

How to Write an eBook

An “A-to-Z” how-to book for
anyone wanting to write and
publish their first eBook



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Hi, I'm Melissa G Wilson, a best-selling author, ghostwriter, publisher, entrepreneur, and marketer. I work with Fortune 500 companies, CEOs, executives, businessmen and women and entrepreneurs around the globe. The one thing they all have in common is, of course, they've written, are writing, or want to write a book. They realize, perhaps more than most, how critical it is to have a book they can use to get their ideas, innovations, insights and passion out to people. They realize that a book, either hardback, paperback or eBook, is the best version of an "elevator speech" they can have. Yes, they may meet 2-10 people in a day they can tell about their work and reach with their ideas.

But a book, particularly an eBook that can be downloaded any time of the day or night anywhere in the world, can potentially reach billions.

The most powerful thing about the Internet is its ability to level the playing field. The Internet gives the same amount of access to the average person on the street as it does celebrities, rock stars, and billionaires. If you have any kind of talent, musical or otherwise, you used to have to have an agent and a lot of money to "get discovered." Now you just need a cellphone camera and access to YouTube.

The same kind of access is true for eBooks. All you need is an idea, a plan, and an eBook. Just ask teen writer Amanda Hocking. Amanda needed to raise \$300 fast. So she self-published the paranormal fiction books she had been writing, thinking she might be able to raise the money that way. She's now sold 1.5 million copies and raised more than \$2.5 million. Not bad wages for a teenage writer.

Amanda knew what I know - that anyone with persistence, drive, passion, and an idea, can write an eBook. That means you can do it too.

TED Global speaker and ghostwriter Becky Blanton and I have teamed up on this book to share what we know about writing *your* first eBook. We know even if you aren't a writer, you can still write an eBook. Here's how.

MELISSA G WILSON

New York Times best-selling author, ghostwriter, publisher, and entrepreneur.



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CHAPTER ONE

Why You Need To Write An eBook

“My TED Global Talk of a few hundred words reached more than five million people. Imagine how many more ideas I could say in a book.” ~ Becky Blanton TED speaker

Did you know that companies with 30 or more landing pages generate seven times more leads than those with fewer than ten? That’s according to Hubspot, a company that helps other companies attract visitors, convert leads, and close customers.

But quantity doesn’t matter without quality - meaning you need to give your reader something to keep them interested in your site, product or service.

If you have a bricks and mortar business, you hand out samples - whether it’s food, or services. You want people to experience what you’re selling. A positive encounter, usually with a free sample, is what gets people to buy.

The only difference on the Internet is that you’re offering digital content, or coupons, or maybe time in a one-on-one coaching session. Studies show that the more time and interest you can get people to invest in something, the more likely they are to buy. Studies show free samples have boosted sales in some cases by as much as 2,000 percent. There’s not much out there that can affect people’s behavior like free samples. Not only do they capture people’s attention, they can also sway people to habitually buy things that they never used to purchase.¹

That’s why writing an eBook with valuable content, information and how-to’s is important. eBooks with value are the kind of books people share with their friends and colleagues. That’s how your name, and your websites, get known and visited, and how you make money, get recognized and establish credibility.

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/10/the-psychology-behind-costcos-free-samples/380969/>

THE TOP REASONS PEOPLE GIVE FOR WANTING TO WRITE AN EBOOK

- Establish themselves as an expert in a field, skill or niche
- To impress their friends, family and colleagues.
- To share a concept, thought or idea they believe can change the world, or at least the way things are done
- Get their name known among people who might want to hire them to teach, speak, or work for/with them
- For profit - make money sharing their expertise with others through the sale of their knowledge
- To give away to get people to subscribe to a website, blog, business, or newsletter
- To become a “published” author
- To create a source of passive income
- To explain stuff to people
- To create credibility among their peers



But what's your reason? Knowing what you want to accomplish with your book is the first thing you need to know before starting it. Why? Because beginning with the end in sight (goal) is how you determine what to write and how to write it.

Even though the reasons above may look different, they're actually all part of a greater whole. If you write for one of those reasons, ultimately you're writing for them all. For instance, if your most compelling reason for writing an eBook is to "Establish yourself as an expert," then the rest of those "reasons," will follow. You may write a book to establish yourself as an expert, but you will also become a published author, make a profit, create a source of passive income, share a concept, thought, or idea, get your name known among people who might want to hire you. See? However, it is important to focus on ONE of those reasons to decide HOW to write your book.

SOUND EASY, BUT IS IT?

Can you really learn how to write an ebook in 10 steps or less? Yes, you can. I'm not guaranteeing you'll produce a bestseller or be an expert when you're done, but you'll start and finish and have a book you can polish, or have polished. Createspace.com, for instance, offers editing and developmental edits for books up to 10,000 words for between \$160 (copy editing) to a full editing package of \$470.

The problem with most "how-to-write an eBook" articles, like "Write your first eBook in 30-days!" and similar programs is that they make promises they can't keep. People want to believe they can sit down at the computer and write a bestselling book in a weekend. Unless you're a professional writer, you can't - at least not something worth reading. I wouldn't be worth trusting if I told you that you could.

If you ever wrote a paper in school, you can write a book. When I first started running for exercise all I could do was 20 or 30 yards before I had to slow down and catch my breath. I wasn't exactly an athlete, or a runner. I had to start somewhere and for me, running to the end of the block was a start! I kept at it and now running a mile or more, or an hour on the treadmill at the gym is easy. It didn't happen overnight. But it happened.

