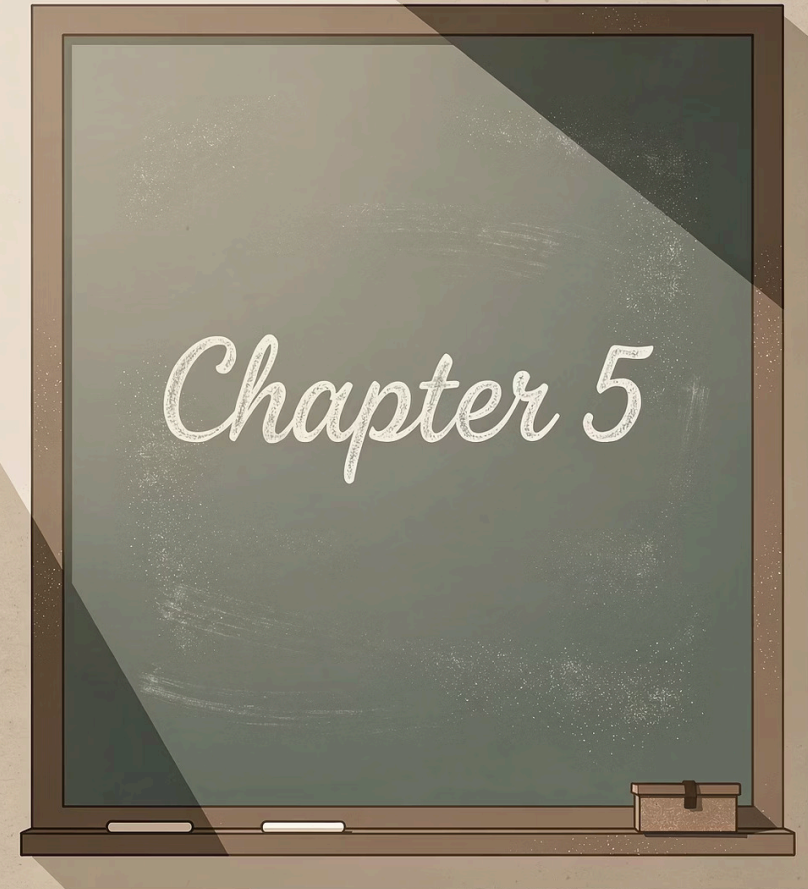
2 Writer B Strengths

- Character interiority and emotion
- Dialogue and voice
- Thematic layering
- Line-level prose and revision

These are examples, not prescriptions. The point is to have an honest conversation about what energizes each of you — and what drains you.

