

A GUIDE *to* WRITING YOUR *First* BOOK

by MICHELLE S. CHESTER

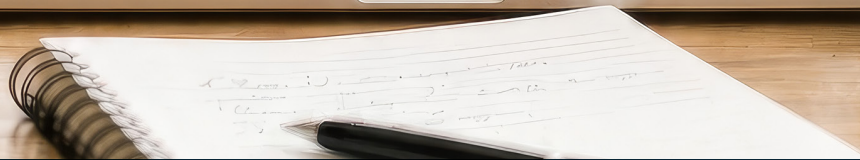
CHAPTER ONE

The Beginning

Every story starts somewhere.
Yours is no different.

It might start with a moment. A question.
A memory. Or a dream that won't let you go.

Whatever it is, your story matters.
And the world needs it. |



3 THINGS YOU
NEED TO KNOW



2 THINGS YOU
NEED TO DO

INTRODUCTION

In the **15 years that I have been editing**, the number one question I get asked is, “How do I write a book?” That is a loaded question, as there are many factors involved. But there is also a simple answer to that question.

From what I’ve learned over the years, there are **three things you need to know** and **two things you need to do** to write your book, and I will outline them in this guide.

I wrote this guide for those that have never written a book before and want to know how to get their thoughts out of their heads and on to paper. Get ready to put some action behind the vision and start the process of writing your first book.

Let’s get started.



“The main rule of writing is that if you do it with enough assurance and confidence, you’re allowed to do whatever you like. (That may be a rule for life as well as for writing. But it’s definitely true for writing.) So write your story as it needs to be written. Write it honestly and tell it as best you can. I’m not sure that there are any other rules. Not ones that matter.”
– Neil Gaiman

TIP#1 KNOW YOUR GENRE

If you've started writing your book but haven't thought about the genre, step away from your computer or put your pen down. The first thing you need to consider when writing your book is the genre.

gen·re
/ˈZHänrə/
noun
a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.

In literature, each genre has its own set of general rules and expectations. If you don't pick the right genre for your book, it could confuse readers and potentially be shelved incorrectly. You may be saying to yourself, "I wrote a romantic-comedy-thriller-inspirational-memoir." I challenge you to go to a bookstore and find the shelf that book will be housed on.

Before we talk about why it's important to know your genre, let's talk about the different genres. At the top level, there is **Fiction** and **Non-fiction**. Each of those have sub-genres under them. I will list a few of the most popular genres under each, but you should do a thorough research to review all genres.

Fiction — literature in the form of prose, especially short stories and novels, that describes imaginary events and people.

ROMANCE	WESTERN
MYSTERY	HISTORICAL FICTION
THRILLER	FANTASY
YOUNG ADULT	LITERARY FICTION
CHRISTIAN FICTION	HORROR
GOthic	MAINSTREAM/CONTEMPORARY
SCIENCE FICTION	URBAN/ETHNIC

I STUMBLED ACROSS THIS CHART THAT BREAKS DOWN A FEW OF THESE GENRES EVEN MORE.



Non-fiction — prose writing that is based on facts, real events, and real people, such as biography or history.

BIOGRAPHY

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

MEMOIR

SELF-HELP/SELF-IMPROVEMENT

CREATIVE NON-FICTION

PERSONAL ESSAY

NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE ARTICLE

OPINION PIECE

TRAVEL GUIDE OR TRAVELOGUE

INFORMATIONAL

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW YOUR GENRE

Picture this scenario: You're at a writer's conference and run into an agent while standing in the refreshment line during the meet and greet. You two make small talk and you mention you just completed your first book. The agent perks up and asks, "Oh really? What genre is it?" You proudly say, "It's a romantic-comedy-thriller-inspirational-memoir."

The agent stares at you for a moment, and then says rather dryly, "Wow. Good luck with that." The agent then grabs her refreshments and walks away.

You just missed a great opportunity to discuss your book because you were not aware of your genre.

