

CHEAT CODES

THE WORKSHOP PAGES

from *How to Write Your Life* by Luke Stoffel

There are no cheat codes. Except these.
Print them. Fill them in. Tape them to your fridge.

▶ CHARACTER SELECT

Fill this in before you start. Then fill it in again when you finish and see what changed.

WHEN I START

WHEN I FINISH

PLAYER 1

your name

CLASS

what you do

XP

what you've lived through

SPECIAL

what you're weirdly good at

WEAKNESS

the reason your game won't start

LOOT

the thing you're writing this for

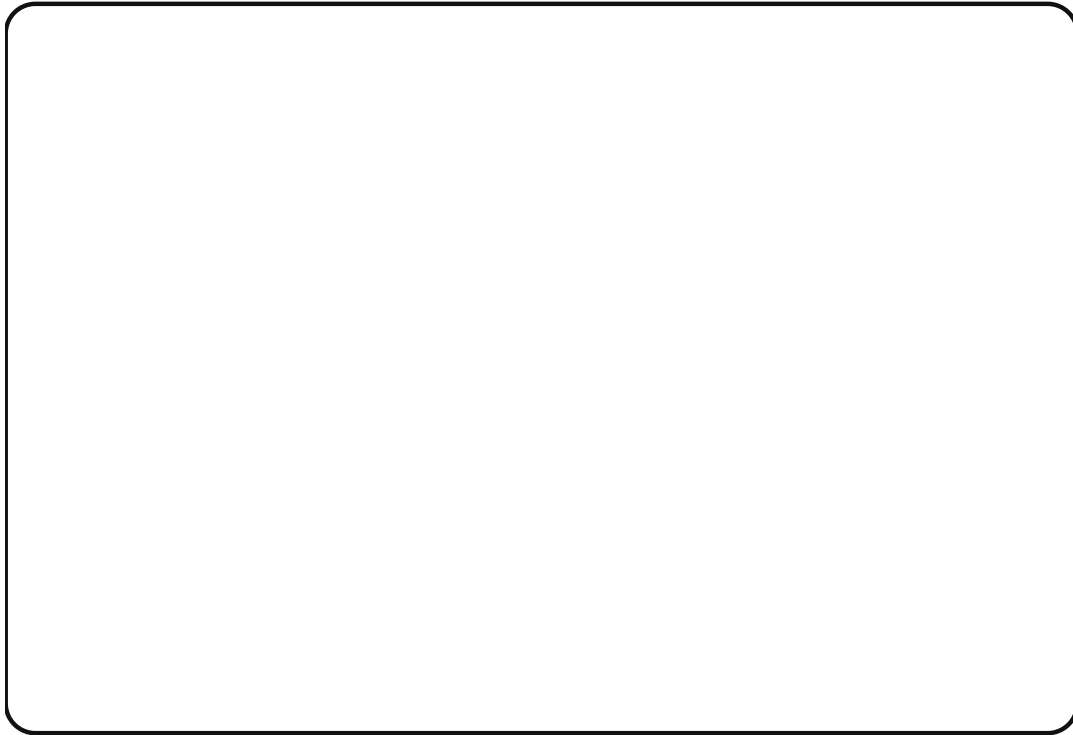
PLAYER 2

who's going to interview you

✦ DRAW YOUR TROLL

Draw him in the box. Name him. Fill in the bubbles.

Tape him up where you write.



MY TROLL'S NAME _____

WHAT HE SAYS

WHAT I SAY BACK

WHERE HE LEARNED IT _____

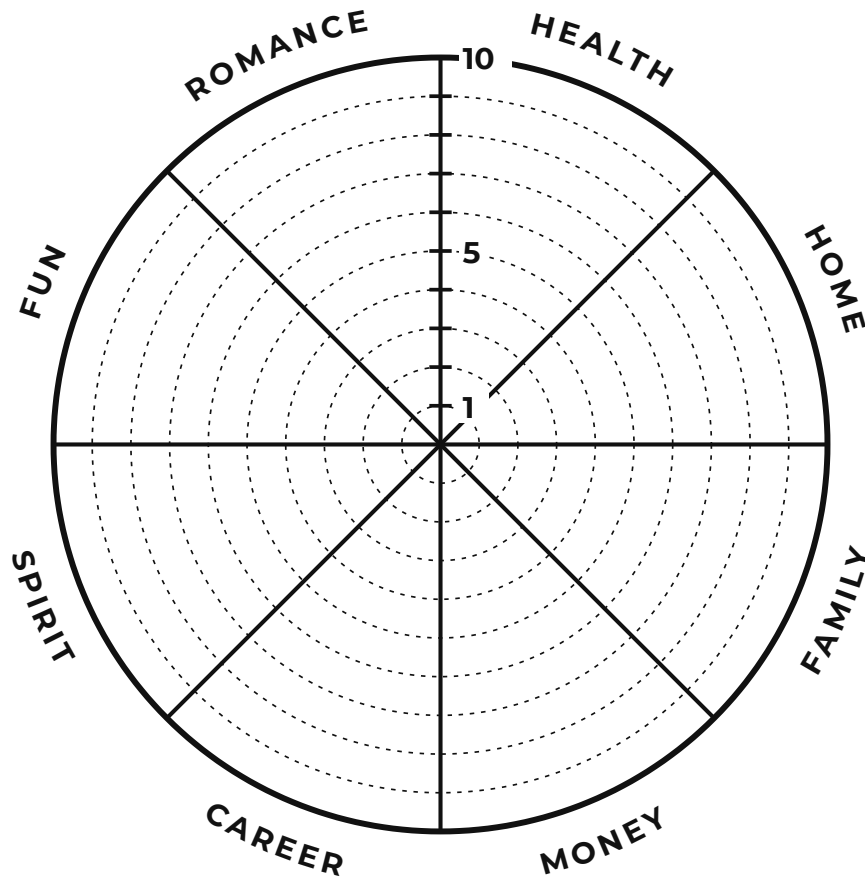
✦ YOUR OVERWORLD MAP

Hold your life up to the twelve steps. Write one memory next to each. Skip the ones that don't fit yet.

