

# Getting unstuck

by Helen White

I finally held my Diploma Accreditation in December 2018, having done a PDC in 2010 – so much for my initial plans of completing my diploma in two years! At times, I felt as if I was wading through treacle, at times I honestly forgot about the diploma, at times I felt fed up about having to write up designs that I'd already completed (but hadn't written up at the time). Overall, I think it was a great process, and has taught me a lot about my own ability to do self-guided work, my motivations, strengths and weaknesses, and of course a whole lot about permaculture and applying it to my life. Many of the designs I did never did make it to the portfolio, but they all helped me along.

I suspect many of us get side-tracked, so I thought I'd share some of my top tips that got me through, and I'm sure you will all have suggestions of your own, too. If you do, please send them to the office at [diploma@permaculture.org.uk](mailto:diploma@permaculture.org.uk)

**Obtain a yield.** Book a tutorial – this may sound obvious, but once I had a deadline to finish writing up a design, it was much easier for me to focus

**Small and slow solutions.** Write up one design at a time, and if possible write it up as you are working on it, not months later, when it just feels like a Big Job, rather than part of the process

**Apply self-regulation and accept feedback.** Look at how you are spending your time, and honestly look at how you are not using it very productively. I added parental controls to some websites where I was spending time for no good reason

**Integrate rather than segregate.** Find a friend – meetings of diploma guilds, or even just chatting to someone else who is working on their diploma, helps focus thoughts, and moves things on

**Use and value diversity.** Go to permaculture events – there is a world of great people out there all doing permaculture, and chatting over a cup of tea, or going to a workshop or two is great for adding energy and enthusiasm to the process

**Catch and store energy.** Visit permaculture projects – either in your area, or when you go on holiday. See how other people are applying permaculture to their lives, even if their choices and decisions are nothing like yours

**Minimum effort for maximum output.** Don't be a perfectionist! A big block for me was I wanted my portfolio to *Amazing* – build a website, learn Prezzi, do a cartoon were among various plans I ditched after a few years. I also struggled from seeing some designs that were beautifully written or drawn, and felt mine would never be as good as that. Your portfolio needs to be good enough for you – not super! It's not a competition.

So good luck with your designs – I'm sure you will be learning a lot along the way.