When talking to agents, publishers, or readers about your book, most often, the first question asked is, "What is the genre?" **It sets the stage for expectations and gets listeners in the right frame of mind to understand your book.**

“Find a subject you care about and which you in your heart feel others should care about. It is this genuine caring, not your games with language, which will be the most compelling and seductive element in your style. — **Stephen King**”

Another reason why it's important to know your genre is that it will **connect readers with a work they are interested in**. Different genres relate to a distinct target audience. For example, you hear about a science fiction author expo where local authors are invited to sell books. You wrote a historical romance book. Do you think it's a good idea to attend and sell your book at that expo? Perhaps not, as the audience may not be interested in that particular genre.

Before you get too deep into your writing, define your genre and learn its rules and expectations.

ACTION PLAN

- Research the genre of the book you want to write and review the rules and guidelines.
- The genre of my book is _____

“To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme.” — **Herman Melville**”

TIP#2 **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**



One important component of writing is knowing **who you are writing to**. Writing with your audience in mind helps focus your message and potentially increase your chances for better sales once your book is published.

IF YOU THINK YOUR BOOK IS FOR EVERYONE, YOU ARE SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR FAILURE.

IDENTIFY YOUR BOOK'S AUDIENCE AND SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS.

To illustrate the impact of audience, imagine you're writing a Christian fiction story. You want to write a scene where the husband and wife are intimate. Considering the audience of this book, you most likely will not go into explicit details. Remember our conversation about genres having rules and expectations? A Christian fiction book typically doesn't have explicit sex scenes. Readers of that genre (the audience) may be offended if there are detailed sex scenes. Now imagine writing that same scene in a Romance novel. Because of the audience, you can go into more details with the intimacy between the man and woman.

Audience isn't just about genre; it can be age, demographics, hobbies, interest, etc. If you wrote a book about the history of the Chicago Bulls, your target audience would most likely be male basketball enthusiasts ages 30 to 65. If your book is about a woman who practices healthy living strategies, your audience would be women ages 35 to 55. A thought-provoking book on race relations may attract male readers of color over 40 years of age.

Knowing your audience affects the tone, style, and wording of your book. It's not necessary for a book geared towards teenagers to be filled with sesquipedalian prose. See what I did there? I used an unnecessarily big word to show you I'm smart. Although there may be a need to use big, polysyllabic words, it's important to keep your audience in mind when writing. Readers like to learn new things, but they don't want to keep a dictionary nearby just to understand your book.

Identifying your audience will help you not only develop your manuscript, but you will be better able to choose marketing methods for your book.

Are you writing a book for:

- Moms with young kids?
- Teenage girls with self-esteem issues?
- 30-something single men who want to start dating?
- Single women in their 40s?
- Married women who are unhappy?
- Mid-life men who want new careers?

The more specific you can be about your audience, the better you will be able to appeal to their interests.

I know it's tempting to want to cast a large net to appeal to a larger group. However, you stand a better chance of writing an engaging book when you can carve out a niche market. Once you're clear about who your readers are, you can target your writing toward their unique challenges and interests.



“*If the book is true, it will find an audience that is meant to read it.* – **Wally Lamb**”

ACTION PLAN

To gain a better understanding of your audience, answer the following questions, even if you don't believe they all apply or are relevant. Developing a profile for your ideal reader can help you make decisions when writing and promoting your book.

- What gender do you want to reach? _____
- What is their age range? _____
- What kinds of occupations do they commonly have? _____
- What hobbies or interests do they engage in regularly? _____
- Where do they spend their time outside of the office? _____
- Do they have children? And if so, what age range? _____
- What books would they likely read? _____
- What do you want readers to gain/learn from your book? _____
- What are some potential secondary audiences for your book? _____

A woman with dark curly hair and black-rimmed glasses is seated at a table, leaning forward and reading a newspaper. She is wearing a dark green top under a light-colored cardigan. Her right hand is resting on her head. On the table in front of her is a white coffee cup on a saucer and a smartphone. The background is blurred, showing warm, out-of-focus lights.

TIP#3 **KNOW YOURSELF**

Do you really want to write a book? Do you have the tenacity it takes, the time it takes, the energy it takes to write a book? Writing is a time-consuming, creative, solitary process that demands months (or possibly years) of your time.