CHAPTER 5

Navigating Creative Disagreements



Open Communication Is Everything



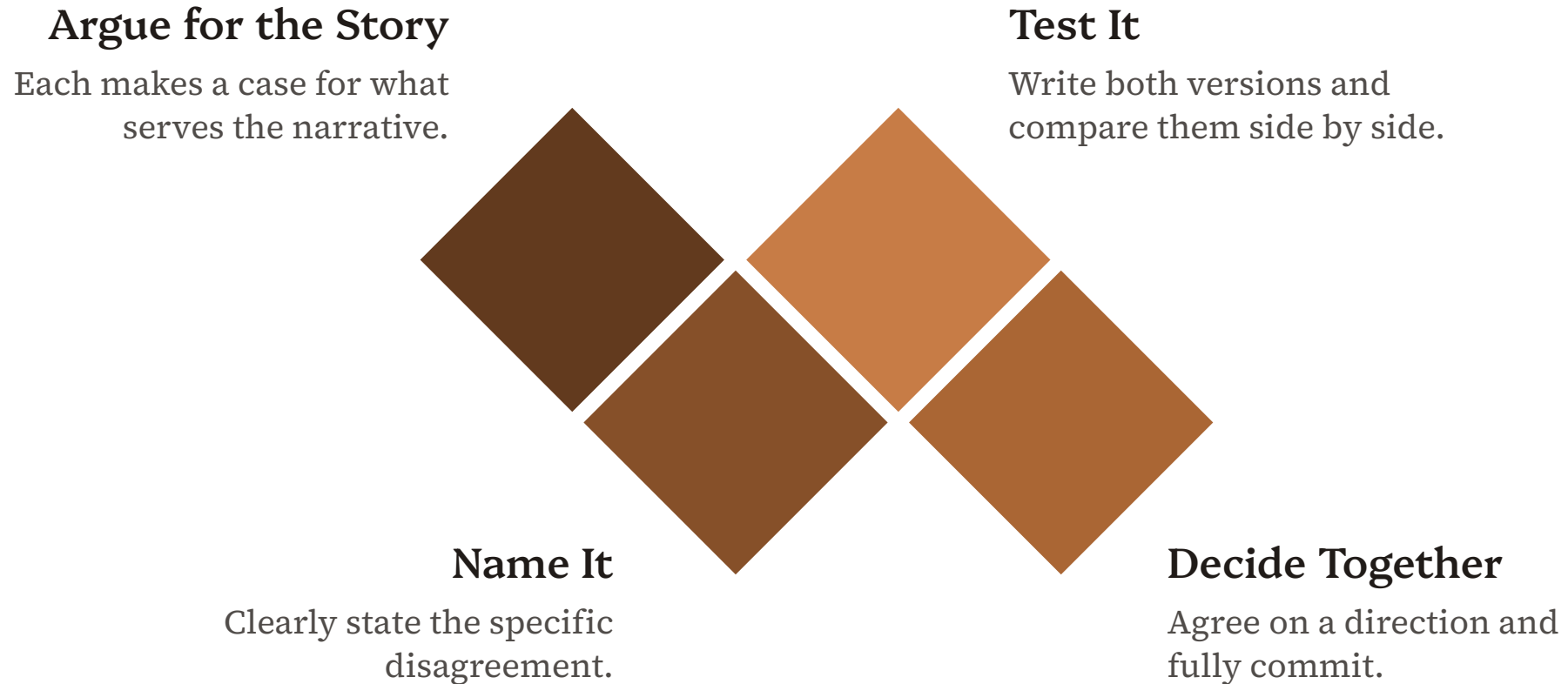
The foundation of any successful co-writing partnership is the willingness to communicate openly at every stage of the process. From the first brainstorm to the final edit, how you talk to each other shapes everything.

That means checking in before problems arise, naming concerns early, and creating a space where both writers feel safe being honest — about the work, the process, and how they're feeling about both.

"Communication is built into every step of the writing journey. We understand that everything we do is in service of the story not ourselves."
— Lauren & Rea

A Framework for Productive Conflict

When a disagreement arises use this four-step process to work through it without damaging the relationship or the manuscript.



The most important rule: once a decision is made, **both writers commit fully**. Revisiting settled decisions erodes trust faster than the original disagreement ever could.

