LITTLE BOG WITCH'S

TO–BE–READ PILE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

HOW TO NOT BUY MORE BOOKS THAN YOU CAN READ IN A YEAR

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INTRODUCTION

IS YOUR TO-BE-READ PILE GROWING FASTER THAN YOU CAN READ?

Time for the story before the recipe, friends! I will be the first to admit I have a problem - I love physical books, hardcovers in particular, and the tiny librarian who lives in my brain thinks I can read far more than I actually can (or have time for). I tend to hoard books and have been for the past 20ish years, so my collection has gotten a little unwieldly (and nightmarish to move). From the moment I was an adult with my own money, I was buying books faster than I could read them, and I realized that not only did I have no idea what I owned anymore, I was basically investing in shelf décor, which is a little hard to justify as a Canadian, where a hardcover is going to cost you like 35$.

At the start of 2023 I developed a system to manage how many books I could purchase in a year to encourage me to read what I owned, buy with more intention and less spontaneity, and prevent myself from spending money buying more books than I could reasonably consume. It has worked remarkably well for me, and now that I've had a year to iron out the kinks in the system, I want to share it with you all, so that you too can hopefully gain control of the deep draconic need to amass a small private library full of trinkets and delights.

Instead I want you to amass a small private library full of trinkets and delights you've actually got a shot of *reading* (in a timely fashion).

HOW TO

Step 1 - Setting Your Limit

The first thing you have to do is set your limit for the number of unread books you are allowed to accumulate within a year. There are 2 easy options to figure out what a reasonable number may be.

- Option 1: If you're someone who tracks your reading (either manually or using an app), your base limit is the number of books read in your Best Reading Year Ever.
- Option 2: If you haven't tracked your reading before, that's fine! Think honestly about how much time you can/want to dedicate to reading a month, and how many of your average book you can read with that amount of time.

Now, if you'd like to, give yourself an extra couple slots **as a treat**, and you've got your yearly limit.

My Best Reading Year Ever was a total of 40 books, and I gave myself an additional 5 slots on the chance that maybe a great series comes out that I just devour in a week, or a friend wants me to buy/read a book they loved.

Step 2 - Drafting the Initial List

The first year you set up your list, you will likely have the least leftover slots to be able to make new purchases, because you're going to round up all your current unread books that you own.

Now listen, not *all* your unread books need to go on the list. Here are the exemptions that I suggest making:

- Any book that you have attempted to start reading two separate times, but couldn't get into (consider donating these, but I understand if you want to keep them!).
- Any book which was purchased to functionally complete a set or series (as opposed to being purchased to read), even they are currently unread.
- Any book purchased as a collectors item, or for purposes other than reading.
- Any reference or academic texts like textbooks, atlases, or guidebooks.

The goal here is to get you to read the books you already own, so putting titles there are no chances of you reading on the list is counter-productive.

Some of the books that didn't make my initial list included books 3-5 of the Outlander series, a few antique books I've collected, and some anthologies I haven't completely read cover-to-cover.

Step 2.5 - Choosing a Medium

Personally, I have my list and the accompanying journal entries in a physical notebook, but I also keep track of everything through Goodreads (formerly) and Storygraph (currently). What feels good to you?

Do you always have your tablet on you? That could be an excellent option! Are you never seen without your laptop? Maybe typing it out in a spreadsheet or a cloud-based word document will be best for you. Do you hoard notebooks as much as you do books? This could be a very good opportunity to finally *use* one of them!

Step 3 - Assessing The Blanks

This step is a little more nebulous than the others - what you want to do here is pause, see how many blank slots you have in your list, and think critically about what kind of books you'd like to acquire to fill them.

Are there any series you've been wanting to get into? Is there a new genre you'd like to explore? Is there a topic you want to delve into? What have you read recently that you did like, and what have you read that you didn't?

MY STARTING LIST

To-be Read List - 2023

1. The Cloisters (Read)
2. The Atlas Paradox (Read)
3. Hell Bent (Read)
4. How to Sell a Haunted House (Read)
5. The Falcon's Eyes
6. Kingdom of the Cursed
7. Kingdom of the Feared
8. Lightlark (Didn't Finish)
9. The Whispering Dark (Read)
10. Slewfoot (Read)
11. The Embroidered Book
12. Camp Zero (Read)
13. Ariadne (Read)
14. Deep Sky
15. She is a Haunting (Read)
16. Nettle and Bone (Read)
17. Six of Crows
18. Crooked Kingdom
19. House of Hunger (read)
20. Jonathan Norell and Mr. Strange
21. Leech (Read)
22. Nona the Ninth
23. Mary: An Awakening of Terror
24. A Far Wilder Magic (Read)
25. All the Tides of Fate
26. A Deadly Education (Read)
27. Cloud Cuckoo Land
28. A Discovery of Witches
29. Last Tale of the Flower Bride (Read)
30. The Cleaving

31. Stone Blind (Read)
32. A Court of Thorns and Roses (Read)
33. A Court of Mist and Fury (Read)
34. A Court of Wings and Ruin (Read)
35. A Court of Frost and Starlight (Read)
36. A Court of Silver Flames (Read)
37. Walk the Vanished Earth
38. Mrs. Greenthumb
39. House of Roots and Ruin
40. Mortal Follies (Didn't Finish)
41. House of Earth and Blood
42. House of Cotton
43. Masters of Death
44.
45.