Think about this scenario: Mary is a senior director at her corporate job, which is extremely demanding but she loves the challenge. She has a husband, a dog, and two pre-teen children that she drives around to their after school activities almost every evening. She's also active in her church and her sorority where she leads the Women's Ministry and chairs several committees respectively. Let's just say, Mary is a busy woman. She got the idea to write a book several years ago but never took it seriously. One day, she couldn't get it out of her head and she decided this was the year she was going to do it. One night, she sat at her desk in her home office, powered up her laptop, and opened Microsoft Word to get started. But she got distracted. She remembered she needed to fold the clothes left in the dryer for two days. She also needed to work on the church's newsletter and reply to a few emails she didn't get to at work. Once she did all that, it was after midnight and she was too exhausted to think about her book.

Sound familiar?

This may not be your situation but I'd take a guess and say that you have a busy life. We all do. Can you add "writing a book" to your already full To Do list? When will you write it? Early mornings? During your lunch hour? At night when the kids are asleep? All of those may work, but you need to come up with a plan. You should write every day and sacrifice other endeavors or rearrange your schedule so you can put writing at the top of your To Do list. Do not give up sleep to write your book. If you're like most people, you are probably not getting enough sleep already, so taking an hour or two away from that is not productive and could do harm to you mentally and physically. Now, I have been told by a few of my clients that they get their best writing done at night as they claim to be night-owls. If you are already conditioned to being up late and can fit writing into that part of your schedule, by all means, do so, just don't sacrifice too much of your sleep time. Your body and mind needs the rest.

Think of writing your book as another job. It will require time, dedication, commitment, energy... All the things a "job" requires. Are you ready to take on another job?

Let's go back to Mary. She was determined to complete her book and decided to take a long look at her life and all that she does. Remember, she's a wife, mother, dog owner, senior executive, church leader, and involved in her community via her sorority work. Whew, I'm tired from just typing her list. She loves all that she does but realizes that something has to give. After looking at her schedule and talking with her family, she decided to step down from her duties at her sorority. That freed up a few hours in the evenings three days of the week. She took that time to work on her writing and within seven months, she had a complete manuscript.

Now, let's look at Phil. He also has thought about writing a book for several years, but with his busy schedule, he felt like he didn't have the time. I met with Phil to discuss his concerns and to see if I could help him come up with a writing plan. Phil is single, has a full-time job, coaches his son's baseball league, volunteers at a community center where he mentors young boys three nights a week, and is head of security at his church. I asked Phil, "If you could take anything off your To Do list that will free up a few hours a week to write, what would you eliminate?"

He pondered this for a few minutes and then said, "Nothing. Everything I do is important to me and I can't see giving any of it up at this time." So, after our discussion, it was decided that now was not the right time for Phil to write his book. He couldn't fit it into his already busy life.

So, do you still want to write your book? Have you considered your life and decided that you will make the time to write?

You did? Great.

Then let's get started. Now that you have decided that you will make the time to write your book, let's get that on paper.

ACTION PLAN

Set Writing Goals

What writing goals do you want to achieve in a day? A week? A month? Write your goals in the space below. If it's not enough space, get more paper. The point is to be honest and specific about your writing goals. Don't limit yourself. Think outside the box and be creative.

GOALS	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

SMART GOALS: SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ATTAINABLE, REALISTIC, AND TIME-BOUND

Develop a Roadmap

Now that you have your goals written down, it's time to take the next step—develop a more detailed plan. Each goal you wrote needs a strategy. For example, if a goal is to write during your lunch hours, the strategy could be to draft a scene, or research a topic you need for your book.

Strategies are also time-bound. A roadmap is only a bunch of words until you set a timetable to accomplish them (i.e., a day, per week, by end of month). It's the time measurements that makes your roadmap more real and achievable. So, when developing strategies, have a current calendar nearby and don't forget to consider important holidays and family and work functions.

In the space below, for each goal you list, make the strategy/plan you will follow for that goal.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
GOAL #1	
GOAL #2	
GOAL #3	
GOAL #4	
GOAL #5	

Post this plan on your refrigerator, computer, desk... wherever you will see it frequently. This will keep you motivated and accountable.