When to Compromise — and When Not To

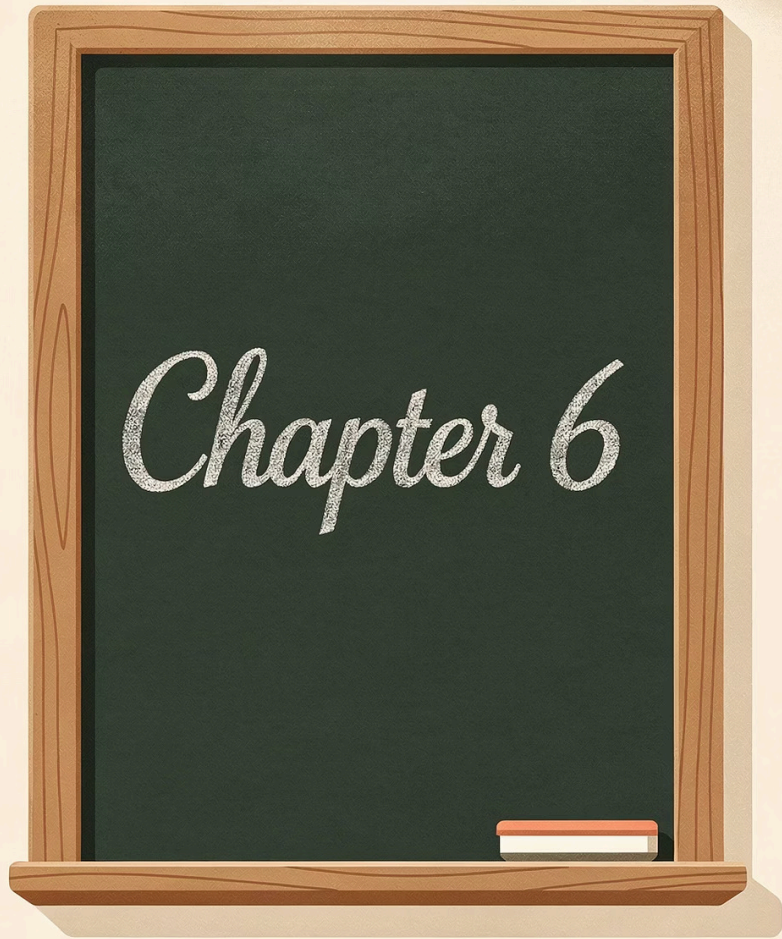
Always Compromise On

Minor plot details, scene order, word choices, secondary character names, setting specifics. These are craft decisions that both writers can flex on without losing sleep.

Never Compromise On

Core themes, character integrity, ethical representation, and the emotional truth of the story. If something feels fundamentally wrong to either writer, pause and talk it through completely.

📌 **Pro tip:** Establish a "veto" system early. Each writer gets a limited number of vetoes for decisions that feel truly non-negotiable. Use them sparingly — and respect them absolutely.



CHAPTER 6

Giving & Receiving Constructive Feedback

Great feedback doesn't just improve the manuscript. It deepens trust between co-writers.

Feedback That Serves the Story

In a co-writing partnership, you're not just giving feedback on someone else's work — you're giving feedback on **shared** work. That changes the dynamic entirely. The goal is never to "fix" your partner's writing. It's to make *your* story — the one you're building together — as strong as it can be.

1

Lead with What Works

Start every feedback exchange by naming specific things that are landing. This is information about what's working.

2

Focus on Effect, Not Preference

Instead of "I don't like this," try "This scene slows the pacing" or "I lost the character's motivation here."

3

Offer Options, Not Demands

Suggest two or three possible solutions rather than prescribing a single fix. Let your partner choose the path forward.



Receiving Feedback Gracefully

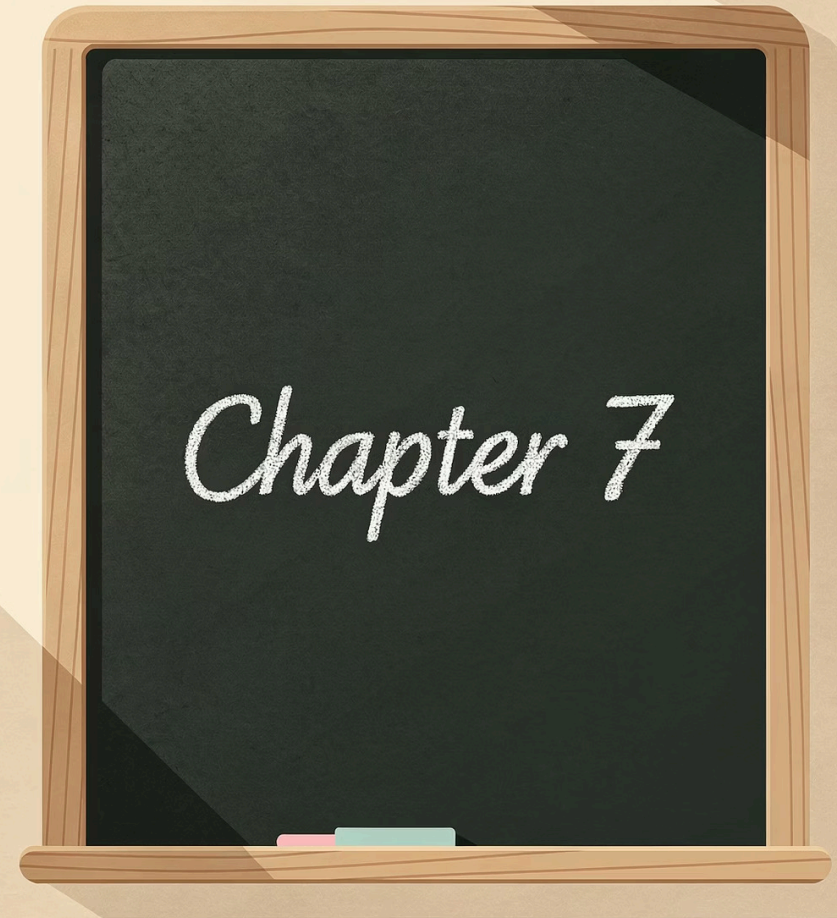
This is the harder skill — and the more important one. When your partner flags a problem, your first instinct may be to defend. **Resist it.**