Writing is the same way. Can you write an email? Then you can write a memo. If you can write a memo, you can write a report. If you can write a report, you can write a white paper. And so on. A book is a collection of chapters. Each chapter is a thought. When you break it down into bite-sized pieces, it gets easier.

Each book you write means you'll get better and better. It's a process. Writing is not always easy, fast, or free, but it is rewarding. As with any skill, writing is also a process you have to tend to every day to get better at it.

One of the other things people don't tell you is that there is no shortcut, no magic bullet formula, or easy way to do this. It takes work, and lots of it. If you're employed full-time, plan to spend 10 to 15% of your week just working on your book. And, I do mean plan and schedule.

Studies show that we're twice as likely to do something if we plan it, and four times as likely to do it if we actually schedule it on our calendar.

If you add an accountability partner - someone to prod and encourage you and make sure you're staying on task, then you're eight times as likely to accomplish your goal. That's why professional athletes, CEOs and successful people have coaches - to keep them accountable. It's rare to find someone so disciplined they don't need someone encouraging them.

If you're thinking you can squeeze in time to write in between the other things going on in your life, you'll fail. You can do that if you also have a set time you sit down and write every week, or every day. Even if you only have 15 minutes a day to spare, do it.

If you already have time in the morning when you get up, make your coffee, watch the news, check Facebook or email, you have time. You just have to commit to it. Ten or 15 minutes a day, every day, or four hours on the weekend does add up if you're consistent. If you want an eBook, but don't want to write it, then hire a ghostwriter. That's a viable, affordable option. Your name will be on it as the author, not the ghostwriter's. You get all the profits and royalties and the ghostwriter goes on to their next work for hire job.

How ever you write and produce it, how well your book does depends on you, your background, topic, how well you do your research and who your audience is.

CHAPTER TWO

But I'm not a Writer

*"Stop saying 'Someday I'm going to write a book.
Start saying, 'TODAY I'm going to write my book.'" ~ Melissa G Wilson*

One of the most common things I hear from people who want to write a book, ebook or otherwise is, "But I'm not a writer." Don't worry; many people aren't writers. In fact, most people aren't. Many of the clients I work with are average writers at best. But they're very good at what they are experts in - business, medicine, engineering, finance, and marketing. Good writers, like any professional, spend a lifetime learning their profession. So don't worry about being a great writer. You're an expert in other things.

Instead of writing, think about how you can be a great communicator in other ways. Begin by talking about your ideas. Record them on a tape recording app, or a tape recorder. Re-record them. When you think you have a recording with good content and (whether it's five minutes or five hours) give it to someone, or hire someone to transcribe it for you. You'd be surprised how good you sound on paper then!

Sometimes sitting down with a colleague, friend or family member who can interview you for the recording can help. We often don't know how much we know, or what we know until someone asks us about it.

Finding someone who knows nothing about what you do, but who is curious about it, can be helpful in other ways. Information and processes you take for granted may not be so obvious to those who want to learn more about it. They may have questions you wouldn't have ever considered important.

What's important about the information you have to share is that you know the topic well enough to explain it in terms your audience will understand. If you can explain something verbally, people called ghostwriters, or "developmental editors" can take what you tell them (in an interview, journal, through your transcripts, etc.) and turn your knowledge into words.

More than 50% of the books written in North America today are ghostwritten, so you're not alone in seeking professional writing help. Don't let not being a wordsmith keep you from writing your book.

I know dozens of top speakers and best-selling authors who had their books ghostwritten. Even good writers often don't have the time to sit down and write a book, even if they have the skills.

GET ORGANIZED.

Lack of purpose, organization, goals, deadlines and tasks is the number one reason most people who start a book never finish it. They don't know what steps to take, what's next, what they need to do or learn to make their book happen. Get a paper calendar you can see every day and write down your milestones on it. Pick a date to start and a date for having every one of the steps in Chapter Two completed. There's no right or wrong timeline - just a timeline you can meet.

JUST WRITE

The number one thing that keeps people from "just writing," is fear - fear of sounding stupid, inept or incompetent. They fear being thought a fraud. They fear not being good or intelligent enough. They fear being judged, laughed at or ridiculed for what they write. They fear other people not "getting" or approving of their idea. Fear keeps more people from writing than anything else. So, if you're feeling fear, you're not alone. The trick to beating fear is to just write. Tell yourself no one else is going to read it until you're ready to share it, and then just start writing. Do NOT try to edit as you go. That only intensifies the fear because you will tend to compare your first draft to a finished product. It's not. It's a draft. You will edit it all when you're finished, but first, you have to get the words onto paper. Then you arrange, rearrange and polish.

WRITER, MEET PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination, unfortunately, is attracted to first time writers, do-it-yourselfers, and novices as well as the professionals, so don't beat yourself up if you find yourself watching television or watching paint dry rather than working on your eBook.

The first time procrastination appears is when you decide to sit down and write. You may feel elated and excited - at first. But once you're in front of your computer, chances are something will happen to distract you, maybe reading just one more book about how to write your eBook, or answering an email, or watching a Youtube video....it will be something. That's procrastination - our subconscious conspiring against us to protect us from fear and rejection. See it for what it is and move on.