“Talent is insignificant. I know a lot of talented ruins. Beyond talent lies all the usual words: discipline, love, luck, but most of all endurance. — James Baldwin”

RECAP

So far, we've talked about three things you need to know to write your book—know your genre, know your audience, know yourself. The final two tips will focus on what you need to do to get it done.



TIP#4 READ/ RESEARCH

“Read, read, read. Read everything—trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master, Read! You’ll absorb it. Then write. If it’s good, you’ll find out. If it’s not, throw it out of the window.”

– William Faulkner

Before you put pen to paper and start writing, take a step back to read and research the type of book you want yours to be. I truly believe that every good writer is a reader. As stated by Stephen King himself, “**If you don’t have the time to read, you don’t have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that.**”

I’m not necessarily talking about researching a specific topic (e.g., your character is a nurse so you will need to research what a nurse does. Or you are writing a book set in the 1800s in the south) as that is obvious you’ll need to research those specific details. When I say ‘research’ I’m referring to research/reading books like the one you want to write.

You may be saying to yourself, “My book is unique. It’s about alien turtles that take over Manhattan, New York. No one has written about that, so I don’t need to research.” I agree that a book about alien turtles may be unique; however, books about aliens aren’t. There are hundreds of books about aliens that you can read/research. Remember, you’re not reading just for enjoyment; you’re reading to glean insight on how the great books (and not so great books) are written. For fiction, review how scenes are written. Review the use of dialogue, how characters are developed. For non-fiction, review the content for clarity. Is the book written in a conversational tone or too preachy? Did the self-help book actually provide practical tips? Did the memoir provide insight into the person’s life?

You are not reading to copy an author’s style or story (that’s plagiarism). You’re reading to get a grasp on how the great ones write. If you want to write a teeth-chattering horror story, you should be reading Stephen King or Peter Straub or any number of other great horror writers. **Read books like the one you want to write.** I also think it’s a good idea to read the books that didn’t get great reviews. What did they do wrong? Why did their book flop? Take notes as you read. What did you like or didn’t like about the book? What can you see yourself doing in your book to make it great? But don’t spend too much time on research. Keep in

mind, research can turn into a form of procrastination. The point is to learn from the great writers.

ACTION PLAN

List three books that you will research/read in your genre that received great reviews.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

List one book that you will research/read in your genre that received poor or no reviews.

1. _____

Consider the following questions as you read the book(s):

For Fiction

1. Did the storyline grab you right off?
2. Was the dialogue engaging?
3. Is the setting important to the plot?
4. Are the characters realistic/believable?

For Non-fiction

1. Is the content organized in a logical way?
2. Is the key message expressed clearly?
3. Is the subject covered in enough detail in each chapter?
4. Are general facts accurate and consistent?

“*The greatest part of a writer’s time is spent in reading, in order to write, a man will turn over half a library to make one book.*”
– Samuel Johnson

TIP#5 WRITE



You've made it to the final tip. You've figured out your genre, defined your audience, set your goals/strategies, and have done the research. Now it's time to get to what you want to do...Write.

START WITH AN OUTLINE

The first thing you need to write is an outline. No matter what type of book you are writing, you should start with an outline. It doesn't have to be the outline you learned how to do in your 8th grade English class. It can be as structured or unstructured as you see fit. The goal is to get the thoughts out of your head and on paper in an organized way.

WHAT IS AN OUTLINE?

A book outline is like a roadmap or blueprint for your book. It gives you the overall picture without all the details.

An outline is the skeleton of your book. Once you put all the bones in place, you have a solid framework for adding your ideas, thoughts, stories, anecdotes, facts, and figures. Like a skeleton, every bone of your book fits into a certain location. When it's in the right spot, you'll know. If something is missing or out of place, you'll know.

Outlining your book can help you define your goals. Authors have also reported that when they outline their manuscript, they finish writing it quicker than when they didn't outline. Outlining can also help you stay focused and motivated, and you can see your story from start to finish. **The biggest benefit of outlining is that it helps you to focus on the quality of your writing instead of what to write.**

So, how do you start an outline? I suggest using the basic format learned in 8th grade English: start with numbers and then use letters to break up each point.