- **Listen fully** before responding. Don't formulate a rebuttal while your partner is still talking.
- **Assume good intent.** Your partner wants the story to succeed as much as you do.
- **Take time.** You don't have to respond in the moment. "Let me sit with that" is always a valid answer.
- **Separate ego from craft.** A note on the manuscript is not a judgment on your talent.

CHAPTER 7

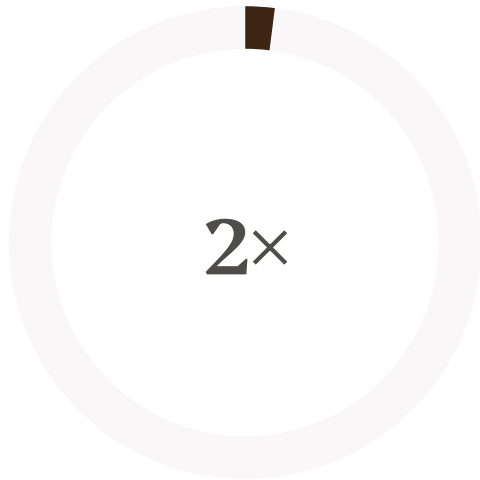
Expanding Reach Through Collaboration

Two authors means two audiences, two networks, and twice the promotional firepower.



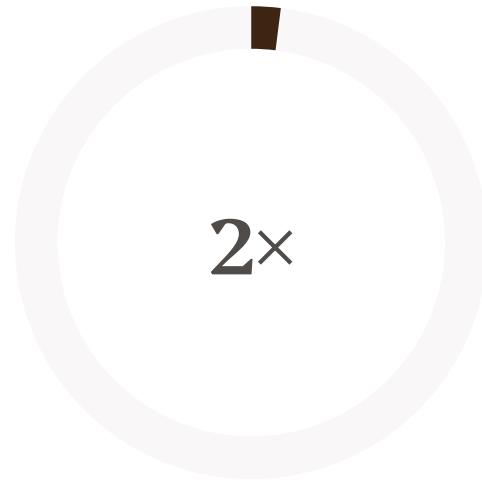
The Promotional Power of Partnership

Co-writing transforms how you market. When two authors join forces, the promotional advantages multiply in ways solo authors can only dream about.



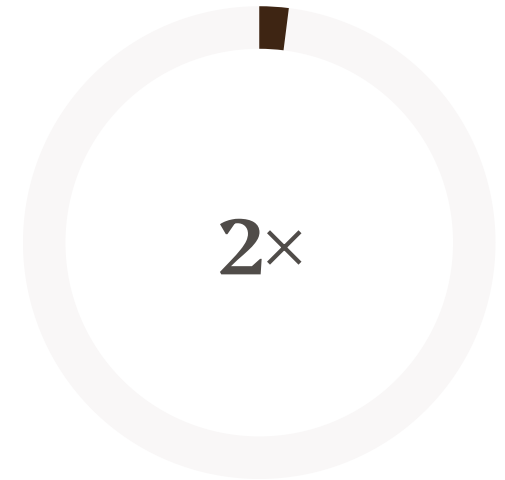
Audience Reach

Combined social followings, email lists, and reader bases double your visibility at launch



Event Presence

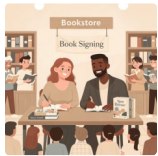
Two authors at signings, panels, and conferences means more appearances with less individual burden



Media Angles

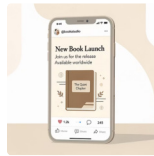
The co-writing story itself becomes a hook for interviews, podcasts, and feature articles

Promotional Strategies for Co-Authors



Joint Appearances

Book signings, panel discussions, and workshops are more dynamic with two voices. Audiences love the energy of a creative partnership on stage.



Cross-Promotion

Each author promotes to their existing readership, newsletter subscribers, and social following. You're introducing your partner's fans to your work — and vice versa.