Procrastination can take on other forms as well - like our making continuous rewrites and edits to our writing. Many people write their first chapter, then go back and continue to edit and rewrite that one chapter, thinking that's how it's done. It's not.

The goal in writing a book is to get the book written first, then to go back and start tweaking, polishing, editing and restructuring.

There's a television sit-com called "In the Middle," about a family in Illinois. The youngest son Brick is an avid reader. He loves reading so much that one day he decides

to write his own book. He struggles for a week over composing one sentence. He edits, rewrites, and edits the sentence over and over again. He gets feedback from his family about his sentence, and for weeks carries it around, reading it out loud, proud he has written “a good sentence.”

The problem is, Brick is so focused on writing perfect sentences he can't finish writing a paragraph, let alone a chapter or a book. He is bogged down, as many writers are, in not making any mistakes. He realizes this but is ultimately content to have simply written one “good” sentence. His book becomes something he's “working on,” although he never really gets around to writing anything other than that one sentence. It's the perfect example of a first time eBook writer.

People are afraid, consciously or subconsciously, to finish things. That's part of what procrastination thrives on. For many of us, finishing something means being judged for that final product. As long as we're not finished, people (we think) can't honestly judge us because - well, it's not finished! We've done our best, but what if our best isn't good enough? So we change our minds, delete what we've written, start over, give up, get frustrated and wonder if we were thinking straight when we decided to write our book, to begin with. Deal with the procrastination and just write. Some tips that work for people:

- Write somewhere else. If you write at home, go to a coffeeshop or the library where you can focus.
- Break down what you need to do into smaller and smaller steps. If, for instance, you're doing your outline, make it a goal to come up with a title for ONE chapter, not all ten or twelve.
- Instead of writing, use the time to work out why you're procrastinating.
- Be nice to yourself. Don't beat yourself up for procrastinating. Do something you want to do and then get back to writing.
- Reward yourself for just sitting down at the computer. Pop a chocolate or pour yourself a glass of wine or some coffee. Make writing a fun activity.
- Create a task list - i.e., (1) Sit down at computer (2) Open book file (3) Write one paragraph. Lists can sometimes get us to move when we can't otherwise get motivated.
- Make a list of all the reasons and ways this book is going to change your life when it's published.
- Read how-to-stop or beat procrastination articles.

TAPE RECORD YOUR IDEA OR CONTENT.

One of the best ways non-writers (and writers too) can get past their fear of writing, their lack of ability, or their relentless procrastination about writing, is to tape record their story and have it transcribed. Once transcribed the story can be massaged into chapters. I detail this process more in the next chapter so that I won't go into it here.

WRITER'S BLOCK.

Even the best writers get writer's block. That means you sit down at your computer, or with pen and pad in hand, and your mind goes blank. You can't write. Nothing you try to write sounds coherent or intelligent. Professional writers have two sure-fire methods for destroying writer's block:

Write a descriptive paragraph of something in your immediate environment. For instance, "The wall of my west wall is made of aged brick. It's red, crumbling at the corners. It stretches from wall to wall, save for the stretch where the sliding glass door is." By forcing ourselves to write about something in front of us we don't have to be creative. We don't have to think. We just observe and write. It's often enough to break the writer's block.

Externalize our thoughts, fears, apprehensions. Make lists. That's right. Make lists. Write, "I have writer's block. I'm afraid I'm never going to finish this book. I don't know what to write. I'm stupid. I'm tired. I'm angry. Whatever comes to mind, no matter what it is, write it down. This is simply a brain flush. Sometimes our brain holds too much information. Getting it out on paper can sometimes release a flood of creative or focused writing.

If neither exercise works, keep with it for the duration of your scheduled time, then quit and forget about it for the day. Come back the next day, prepared to write. You may feel blocked for one hour, one day, or one week. But as long as you're writing something, even nonsense, or lists, or observations or thoughts, you will break the block.

You're not a writer? The only way to become one is to write, and write, and write. Best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell says it takes anyone a minimum of 10,000 hours to become an expert at anything. But studies show it only takes most of us about 20 hours to learn how to learn a new skill well enough to enjoy it and participate in its execution. Twenty hours? That's just one long weekend, or a few hours out of every weekend for a month. You can do this. Here's how.

CHAPTER THREE

Where Do I Start? An Easy 10-Step Process

“The secret to getting ahead is getting started.” ~ Mark Twain

Did you know that 97% of people who start to write a book never finish it? Out of every 1,000 people that set out to write their book, only 30 actually finish. Pretty depressing, right? But wait. On top of that add on the fact that only 20% of people who write a book actually publish it. That means that out of the 1,000 who start to write and publish a book, only 6 actually do so. Will you be one of those six? You can be. How. By starting with what you know and proceeding in an organized, step-by-step fashion. Now is not the time to learn something new to share with others. Begin with what you know and love best and work from there. Take it one step at a time. Set realistic goals and discipline yourself to write regularly - if only for 10-15 minutes a day. Why? Because the odd truth is, it's not procrastination or fear, or lack of knowledge that keeps people from starting and finishing their book. It's a lack of knowing HOW and where to start.

So you've decided on why you want to write an eBook, and what kind of book you want to write, now it's time to look at the contents and create an outline.

