Setting Internal Deadlines for Stories/Projects:

The time that you allot for each stage will vary with the time available. Working from this plan will help you meet your deadlines with the best copy possible.

1) Develop a story plan to focus your idea:
   • Focus statement: In one sentence of 20 words or less, tell what you believe this story will include.
   • Looking at that one sentence, brainstorm a list of questions that story needs to answer to be complete. Must be related to the focus.
   • Looking at the questions, brainstorm the BEST possible sources to answer those questions.

2) Do enough pre-reporting to pitch the story.

3) Once the pitch is approved, call all sources to set up interviews. When they ask for a deadline, give them your “reporting deadline” not your final due date.

4) Halfway progress check: When you think you're halfway to your reporting deadline, go back to the questions the story needed to answer. You may be closer to having a complete story than you think.

5) Deadline for reporting

6) Deadline for first draft (look at content, structure and flow)

7) Deadline for rewrite (Read it aloud. Does it flow? Tighten. Eliminate awkward phrases and passive voice.)

8) Time to polish: (Check strength of verbs and tighten writing. Eliminate “There is...” construction. Start and end on phonetically strong words.)

9) Verification time: Check EVERYTHING. Names, numbers, titles, quotes, dates.

10) Due date: Your FINAL deadline