The roman numerals should include the name of the chapter or description of what the chapter will be about.

Sample Fiction Outline

- I. **Chapter 1** - Introduce Brooklyn and John
 - a. Childhood friends who grew apart during high school. Haven't seen each other since high school graduation. Both are now 26 years old.
 - b. Brooklyn, the shy nerd turned successful business woman, has moved back to her small town to open a small business.
 - c. John was the popular football star in high school. He got a blue-collar job after graduation and never moved away from the small town.
 - d. Brooklyn and John run into each other at the mall but John doesn't immediately recognize Brooklyn and flirts with her, which makes her mad.
 - e. She gives him a fake name since he doesn't remember her.
- II. **Chapter 2** - Flashback to Brooklyn and John's Past
 - a. Parents are best friends. They were good friends ages 4 – 13.
 - b. Things were great in junior high school. They ate lunch together and had the same friends.
 - c. Things changed when they entered high school. John became a popular football star. Brooklyn became studious and nerdy.
- III. **Chapter 3** – Brooklyn plots revenge against John
 - a. Brooklyn purposely runs into John again and he asks her out on a date, which she accepts.
 - b. Brooklyn gets John to open up about his life.
 - c. Brooklyn's plan is to get him to really like her and then dump him.
- IV. **Chapter 4** – Brooklyn starts to fall in love with John
 - a. As they spend more time together, Brooklyn starts to remember what she liked about John from childhood. She tries to control her feelings.
 - b. Brooklyn breaks up with John.
- V. **Chapter 5** – John finds out who Brooklyn is and confronts her
 - a. John sees Brooklyn driving down the street and follows her. He sees her visiting her dad's gravesite and confronts her.
 - b. Brooklyn confesses who she is and John runs off.
- VI. **Chapter 6** – Brooklyn goes to John's house and apologizes
 - a. Brooklyn follows John home and begs him to hear her out.
 - b. She explains why she was seeking revenge.
 - c. They talk for a few hours and then decided to start back dating again.

Document the story linearly, scene by scene, using letters or numbers as you go.

TIP:

As you mentally work through each scene, watch for possible lapses of logic or blank areas in how one event builds to another. Take the time to think through these potential problems so they won't trip you up later. If you get stuck, try jumping ahead to the next scene you know, and then working backward. For instance, if you know where you want your characters to end up, but not how they'll get there, start at the ending point and then see if you can figure out what has to happen in the preceding events to make it plausible.

<https://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/7-steps-to-creating-a-flexible-outline-for-any-story>

For a detailed, Outline template, email me at michelle@ebm-services.com. Put "Outline Template" in the subject line and I will reply with a Word document you can customize for your needs.

Be sure to include the title of your book, even if it's a working title.

The roman numerals should include the name of the chapter or description of what the chapter will be about.

Sample Non-Fiction Outline

Title: The Making of Fudge

- I. History of Fudge
 - a. Who invented it?
 - b. Where Fudge was discovered
 - c. What is Fudge made of?
- II. 5 Common Types of Fudge
 - a. Brown Sugar Fudge
 - b. Maple Walnut Fudge
 - c. Peanut Butter Fudge
 - d. Peppermint Chocolate Fudge
 - e. Simple Chocolate Fudge
- III. Ways to Make Fudge
 - a. Microwave
 - b. Slow Cooker
 - c. Stovetop
- IV. Simple Recipes
 - a. 3-Minute Recipe
 - b. 2-Ingredients Easy Fudge Recipe
- V. Where to get the best Fudge
 - a. City/State
 - b. Region
 - c. What to consider when buying Fudge

List the sub-topics for each chapter topic.

TIP:

Create a chapter-by-chapter outline. This is the method I use to outline all of my books because it's the way my brain thinks. I like to first organize all of the chapter headings, and then using a combination of research and the knowledge I already have on the topic, I create subtopics within each chapter. By the time I've completed it, I have an extensively detailed outline that I can follow. The only thing left to do is write the book!