Begin by making a bulleted list of the content you want to share. For instance, for this book I made a list of the top questions and comments I get from clients when I suggest they write an ebook and turned them into content chapters. They were mostly variations on the following:

- Why do I need to write an eBook?
- Where Do I Start?
- How can I write a book when I can barely write an email?
- What do I need to know?
- What if I can't or don't want to write it myself?

Those top questions turned into the chapters of this eBook.

Until you sit down and do the same, you can't start writing. This is called step one of a “brain dump.” It means you list all the possible topics, facts, or things and people you want to write about. Don't judge, edit, or try to figure out what's important at this stage. Just put it down. It doesn't matter if you use a pad of paper and a pen, or a computer. The idea is create a list.

As much as we'd all like to think we can just sit down and start writing, your book will be more effective, compelling and likely to sell or spread if you follow the process I'm setting out in this book - (1) Brain Dump (2) Research (3) Table of Contents (4) Outline Chapters and (5) Write (6) Edit (7) Feedback from colleagues, friends, family (8) Revise and edit again (9) Proofread and (10) Publish

There are always going to be other people who think they have the best idea, best book, best approach to sharing information about the same topic you're considering. That's why it's critical to know where to start. In the beginning you'll be excited and want to "do it all at once," but trust me, limit yourself to a pace you can sustain over time - like for months. That may be 10 minutes a day, or an hour or more. It's up to you. This is not a race. It's a guaranteed plan to help you be one of the 6 out of 1,000 people who will start and finish their book.

WHERE DO I START?

STEP ONE: The Brain Dump. Begin with, "I want to write an eBook about _____."

Now, decide WHY you want to write an eBook about _____? My intent looked like this:

"I want to write an eBook about how-to-write an eBook because so many clients have asked me about the process that it seems like a good topic."

Simple, right? Now, set aside 10 minutes and write down, in bulleted fashion, everything you think should be included in your book. Remember, no judgement, no editing, no debating with yourself about whether it should or shouldn't be included. Just write it down. This is not your book. It's your pre-research brain dump. Write for at least 10 minutes. It's fine to write for an hour if you can, but no less than 10 minutes. Once you've finished, set the list aside and go do something fun. Eat, go for a run. Watch television, have a drink - whatever it is that will get your mind off of the list for a few hours. Then, go back and put in another 10 minutes. Then set your list aside. That's it for step one. Easy, right?

STEP TWO: Do your research. What books and articles already exist about how-to write an eBook? After writing out all the things I wanted to include in my book, I Googled the topic. It turns out there are thousands of books and articles on how-to write an eBook! Now what? Now came the hard work - research.

1) I began by researching competitive books before I even begin to write my outline. I had my list of things I thought were important, and that I wanted to include in the book. But I wanted to see if what I had to offer was what people wanted to learn. I wanted to see what questions weren't being answered, and what information wasn't being shared by those other authors before I started my book.

2) I asked myself, "How do I make my book a complementor, or a disruptor, to the many similar books on the market?" (Disruptor:

3) I researched the top ten books that I thought were similar to mine. Ten is the minimum number. The more the merrier of course.

How to research: If you already have a subject in mind, as I did, one of the best tools on Amazon is its "Look Inside" feature where you can read the first few pages of the competitive books in your market. Here, you can compare each book's Table of Contents and the first pages of each book. Your goal, here, would be to create as powerful and engaging a start with your book as these books have done.

Now let's go further with three tips for effectively researching the positioning of your book so that you get what I term a "Book Smart Start." I'll use a different topic for this example:

- Find books in your area that rank from 1-10,000. How? Type in Amazon, for example, sales or leadership or career best sellers. Here, I typed in Amazon "leadership books best seller 2017" and one of the first books that came up called "Think Wrong," was ranked about 3000, overall in an ebook format. This means that this book is currently selling 25 to 70 books a day, according to a ranking tool for Amazon where 80% or more of all books are sold.
- Look inside these top books and note their Table of Contents. Taking the book, "Think Wrong," again as an example, I found it contained only eight chapters when I included the introduction and the conclusion. The chapters were straight forward. The first one is titled "Be Bold. " This makes sense as it sets up an emotional appeal to readers to commit to disrupt the current status quo. The other chapters follow, as many books of this type, to encourage readers to move beyond just thinking about new creations and, instead, making them and then improving upon them as they build a customer base.
- It's obvious that this book is directed at people who want to start new business initiatives or entire new companies. Your goal here would be to juxtapose what you

find from looking at the Table of Contents for this book with others that are of similar ranking.

- Read the reviews for these top books. Again looking at the book "Thinking Wrong," I discovered people liked the research the authors shared about leaders in history who thought "wrong" or differently.

Other reviewers said they liked the process and practices the authors shared around disrupting old practices of thinking to create better new products and services. On the negative side, one reader found the book too challenging to read.

Reviews, and blog posts and media coverage of other books on your topic is why your competitors are your best friends. I don't mean that in the, "Hey it's Friday night, bring over a few bottles of wine and let's party," kind of way. Your competitors have most likely done their research and structured their books on what they found. If you see a pattern in all the books about your topic, chances are there's a reason why everyone included the information in their book.

Find out why and then decide if YOU really need that in your book or not. Competitors, their reviews, their media coverage, interviews and even videos and talks are the best source of information about what's missing on a topic and could take off if you write about it. That's the kind of best friends I mean - people who have done a lot of the legwork already.

