



Make Your Book a Reality!

Yes ~ Your Book.
You Can Do This.

How often have you heard someone say, “I should write a book” ... and then they never do.

It’s sad, because everyone has a story to tell, a message to communicate or a gift to share but few people discipline themselves to make their books a reality. Books don’t have to be published to have value. Some people write simply for their own pleasure or to leave as a family legacy—others take their work to the next level, having little idea where, or how high, that level may be.

Some people are gifted writers, while others need the assistance of gifted editors to help them get their messages to the marketplace. Whether you write it all yourself or have help, book writing is all about communication; connecting with your reader.

Most of the books we, at byDesign Media, publish are written to communicate information or a particular message. For that reason, the following pointers do not deal with important issues of good fiction, such as character development, plot or settings. They address only the straightforward work of getting your message to your readers.

The process can fit in a nutshell and here it is:

The Nutshell Plan

1. Find the message that’s burning inside you
2. Get a notebook planner
3. Divide your message into bite-size portions (chapters)
4. Gather your content
5. Organize your content
6. Start writing
7. Edit mercilessly.
8. Get someone whose skills you trust to read or edit your manuscript
9. Research the industry.



1. Find the message that's burning inside you

Find the message that's burning inside you – or at least something you know will benefit people. If you have a message burning inside, it's easy to write down the main points you want to address and organize the book into chapters – not a problem. The problem arises when you try to figure out what's going to make you the most money and then try to figure out how to manipulate people into PayPal-ing you the gold from their bank accounts. That's tough.

Determine your market. To whom do you want to communicate your message? It's important to have a clear sense of who your reader will be and what will resonate with that person. Imagine yourself sharing your message with him or her. See your book as a vehicle for carrying your message.

2. Get a notebook planner

Buy a notebook, or fill a binder with lined paper and coloured divider sheets. While that may sound archaic in our techno-driven world, you may not have a device handy when inspiration strikes or you find a critical piece of research (that can't be tucked into an iPad for later).

While there are those who think one can sit down at the computer and simply start hammering out the next best-seller, the truth is that you have to have a plan. Writing a book is like painting by numbers. The outline has to be there before you can start to apply the colours. This is one time when good old-fashioned pens trump computers. You always have one in your purse or pocket and those little scraps you write at unplanned times (like in a restaurant) can be tucked into a notebook when you get home. They are like gold when the actual writing begins.

While perfect-bound notebooks are nice, nothing beats a good old three-ring binder. It stays open easily and doesn't mind having bits of napkins scotch-taped to its pages. I've never seen one get offended when I ripped a page of utter garbage from its spine. :)

3. Divide your message into bite-size portions (chapters)

Make a list of the points you want to make and then transfer each point to one of the coloured dividers in your notebook. You now have your book divided into chapters. As the process of book development moves ahead, some of these may be combined with others into one chapter, or further divided as you recognize certain aspects as chapters in themselves.

4. Gather your content

This is the research stage. Learn everything you can about your subject. Read what's already been written about it. Reference all your research properly in the particular chapter sections so it will be a snap to develop your bibliography later. Jot down ideas as they come to you and put them into the appropriate chapter areas. This may mean getting up at night to make notes on thoughts that may be important so they won't be lost the next day.

If you're doing interviews, conducting studies or gathering stats, make sure you use professional methods so your work will be credible in professional circles. This may mean dusting off your old Sociology 400 texts and polishing rusty techniques for gathering content.

Hang on —don't think you have an excuse for not making your book a reality just because you never took Sociology 400 (or any Sociology, Philosophy or Theology or in fact any of those "logies" that are expected from the halls of academia). Your content may be all about your personal experience, rather than gleaned from external knowledge. It's entirely possible that your story may outsell that of someone who has spent twenty-five years researching his or her topic—if your content is interesting, relevant and well-organized.

Discuss your thoughts with others. Try to assess where your message fits in terms of general knowledge or new material. Much can be determined regarding the eventual interest of the marketplace through an assessment of the interest level of people around you.

5. Organize your content

Now that your notebook is filled with random thoughts, the research you want to use and adequate understanding of your topic to make your book worthwhile reading, it's time to bring order out of chaos. Section by section (chapter by chapter) focus on each issue you're addressing—this may be a section of a timeline, an aspect of your topic or whatever sets one section (chapter) apart from another—and put your content into logical order.

Readers need the confidence of knowing they're being led in logical progression, from point A to point B all through to point Z. To have that confidence, they need to feel the underlying structure of the book.

Structure in writing goes from the big picture to the little picture—from the overall topic to chapters, to chapter sections, to paragraphs, to sentences and finally, to the use of the most appropriate word to express whatever it is you're trying to communicate.

Approach your writing from the standpoint of treating every chapter as a stand-alone, to the extent that there is purpose in chapter division.

6. Start writing

Now is the time for staring at your first page wondering what the heck to write.

Before you begin each individual chapter, refamiliarize yourself with all the content for that chapter. Begin with a thought that will lead your reader into all the content to come for that chapter. Write it down.

Get the whole book written before you begin to polish (edit) your work. Otherwise, you may get bogged down with revisions to the extent that you will get discouraged and give up.

7. Edit mercilessly.

8. Get someone whose skills you trust to read or edit your manuscript.

When you have finished to the best of your ability, find an editor (could be a retired English teacher) who can evaluate and perhaps assist in polishing your manuscript. If you take it to a publisher before taking this step, you could end up paying more for editing than necessary.

9. Research the industry.

Decide whether you want to self-publish or take the traditional royalty route. The entire publishing industry has been transformed since the advent of print-on-demand and e-books. Research the industry to familiarize yourself with publishing and marketing trends.

Tips

- Don't stress about the development of your book. The best ideas come when you're writing.
- Read out loud. Strengths and weaknesses will become clearer.
- Allow the uniqueness of your style or ideas the freedom of expression.
- Worry less about what people will think, than about the value of your message. Be honest.
- People choose books with good titles, good front covers, compelling back covers and a captivating opening paragraph.
- Don't get discouraged! If you get frustrated, take a break. Let your work simmer until the heat returns.
- Use correct grammar and spelling. At the very least, you need proper basic skills.
- Write what you know or what you are qualified to write.
- Don't expect a bestseller on your first time out of the gate. If you get one, that's great, but approach your writing as a process of getting better and better at your craft. Most seasoned authors are embarrassed by their first books and hope no one will read them. The more you write, the better you'll get.
- Take writing courses. Go to writers' workshops and conferences. Join writers' groups.
- Read books about good writing. Read, read, read.
- Get comfortable with your writing software. If you want an excellent, free program, try OpenOffice.

Warnings

- Be sure the book you want to write hasn't already been written.
- Be open to critics, but don't let negative people rob you of your vision.
- Expect to learn from your mistakes.
- Avoid plagiarizing (copying someone else's work).