<https://www.rainmakerpress.com/my-musings/2018/7/25/how-to-outline-a-nonfiction-book>

like this format because each time you add a new point or sub-point, the word processor (Microsoft Word or TextEdit for the Mac) will add a new letter or number in the new sequence. If you move points around, the system will automatically revise letters and numbers for you. Your outline should be updated as you write. Things most likely will change as you create and learn your characters (fiction) or discover more information to share (non-fiction). Using this format will be a huge time-saver when making changes.

It doesn't matter how you do your outline; it's just important that you do one. It will help you focus on your story or information and expedite the completion of your manuscript.

READY...SET...WRITE...

Once you've finished the outline, you're ready to start writing. Go back to your goals/strategy document and follow the writing plan you set for yourself. I spoke with a few of my writing buddies/published authors and asked them to give me advice for first time writers. Below are the tips they provided:

Break Writing into Small Chunks

Writing a book is like running a marathon. A new runner doesn't start off running 26 miles. Achieving that goal requires lots of training and practice. Don't get overwhelmed by the amount of work that is ahead of you.

Remember your goals/strategy and break your writing down into chunks. Books are made up of paragraphs, sections, chapters, etc. Start off by writing a few paragraphs about a single idea or piece of research for your non-fiction book. The next day, write about another idea. As long as you move forward with writing every day, you will reach the end.

“

Abandon the idea that you are never going to finish. Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page for each day, it helps. Then when it gets finished, you are always surprised.

– John Steinbeck

”

Set a Deadline

Although some writers are put off by deadlines, many find it helps to achieve their writing goals. Let's face it, your story (even if it's an autobiography) will not flow smoothly each time you sit down to your computer. And you won't always have the time to write every day. Instead, set a deadline and aim to write a few days per week to meet that deadline.

Cultivate a writing habit and set a daily word count to help you reach your writing goals.

Have a Dedicated Writing Space

Just as the kitchen is the dedicated space in the house to cook and the bedroom is the dedicated space in the house to sleep, you need to have a dedicated space to write. You need a space where you will not be interrupted, and the noise is at a minimum.

You could put inspirational posters, or Post-It notes on the wall. One client said she likes for her desk to face the wall because the outside is distracting. Another says she likes to stare out at her garden during her writing time. It's whatever works for you.

If you don't have a space in your house, you could go to the library or coffee shop each day. Trust me, the coffee shop would love to get your business each day you're there. One client shared she wrote her first manuscript on the computer at the library.

The perfect place to write varies per person. Find what works for you. It could be a combination of home and library, as long as you've found the ideal spot to write.

Write the First Draft – No Editing

Writing your first book can be intimidating. You have all these ideas in your head but somehow can't seem to get them on paper. You want the first draft to be perfect, no errors, ready to print. That's not going to happen. Trust me, I know. Don't overthink things. Simply get the thoughts out of your head and onto paper. Don't worry about typos; spell check (and your editor) will eventually catch those. Your goal is to get your first draft done and on paper.

Try to refrain from editing yourself or get stuck in re-writing a sentence or paragraph. Remember that outline you created? Refer back to it to guide you through each chapter and/or section.

Fight Writer's Block

Many beginner writers worry about writer's block. I've heard them say things like: "I'm not a real writer; I can't do this." Or "I can't think of anything to say." Writer's block is a real issue writer's face, but it can be conquered. In the book "On Writing" by Stephen King, he states he deals with writer's block by throwing a new problem at a character. If you write fiction and are stuck on a scene, stop and write another scene, or introduce a new character or new plot twist. Doing this will help you get over writer's block.

If you write non-fiction, explore a setback or challenge you faced while trying to achieve a specific outcome related to the subject you're writing about.

Put the draft down for a few days. Read other books that inspire you or listen to a podcast by someone you admire.

Track Your Progress

Track your daily word count and how long you spend writing each day. This will help you measure your word count and see how far you need to go to reach your target goals for writing your book. You may need to adjust your goals/strategy so document accordingly.

“
Find your best time of the day for writing and write. Don't let anything else interfere. Afterwards it won't matter to you that the kitchen is a mess.
– **Ester Freud**
”

Identify if you've reached any milestones like finishing a chapter or section. Also, if you're not reaching your daily goals, determine what's holding you back and adjust your schedule, if needed.