Your goal, with any of the above three tips, would be to take the best ideas from the books you've researched, along with anything you saw could be done differently or better. Then write a book that speaks to readers looking for fresh perspectives and unique examples/stories. Finally, when you are done writing your first draft, pull in both a good developmental editor to ensure your writing flows and is engaging and compelling.

STEP THREE: Create your Table of Contents (TOC). You've come up with an idea for your eBook. You've done your research, now you're ready to create your Table of Contents and your Outline. This step is the most critical part of the process. It's also half of the work on the book. Some people can start a book without a detailed outline, but for 90% of us, starting a book without an outline is like starting a cross-country road trip without a map or a destination. Yes, it will be interesting, and maybe even a lot of fun, but it will take longer, cost more and ultimately be something we enjoy, but no one else is interested in hearing about.

How-To create a TOC.

Start by listing the top 10-15 topics you'd like to cover in your book. Then, list them in the order you'd like to present them to your readers. Give each topic a compelling or

descriptive name or phrase. These will be your Chapter Titles. I titled my chapters after the questions I hear most from first time writers. For instance, “Where Do I Start?” and “But I’m Not a Writer.” This are magnets for the reader who has the same questions!

Once you’ve made a list of topics for the chapters, make a list of the contents for each chapter. (I told you this was going to be hard, but I promise you, it will be worth it!)

For instance, in this chapter, “Where Do I Start?” I listed the top 10-15 things my clients ask me about how to get started. I didn’t use all 15, but I wrote as many ideas down as I could so I could later trim the list down. Ultimately I decided on:

STEP ONE: Come up with an idea for an eBook topic

STEP TWO: Research the topic

STEP THREE: Create a table of contents or TOC

STEP FOUR: Outline the chapters in your TOC

STEP FIVE: Start writing

STEP SIX: Edit

STEP SEVEN: Get feedback from friends, family, colleagues

STEP EIGHT: Revise and edit again

STEP NINE: Proofread (hire a proofreader)

STEP TEN: Publish. (Design, layout, create a cover and LAUNCH)

STEP FOUR: Outline your chapters. I know. Everyone hates outlines. They can be tedious and frustrating. Don’t worry about following the official outline structure you probably remember hating from high school. Make it simple. Start by defining what the reader will learn after reading this chapter. For instance, in chapter one of this book I wrote:

“I want people to know why they need to write an eBook and the top three rules for writing a successful eBook.” That gave me my focus for that chapter so I didn’t try to cover all the information in the book in that first chapter. Once you have your declarative sentence (or two) about what the reader will learn, just create another bulleted list of the things you want to cover in that chapter.

My list included the reasons people tell me they want to write an eBook, why I write eBooks, and the three rules I always ask myself about a book - Is it boring, is it informative, and ultimately - is this a book I will write and launch?

Easy. Once you have the list set it aside for a few hours. When you come back to it with a fresh mind read it over and see if it makes sense. Does it follow a natural progression? If you’re talking about how to do something have you started at the beginning, like you would if you were explaining it to a friend? Or have you just put stuff

in willy-nilly order as it occurred to you? Shuffle things around so they have some order. You might want to start your chapter by telling a story.

STEP FIVE: Start writing. You did this in high school. If you went to college you definitely did this when you wrote book reports or papers.

Writing an eBook isn't rocket science, but it is hard. Remember those high school and college papers? Yeah, like that, but about a topic you're passionate about and hopefully enjoy writing about!

Writing an eBook requires hard work, lots of thinking, discipline, repetition, patience and reflection. That's why not everyone who wants to write a book can, or will. If you want to write a book that gets downloaded, sold, shared and reviewed, you must be able to hear and respond to harsh feedback, criticism, and suggestions without going into a deep depression, getting angry or defensive, or quitting. This is all part of why many people fail to finish what they start. It can be, or at least feel, overwhelmingly emotional and be a huge demand on your time and mental discipline. Once you finish writing the entire book - whether it's weeks, months, or years, set it aside for at least a week (longer is okay) before you edit it. This gives you time to clear your mind and get you the objective distance you'll need to edit.

STEP SIX: Edit. What is editing? Editing is making changes, adding or deleting, and rewriting sentences or sections of your content. It's different from proofreading, which is a form of editing. Proofreading is reading content for grammatical or spelling errors.

Don't make the newbie mistake or fall to the temptation to edit your book before you finish it. Editing is something you do after the last chapter is finished. Why? Because you want to edit your book as a completed work so you can see how best to edit it. It's like painting. You paint the entire wall first, then you go back and sand out or correct any imperfections. When your barber or hair stylist cuts your hair, notice they cut the whole head and then go back and double check to make sure the length is right (editing). Finish the book first. One of the advantages of this (and there are many) is that when you do spot something you'd like to change you can tell yourself, "I'll do that when I edit." It keeps you from getting distracted and not moving forward. If you must tend to something or go crazy worrying that you'll forget it, simply highlight the paragraph so you can find it again, or leave a note to yourself in a different color type.

Once the book is finished, go to Grammarly.com and either get the full trial version of the program, or buy a subscription. Then, run your book through it. Grammarly's proofreading and plagiarism-detection resources check more than 250 grammar rules. Not all of their suggestions will fit, and you have the option to accept or decline their

suggestions. This will fix hundreds of things you wouldn't catch simply by reading it. It's not perfect and it's not a professional person, but it does catch an amazing variety of mistakes. Think of it as "spell check" on steroids.