Behind-the-Scenes Content

Readers are fascinated by the co-writing process. Share your journey through podcasts, blog posts, or social media series — the "making of" story sells the book.



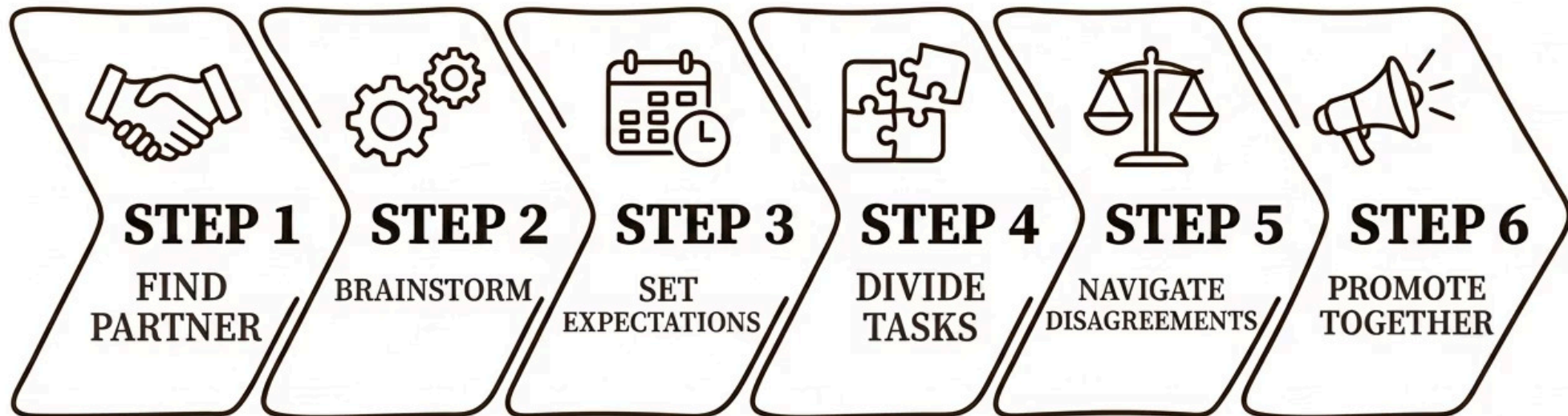
FINAL CHAPTER

Is Co-Writing Right for You?

You've seen the framework. Now it's time to make the decision that's right for *your* creative life.

The Complete Co-Writing Framework

Let's bring everything together. Here's the step-by-step system we use — and the one you can adapt to your own partnership.



Signs Co-Writing Could Be Right for You

You Might Thrive If...

- You enjoy talking about story as much as writing it
- You're energized by other people's ideas
- You want accountability built into your process
- You're willing to compromise on details to serve the bigger vision
- You've been stuck on a solo project and need fresh momentum

Proceed with Caution If...

- You struggle to accept feedback on early drafts
- Your creative process requires total solitude
- You have difficulty meeting deadlines even for yourself
- You want complete control over every word on the page
- You tend to avoid difficult conversations

Neither column is a judgment. Self-awareness is the first tool in any writer's kit — and knowing your working style helps you make the right choice.



Your Next Step

You don't have to decide today. But you **can** take one small step before this session ends.

1 Find Your Writer Community

Join writing groups, attend events, and engage with other authors online and in person. Your future co-writer is likely already in your orbit.

2 Identify One Person

Think of one writer in your life — someone whose work you admire and whose company you enjoy. That's your starting point.

3 Start a Conversation

Reach out. Not with a pitch, but with curiosity. Ask what they're working on. Talk about craft. See where it goes.

4 Try Something Small

Propose a low-stakes experiment — a short story, a scene swap, a brainstorming session. Test the waters before you dive in.

Thank You

Writing doesn't have to be a solitary act. The right partnership can push your craft further than you imagined, open doors you didn't know existed, and — most importantly — remind you that storytelling has always been a shared human endeavor.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

— Helen Keller

Lauren Nossett & Rea Frey

Connect with us after the session — we'd love to hear about your collaboration journey.

Connect with Lauren: [Website](#) | [Substack](#) | IG: @laurennossett

Connect with Rea: [Website](#) | [Substack](#) | IG: @reifreyauthor