Always refer back to your goals/strategy document for your timeline.

Don't Self-Edit Your First Draft Right Away

Congratulations. You've finished your first draft. Now, I know you're ready to start the self-editing process as you've kept a mental note on all the areas you want to change. But, before you get your red pen out, take a step away from the draft—about a week or two. Go out and celebrate your success. You've worked hard and deserve a break, so go do something that has nothing to do with writing.

When you let your work sit for a while, it gives your brain a chance to relax and cool down. You're not as enthralled with the story after a week or so. You've had time to think about other things, spend time with family and friends, or even watch a movie.

Once you're ready, print out the draft of your book, put it in a binder, get a red pen (or a color of your liking other than black), and read, making necessary notes for revision. When you read it, you'll see things you missed previously. And that's okay. That's what you want to see. That's why you took a few weeks off, to clear your head and to see it more objectively. Highlight or underline sections that need to change and fix all typos that you discover.

Look for words and sentences to change and ideas to remove and expand upon. But don't change them now. Mark up the entire draft.

Don't feel bad if you read content that doesn't flow or now doesn't make any sense. It's all a part of the writing process and trust me, every writer goes through it.
EVERY WRITER.

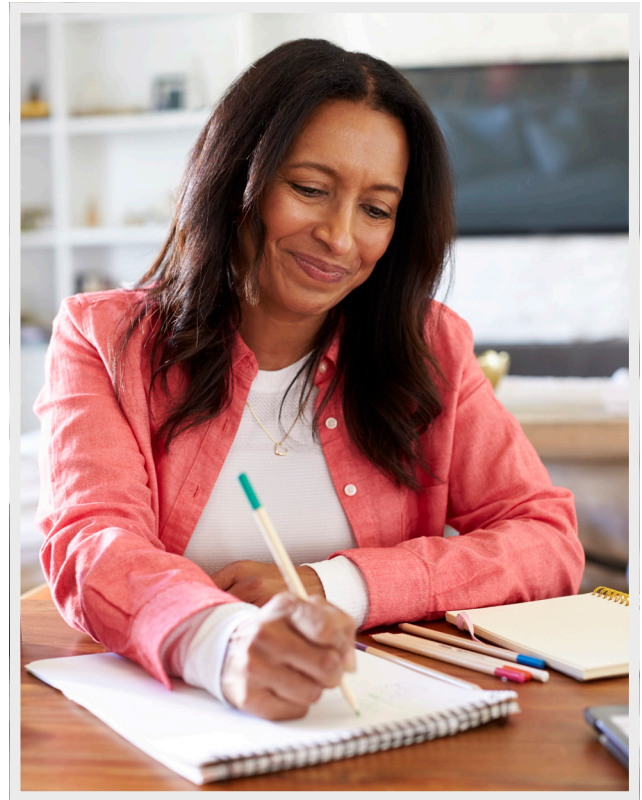
“
You don't start out writing good stuff. You start out writing crap and thinking it's good stuff, and then gradually you get better at it. That's why I say one of the most valuable traits is persistence.
– **Octavia E. Butler**
”

Re-Write

Yes, you've written your first draft. It took you awhile, but you got to the end. The journey isn't over. Now that you've done a bit of self-editing, it's time to write the next draft. All those notes you took and all those sentences you highlighted or underlined... It's time to make those changes.

While re-writing, ask yourself these questions:

- Does my introduction invoke curiosity in the reader?
- How can I strengthen my arguments?
- Do I invoke at least one of the five senses in each page of my work?
- What's the weakest part of each chapter? How can I cut it?
- Have I eliminated as many unnecessary adverbs and adjectives from my work as possible?
- Does each chapter end in a way to make the reader rush to the next chapter?
- Have I removed every cliché?
- Am I maintaining a consistent writing style throughout the draft?



These are just a few questions that you should ask. There are more comprehensive checklists for self-editing on the Internet. Do a search and find one that is right for you, or create one yourself.

You might perform the process of writing, reviewing, editing, and rewriting several times before you're happy with your book. Take it sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, and chapter by chapter.