STEP SEVEN: Upload the document to Google Docs if you haven't already written it in Google Docs. (something I strongly recommend doing because Google Docs tracks all your revisions and automatically saves everything so you don't lose or delete it).

Get feedback from friends, family, colleagues. You may or may not want to do this, based on your own book and situation. I advise you limit yourself to the number of people you share your rough draft with. Another important point, don't share your book with anyone until you're finished. Doing so will simply make it more stressful for you, and cause greater fear and procrastination. Until it's finished it's for your eyes only. This takes the pressure off of you to be perfect. You know that you're going to edit it once it's done, and then when you feel ready you can share it. The pros and cons of feedback:

Getting your friends and family to read your book will give you a good idea of how readers might respond. However, being family and friends I've seen that most of that group will either tell you what they think you want to hear, or they'll tell you how they would have written it. Neither is very helpful. So take their advice with a grain of salt. Remember, you're the expert. You want them to tell you if they understand the topic better as a result of having read the book, or if you answered any questions they had about the topic. Reassure them to be brutally honest only if you can accept feedback without getting defensive or offended. If you don't want them reading it until it's published, that's okay too.

Asking a colleague to read your book is a bit better - if they have the time. Offer to compensate them - buy them dinner, etc. for reading it. Find a colleague you trust, not one you compete with, for obvious reasons!

The best option of all is to hire a professional editor to look your book over. Createspace.com (where you'll most likely publish your book), has editing and professional services ranging from \$170 to \$500 for a full developmental and proofreading edit. It's money well spent by objective professionals who know what to look for in terms of flow, structure, style and consistency.

When asking for feedback, ask your reviewers to use "track changes" in a word document, or upload your book to Google Docs and ask them to just put their comments directly in the document. This way they don't have to tell you to your face, and you can see exactly what and where they were reading in the book to cause that feedback.

STEP EIGHT: Revise and edit again. Take time to consider the feedback you've received. Does it feel right? Accurate? You don't have to incorporate all of the suggestions you receive. I suggest you read the feedback first, but don't edit until you're over any emotional reaction you have about the comments. Then, go back and make any changes, add or delete any content you need to change and rewrite what you need to rewrite.

STEP NINE: Proofread. Run the book through Grammarly one more time. Then hire a professional proofreader to proofread it for you. A proofreader is ONLY looking for spelling and grammatical errors at this point. If they're really good they may spot inconsistencies, etc. too, but hopefully by this point there are no huge errors. It's money well spent as a book full of errors screams "self-published newbie" and turns your readers off. If you're trying to establish credibility with your readers you'll destroy credibility if your book is filled with errors.

STEP TEN: Publish (Design, layout, create a cover and LAUNCH!) Okay, you're almost done! Now all you need to do is create a cover, and design the interior of your ebook. If you're not a graphic artist, don't do this yourself. There are many places you can hire someone for a few hundred (or less) dollars to do this for you. Upwork.com, Fiverr.com, 99designs.com and other freelance sites give you a variety of professional designers to choose from. The best place I've found for someone to format your eBook is Ray Hoy, <http://fictionworks.com>.

Fictionworks is one of the five original eBook publishers on the Internet, having been in business more than twenty years. Contact ray@fictionworks.com. For \$60 Ray will format your book for Kindle, epub and emob, the three most common eBook formats on the Internet, making sure you can upload your final ebook to Lulu, Createspace and other online book sellers. If you upload your book to any book seller, rather than from your own website, you will need an ISBN number as well.

If you want to know more about ISBN numbers, and why you should buy your own rather than use Createspace's free ISBN number, go to my article on ISBN vs ISSN numbers at: http://www.goodreads.com/author_blog_posts/13487064-isbn-vs-issn

Sound easy? I wish it were. It will take discipline, scheduling and hard work to do, but it can be done. Millions of people do it every year. So can you. Remember, the reason most people fail is disorganization. If you take this in small steps, one step at a time, you will finish your book. It's not a race, don't make it one.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ghostwriters and Resources

“We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.”
—Ernest Hemingway

Writers, like most professionals, have tools, apps, and a process. If you want to do this right, you’ll follow their lead. You don’t need expensive or fancy, but there are several applications and software you’re going to need to do this effectively. If you aren’t familiar with these applications, plan on taking time to learn to use them. It’s not a waste of time to learn them regardless of whether you actually write your book or not.

These are basic, need-to-know applications everyone who uses a computer should be aware of and competent in. You don’t have to spend a lot of money to be a writer. People (and websites) will try to tell you that you have to have a certain (and very expensive) piece of software, or a certain type of computer. You don’t. Don’t get distracted by the toys of writing. Just write.

GHOSTWRITERS

You may start your book, do your brain dump, complete your mind mapping and all the other steps, and decide you really want to write the book, but suddenly (or eventually) realize that’s it’s far more work than you realized. Unless you’re independently wealthy, have lots of time on your hands, or write well, the average person writing their own ebook can expect the process to take 3-6 months, or longer if the book is more than 25 pages. An eBook you plan on giving away can be any length, but what really matters are:

Is the writing “tight” and efficient? That means, do you get to the point quickly, explain something cleanly and then move on to the next point? Or do you ramble? Don’t ramble. Readers hate it.