Step 4 - Using the List

As I was reading throughout the year, I checked things off on my list as I read them, struck them out if I tried to read them and really didn't like them or it was my second time trying to read them and it just wasn't for me, and made notes about pre-orders and when they arrived so I didn't forget about them.

I would recommend using your fun stationary for this step! Pull out your highlighters! Grab your washi tape! Use the good markers! I realize I could have told you this in Step 2.5, but I was busy telling you that you could also do this whole process on your laptop, so I wasn't going to follow that up with decoration techniques that I really don't suggest following if you selected a non-notebook-based method.

Bonus Step - Journaling

This step is optional, but I decided to also write a journal entry for each book I read throughout the year. I included the title, author, date I finished reading the book, a star rating, and 2-3 comments on what I had thought.

You can make notes regarding whatever you feel is important! What I was primarily noting were things I wanted to remember for if I was trying to quickly summarize and then recommend the book to someone (assuming it was good), or explain why I didn't like it (if I didn't enjoy it).

(Bet you thought I was going to say assuming it was bad, but I'm not out here to tell you that a book is objectively 'bad')

EXAMPLE ENTRIES

MY NEXT LIST

To-be Read List - 2024

Remaining from 2023
1. The Falcon's Eyes
2. Kingdom of the Cursed
3. Kingdom of the Feared
4. The Embroidered Book
5. Deep Sky
6. Jonathan Norell and Mr. Strange
7. Mary: An Awakening of Terror
8. All the Tides of Fate
9. Cloud Cuckoo Land
10. A Discovery of Witches
11. The Cleaving
12. Walk the Vanished Earth
13. House of Roots d Ruins
14. House of Earth and Blood
15. House of Cotton
New Books
16. Heavenly Tyrant (Pre-Order)
17. Midnight Library
18. Lore of the Wilds (Pre-Order)
19. The Familiar (Pre-Order)
20. House of Sky and Breath
21. Book of Doors (Pre-Order)
22. A Dark and Drowning Tide (Pre-Order)
23. A Fragile Enchantment
24. Where the Dark Stands Still (Pre-Order)
25. Modern Divination
26. Medea (Pre-Order)
27. The Night Hunt
28. A Study in Drowning
29. Peaches and Honey
30. Flowerheart

31. House of Flame and Shadow (Pre-Order)
32. Voice of the Wretched (Pre-Order)
33. Starling House
34. City of Stardust (Pre-Order)
35. The Atlas Complex (Pre-Order)
36.
37.
38 - 40. Blank also (you get the idea)

Removed from List

1. Lightlark - Started, didn't enjoy
2. Six of Crows, Crooked Kingdom - Second attempt to read, abandoned
3. Nona the Ninth - Bought to complete series
4. Mortal Follies - Started, didn't enjoy

Step 5 - Yearly List Update

At the end of the year/start of the next, it's time to update your list and get it ready for the upcoming year of reading!
The first step is to copy over anything still unread from the previous year, with some exceptions:

- Anything you have attempted to read twice and haven't been able to get into
- Anything you attempted to read and really enjoy

Some books just aren't for you, and that's ok! If I judge that something is a 'good book' that I *could enjoy* but I'm not in the right mood when I try to read it the first time, I will re-shelve it and try to read it another time to give it a fair shot. However, if I try to read book and just don't like it, either for editing issues or content reasons, I know giving it another shot won't help, so it gets removed from the list (and normally gets donated).

Step ∞ - Going Forward

Once you've transferred over your remaining unread books, you can go forth and acquire new books! Repeat 3 and 4, adjusting the total slots on your list as needed. If you noticed, my 2024 list only had 40 slots. In 2023 I only read 23 books, so I'm already feeling a little behind my TBR pile, so I'm going to tentatively give myself a couple less slots for the upcoming year.

The beautiful thing about this system is that it is highly adaptable and also meant to work *for you.* It's not supposed to be highly stringent and harsh, because first and foremost, I want to help you establish a sustainable book purchasing-and-reading cycle, which will encourage you to read what you buy.

This isn't about telling you that you can't have the new book you want just because you've already filled up all your slots for the year. If you *really* want a book, then go ahead and buy it!

Go forth and read! That's it, friend. At the end of the day that's the whole ballgame. Go forth, pick up a good book, and read it. If you liked it a lot, tell a friend about it! Encourage others to read!

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