“

*One thing that helps is to give myself permission to write badly. Tell myself that I'm going to do my five or 10 pages no matter what, and that I can always tear them up the following morning if I want. I'll have lost nothing – writing and tearing up five pages would leave me no further behind than if I took the day off. – **Lawrence Block***

”



ACTION PLAN

Create a new outline for your book. Use the template below as a guide but tweak to your liking.

Title: _____

I. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

II. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

III. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

CONCLUSION

I hope you found this guide useful as you start your writing journey. I know it may seem daunting to write a book, but the process can be therapeutic and/or enlightening. Although it takes time, commitment, and perseverance, when it's complete, you will have your thoughts on paper and ready to share with the world. Yes, I said the world. Think big, my friends.

When you get frustrated or can't seem to put your words on paper, remind yourself of the reason why you're writing it. Focus on your initial motivation and your end goal.

Remember, you're not alone in this process. I am here to be a resource for you. Contact me with any questions about your writing.

As you can see, I love quotes as I have sprinkled them throughout this guide. I will leave you with these final two. Simple in their words but profound in their meaning.

*I believe myself that a good writer doesn't
really need to be told anything
except to keep at it.*
— **Chinua Achebe**

*And by the way, everything in life is
writable about if you have the outgoing guts
to do it, and the imagination to improvise.
The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.*
— **Sylvia Plath**

Happy Writing

RESOURCES

The links below were used as a resource for this guide. Refer to them for additional information. I also suggest doing your own search via the Internet for your specific genre and writing needs. However, don't get too caught up with the Internet. It's full of information and misinformation (some useful, some not so much), so read, research, but do what's best for you and your book.

Tip #1 – Know Your Genre

<https://justpublishingadvice.com/do-you-know-your-book-genre/>

<https://authorkristenlamb.com/2015/05/choosing-a-genre-anatomy-of-a-best-selling-story-part-7/>

<http://www.rockyourwriting.com/2013/06/how-to-figure-out-your-books-genre/>

<https://resources.writersonlineworkshops.com/resources/definitions-of-fiction-categories-and-genres/>

<http://thelatinauthor.com/non-fiction/types/>

Tip #2 – Know Your Audience

<https://hdwebpros.com/blog/10-effective-tips-to-reach-your-audience.html>

<https://blog.reedsy.com/3-steps-reaching-target-audience/>

<https://nonfictionauthorsassociation.com/define-your-target-audience/>

Tip #4 – Read/Research

<https://authorshelpingauthors.wordpress.com/writing-2/how-to-research-before-writing-that-book/>

<https://self-publishingschool.com/writing-book-7-killer-research-tips/>

Tip #5 – Write

<https://self-publishingschool.com/11-ways-outline-book/>

<https://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/7-steps-to-creating-a-flexible-outline-for-any-story>

<https://www.tckpublishing.com/how-to-write-a-book-outline/>

<https://becomeawritertoday.com/33-surefire-ways-overcome-writers-block/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Chester is the owner of EBM Professional Services (www.ebm-services.com), a full-service firm specializing in copy editing, content editing, proofreading, and manuscript critiques. She has more than 20 years' experience as a Technical Writer/Editor in the corporate world. Michelle has done freelance editing for a number of publishers and numerous published authors.

Alongside working on freelance projects, Michelle served as Editorial Assistant for *Written* magazine in Atlanta, GA (www.writtenmag.com); Contributing Editor for *Sophisticated Groom* magazine in Atlanta, GA; and worked as a proofreader for the *Society Life* magazine in Southlake, TX (www.societylifemagazine.com).

As a workshop coordinator and facilitator, she has shared in the success of The Gulf Coast Writer's Retreat, 2011; Black Writer's Reunion & Conference, 2008 - 2010 (www.blackwriters.org); Gifted for His Glory Seminar – Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Creative Tyme & Library Ministries, 2010; and The Writer's Block, Inc. 4th Annual On the Cusp Writer's Conference, 2007.

www.ebm-services.com

michelle@ebm-services.com

[Facebook.com/ebmproservices](https://www.facebook.com/ebmproservices)