Can you tell a good story? Even non-fiction books are stories. They’re factual stories, but they tell the story of how-to-do something, or why to do something. They pull the reader in with promises, examples, case studies and outcomes.

Stories tell us how other people did something, or failed to do something. Stories are how we learn, grow, change and avoid (mostly) failures.

If you're struggling to just get the basic information and facts down, you may want to consider hiring a ghostwriter, or a writing coach. Both can help you improve your own writing - in different ways. With a coach, you'll do all the heavy lifting, corrections, revisions and work.

A ghostwriter, depending on what you want, will make all the corrections, changes, and edits for you, but then can go back (or in track changes) explain why they made the change (If you tell them in advance and if you pay them for it!)

A few hours a month with a good writing coach can help you make tremendous strides. An experienced ghostwriter who can also teach (not all of them can), can move your book along faster, while at the same time teaching you how to do the next one better, or all by yourself.

What is a ghostwriter and what will they do with my book?

A ghostwriter is a professional writer people hire to write their papers, books and letters for them. And yes, it is an honorable profession. More than 50% of all books published are ghostwritten. Ghostwriters generally either write a book from scratch, or they work with the bits and pieces a writer has already started. Writers who bring a finished work to a ghostwriter are generally looking for a developmental edit.

Most of us remember that having someone else write your papers for you in school was a fast way to failing a course, if not getting suspended or even kicked out of school. So what's the difference and why is it okay now to hire someone to write your book? Writing your own papers in school was about teaching you a life and educational skill. You were being graded on your work, not someone else's.

As adults in the business world, ghostwriters are professionals who perform a service - writing. Many CEOs already have their assistants, secretaries and staff write reports, memos, letters and correspondence they put their own name on. Ghostwriting is just part of the same sort of process. Many CEOs and executives are too busy to spend time writing, even though they write well. They prefer to hire ghostwriters so they can better use their time conducting business. Writing is a time intensive process and sometimes it's just a smarter decision to delegate the task to those who do it best - ghostwriters.

Many ghostwriters are former journalists, and are excellent researchers. They work well on deadlines and can be objective about the content they're writing.

Ghostwritten books are generally a “work for hire.” That means once you pay them for their work, you own the copyright and content.

They can’t use or reuse it, and if you have signed a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with them, they can’t even tell anyone they were the ghostwriter. As far as the world is concerned, your name is on the book so you wrote it.

What is a developmental editor and what do they do?

Development editors take an existing book or report and develop it. They help develop your idea or concept by working with the structure and flow of your book. This usually involves, to varying degrees, rewriting sections, tightening sentences, making sure the content flows, that the content and commentary is consistent throughout, and that facts are accurate. Many first time eBook writers write their first book then turn over the content to a development editor to make sure it reads well, has no “content holes,” or other issues.

Developmental editors will often challenge you in order to strengthen a point. While they won’t generally dictate to you what the book has to be, they will ask you to justify your point if they think it doesn’t fit the rest of the content, or is at odds in some way with the concept. Think of them as a coach, pushing, supporting, forcing you to dig deeper to make your book a better piece. If you are thin-skinned and don’t take criticism, feedback or suggestions well, working with a developmental editor will be painful.

However, when you find an editor who is honest, trustworthy and talented you will be amazed at how well they can get your manuscript into shape.

The ghost writing process in general

Professional ghostwriters charge anywhere from \$35,000 to \$75,000 and up for writing a book. However, you can also go to sites like UpWork, Freelance.com and others and also find competent to good writers for a few thousand dollars if you know what you’re looking for. Many ghostwriters get their start on these sites and are very good writers, but are just unknown.

Remember though, you get what you pay for. Learn how to find the best ghostwriter or coach with these tips:

Ask to read some of their work. They may decline because of NDAs, and that's a legitimate reason. However, many ghostwriters have blogs or post to LinkedIn or have articles published under their name you can read.

Ask to speak with them about your book for 15-to-30 minutes to see if they would be a good fit. You can tell a lot from your intuition by speaking with someone on the phone. Most ghostwriters will gladly agree to a phone call if it means potential work.

Hire them for a small job before hiring them to write your book. Many freelancers do well on the phone, or in person. The true tell of their professionalism is how they perform on a small job. Pay them to write an article or blog post to get a feel for how they work. Are they responsive? Do they return your phone calls or emails in a timely manner? That doesn't mean immediately. Most have several clients and a workload they tend to. Expect to hear from them within 24 hours, longer if it's over a weekend.

Ask friends for recommendations. You'd be surprised how many people have hired a ghostwriter - especially if they're businessmen/women.

Search on LinkedIn and read blog posts ghosts have posted on their own accounts. Good ghostwriters rarely advertise, but they do market. Look for their website or blog, and always check LinkedIn for active writers.

Google their names. Many ghostwriters also write under their own names for magazine and book articles. Search on their name on Amazon.com under books. Many writers thank their ghosts in their book acknowledgements for "editing" their book. It's hard to tell if they truly just edited the book, or ghosted it, but chances are they had a significant role in the publication. You can also write the "author" and tell them you're looking for an editor and/or ghostwriter. Tell them you saw they thanked their editor in their book and ask for a referral.

Google Docs. Not only is Google Docs a safe way to store your files, it's free. It also gives you revisions of all your documents. For instance, if you rewrite a chapter, then decide you liked the original version better, Google Docs has that revision backed up for

you to go back to. Dropbox does the same thing. It's a feature you'll want in any writing software you choose.