1	THE ORDINARY WORLD	
2	THE CALL	
3	THE REFUSAL	
4	THE MENTOR	
5	CROSSING THE THRESHOLD	
6	TESTS, ALLIES, ENEMIES	
7	THE APPROACH	
8	THE ORDEAL	
9	THE REWARD	
10	THE ROAD BACK	
11	THE RESURRECTION	
12	THE RETURN	

▶ SPIN THE WHEEL

Write the first memory that pops up for each slice. Rate how much it still gets to you. Your 9s and 10s are your chapters.



SLICE	FIRST MEMORY	1-10
HEALTH		
HOME		
FAMILY		
MONEY		
CAREER		
SPIRIT		
FUN		
ROMANCE		

▶ **PLAYER 2**

What's your earliest
memory? Where
were you standing?

1/18

▶ **PLAYER 2**

What did your
house smell like
when you were a
kid?

2/18

▶ **PLAYER 2**

What did you want
to be when you
grew up?

3/18

▶ **PLAYER 2**

Who was the first
person who really
saw you?

4/18

▶ **PLAYER 2**

What's the worst
trouble you ever got
into?

5/18

▶ **PLAYER 2**

When did you first
know you were
different?

6/18

▶ **PLAYER 2**

What's a day you'd
live over again?

7/18

▶ **PLAYER 2**

What's a day you'd
erase?

8/18

▶ **PLAYER 2**

Who did you lose,
and what do you
still have of theirs?

9/18

♣ PLAYER 2

What story do you
always tell at
parties?

10/18

♣ PLAYER 2

What's the story
underneath that
one?

11/18

♣ PLAYER 2

What did you get
wrong for a really
long time?

12/18

♣ PLAYER 2

Who do you owe an
apology?

13/18

♣ PLAYER 2

Who owes you one?

14/18

♣ PLAYER 2

What were you
doing the night
everything
changed?

15/18

♣ PLAYER 2

What did you hide
from your parents?

16/18

♣ PLAYER 2

What's the bravest
thing you've ever
done?

17/18

♣ PLAYER 2

What would your
sixteen-year-old self
think of you now?

18/18

➤ BEFORE, DURING, AFTER

Pick one memory. Fill in all nine squares, one line each.

MY MEMORY _____

	WHAT I FELT	WHAT I THOUGHT	WHAT I DID
BEFORE			
DURING			
AFTER			

Final sweeps

Two passes, one chapter at a time. These are places to stop and look, not proof of anything. If it still sounds like you out loud, keep it.

The robot's fingerprints

- ☐ Lists of three
- ☐ The same idea said twice in new words
- ☐ Pretty metaphors that mean nothing
- ☐ “It wasn’t X. It was Y.”
- ☐ A lesson at the end of every paragraph
- ☐ “I felt something shift”
- ☐ Therapy words you’d never say at dinner
- ☐ Too smooth, no lumps

The filler sweep. Cut or replace. Some sentences need a “was.” Sweep, don’t purge.

suddenly · then · that · very · really · is · was · started · just
· slightly · somewhat · somehow · seem · definitely ·
something · quiet · quietly

(The prompt for this is in the Spell Book.)

Is it done?

- ☐ Every chapter read out loud at least twice
- ☐ A developmental editor (human or bot) has read the whole thing
- ☐ Four or five beta readers, and I fixed where they tripped
- ☐ Robot fingerprints hunted
- ☐ Filler sweep done
- ☐ My hardest chapter is in there
- ☐ The first page makes you want the second
- ☐ The last page doesn't tie a bow

Map your reader's day

MY ONE READER: _____ (age, job)

Time	What they're doing	Where they'd find my book
Morning		
Commute		
Lunch		
Afternoon		
Evening		
Bedtime		

The launch checklist

Three months out

- ☐ Decide on ISBNs: free from KDP/Ingram, or your own from Bowker for wide distribution
- ☐ Interior PDF, EPUB, and full cover file ready
- ☐ Apply for a Library of Congress Control Number
- ☐ Cover finished, readable at thumbnail size
- ☐ Book on NetGalley through a co-op
- ☐ Start a mailing list

One month out

- ☐ Upload to IngramSpark first
- ☐ Upload to Amazon KDP second
- ☐ Answer Amazon's AI question honestly
- ☐ Order a proof from each, and check every page
- ☐ Enroll the ebook in KDP Select
- ☐ Book promo dates (Freebooksy, Bargain Booksy, BookBub, Fussy Librarian)
- ☐ Order ten author copies for the house

Launch week

- ☐ Ebook at 99 cents or free
- ☐ Email your list

- ☐ Tell every single person you see
- ☐ Open the reviews with a friend in the room

After launch

- ☐ Register the copyright at copyright.gov
- ☐ Enter awards in your category
- ☐ Keep going, one person at a time

The one cheat code that actually works

Talk it out. Write it down. Read it out loud.
Every day.