Google Docs also allows you to collaborate with other people (editors, friends, family, colleagues, etc.) and to see their comments, changes, additions, edits. Since it's a cloud app, you can access Google Docs from any computer, any time.

That means if you're at work and want to use your lunch or break time to write, you can. No special contortions needed. Just log in and start typing. You can work from your laptop, desktop or even your phone.

Google Calendar/Fantastical or some kind of calendar application. This is also free. Pick a calendar application you'll actually use, one that sends you reminders. Use it to schedule your milestones or writing goals so you hit them.

Dropbox. Not only is Dropbox the safest way to store your files, it also gives you revisions of all your documents. For instance, if you rewrite a chapter, then decide you liked the original version better, Dropbox has that revision backed up for you to go back to. Google Docs does the same thing. It's a feature you'll want. You get a certain amount of space with Dropbox for free (enough to write 10 books), and then you can upgrade for more if you choose.

Evernote. Not having Evernote is like not having pockets, or not carrying a bag, purse, or backpack. How else do you keep track of all your stuff? Evernote has a free version and an upgrade version of course. Once you learn to use it you'll see the advantage of the upgrade. Evernote lets you "clip" items from the Internet, forward important emails, keep track of your notes, ideas, and even your PDFs, audio and video files. Think of it as a digital Moleskin (notebook) of ideas, events, thoughts, things.

Stock Photography membership. The membership is free, the photos aren't. If you're going to sell your book you can't just find any free photo on the Internet that you like and use it. Well, you can, but expect to be sued if the owner of the photo comes calling. If you're going to use photos or illustrations in your book you need to either own them, or own the right to use them. That's where stock photography sites (paid), or free sites, like Morguefile.com, come in. They either sell or give you those rights. Keep track of them. Stock photography sites do that for you - keeping a record of all your photo purchases (and the rights you purchased) on file forever.

Mind mapping software. Mind mapping software is brainstorming software. Mind mapping is a great way to brainstorm, plan, or turn ideas into the steps or progression of steps you need to take to make your plans happen. There are hundreds of different kinds of mind mapping software, some free, some for a one time, or a monthly cost. So try out several until you find one that fits your style. Some of the most popular programs are:

- MindMapple
- Mindjet
- Freemind
- Text2MindMap
- Coggle

Writing is as simple or as complex as you want to make it. If you're serious about writing an eBook I strongly encourage you to do that before immersing yourself in the business of writing. Once you have actually written your first book all the articles about getting published, ISBN numbers, cover designs, fonts, formatting etc. will make much more sense.

Good luck to you. You *can* do it.

LET'S RECAP

How-to-Write an eBook

- **Get organized.** The number one reason most people never start, or finish writing a book is because they're disorganized. Pick a date, create a timeline, find an accountability partner, someone to ask you how your book is going (they don't have to read it. They're just there to make you accountable.) Pick someone who won't buy into your excuses and who will hold your feet to the fire about staying on track.
- **Just start.** Stop telling yourself you're going to write a book one day. Pick a day. Then start writing. I promise you it gets easier every day, even if it's hard at first!
- **Write about what you know about.** Don't try to write about something just because it's popular, trending, hip, cool, or selling like crazy. You're out of your depth and anyone with more experience or knowledge than you will spot your newbie-ness immediately. You'll be laughed at, if not discredited and definitely not trusted. If you **MUST** write about something you don't know about, then tell your reader right up front you're clueless and learning as you go.
- **Know WHY you're writing the book you're writing.** Have a goal or purpose in mind. Maybe you just want more subscribers, or maybe you want to get your name out there as an expert. Maybe you just want a source of passive income. Or, you really do have a world shattering or changing idea. As long as you know why you're writing it, you can stay focused on the end goal.
- **Do your research.** When you do your research you'll see what's out there, what's needed, what readers want more, or less, of.
- **Read the reviews.** When you read another book's reviews you get a chance to see what the readers loved, or hated, about it. You'll often discover an unmet need that other authors aren't writing about - which gives you an edge in creating your book.
- **Your Competitor's are your best friends.** Well, their research, Table of Content, and reader reviews are. Study where they have failed and succeeded to make sure you're on the right track to success yourself. If readers consistently complain about the "long, boring history" of the industry, don't write about the history of the industry **UNLESS** you think it's important and unless you can write about it in a way that is relevant, fun, and fascinating to read.

- **Write shorter books, more often.** It's better to have ten books of 10,000 words of quality than one 100,000 word book of poor quality. Try to have at least three eBooks ready to go before you do a big launch. Trust me. The first book is the hardest. The rest get easier and easier.
- **Finish it and publish it already.** Not finishing your book and publishing it is like buying a new car and locking it in the garage, never driving it. The only person admiring it is you, or your family and friends, who will quickly get tired of just seeing it (the book or the car) sitting there waiting for it to do what it was intended to do. Just finish it and publish it. You can always go back and edit, add, change, or revise it.
- **Ask for a "Next Step."** Don't forget to request that your readers share their appreciation of getting your book and benefitting from the wisdom you have provided. Studies show that this request does get significant results. So, do make sure to complete this step.

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AND TELL YOUR FRIENDS?

TWEET IT + FACEBOOK + BLOG ABOUT IT!

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PUBLISHING AND MARKETING WISDOM.

