



Start Here

A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Your Book

 $Author\ Coaching\ \bullet\ www. Author Coaching. com$

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MODULE 1

How Do I Know If I Have A Good Book Idea?



Start Here: A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Your Book You have always wanted to be an author.

You've been practicing and honing your writing craft for years.

You've been building your influence and growing an audience.

Now it's finally time to take the plunge and start on your manuscript and book proposal.

Except you have one big problem.

What should you write about?

Maybe you have NO ideas. But more likely, you have too many ideas.

How do you choose which idea to pursue first? And how do you know if the idea you choose is a good idea?

Before you spend countless hours writing a book proposal or fleshing out chapter summaries, you want to know if you are even in the right vicinity of what is selling right now, what publishers are interested in, whether or not a subject has been overdone, or if your twist on it has merit, if you are credible to speak on it, or if you should take a different route. The last thing you want to do is spend hours and hours developing and writing a bad idea.

This is probably one of the biggest decisions you are going to make as an author. What are you going to write about? It's a weighty decision, and it can make or break your publishing career. Oftentimes you only get one shot at publishing a book – one opportunity to pitch your idea to an agent or editor – one chance to launch your words into the publishing industry and hope they are received well.

The process of determining which idea you are going to write about requires discernment. But there are some clear indicators you can use to help you evaluate whether or not you have a good book idea, and which idea you should pursue first. We're going to explore with you five factors you should consider when choosing a book idea.

Let's get started!

SECTION ONE

PREMISE

Imagine you were at a lunch date with a friend, and you told them you were writing a

book. And then they turned to you and asked, "What's your book about?" What would you tell them? Feel free to write a longer description (we'll shorten later).

The premise of your book is basically its thesis statement. It doesn't have to be long. Maybe 2-3 sentences when you start out.

Take a look at these two sample Premises.

One of the most valuable skills in our economy is becoming increasingly rare: the ability to focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task for a sustained period of time. If you master this skill, you'll achieve extraordinary results and will be in demand in a crowded talent marketplace.

A Mother's Love is a collection of personal stories highlighting the depths to which we mothers will go, the innate way we were made to cradle, nourish, nurture, and tend to our children, and how God longs to redeem our mothering in how He loves and cares for us.

9	Looking at the description you wrote above, what would you say is the central idea of your book? How might you hone in and tighten your premise? If you have two ideas, try to write a premise for both ideas.
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9	If you wrote down two or more ideas above, is there any idea you are more passionate about than the other? Why?

9	Is either idea more accessible than the other? Do you have any content already developed?
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9	If you had to pick, which idea do you feel compelled to write about now ? Which one can't you give up?
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9	If you were given the opportunity to meet with an agent or editor, which idea would you be most excited to tell them about? Which idea do you think has more audience appeal?
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An essential part of evaluating your book idea is making sure you identify and land on a strong book Promise.

Let's say you are sitting with one of your readers telling them what your book is about, telling them the Premise. And then you say, "I promise that after you finish reading my book you will ..."

What are you promising your reader they will gain from reading your book? What are you promising your reader they will receive or learn? What are you promising them they will FEEL or experience? What new tools or skills or understanding are you promising to provide them with?

What is in your book for the reader? What will he/she take away from your book after reading it?

Take a few minutes and consider your book idea(s). What do you think is the main

	promise you are offering your reader? What are they going to get/gain/learn/encounter/feel/experience from your book?	
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9	Does one of your ideas have a stronger Promise than the other? Which one?
9	It's been said that a Promise is only as valuable as it's Delivery. How do you plan to deliver what you are promising to your reader? (i.e., tangible takeaways, good storytelling, funny anecdotes, etc.)
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	to deliver what you are promising to your reader? (i.e., tangible takeaways, good storytelling, funny anecdotes, etc.)

ACTION STEP

Find three safe people with whom to share your book idea. Not your mom. But people who are critical listeners and who will ask questions and engage with you on your content. Practice sharing with them the Premise and Promise of your book. See what resonates with them and what does not. Find out what they are hoping to gain from your book.

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notes:	
PERSON 3:	DATE:
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HOOK

As you continue fleshing out whether or not you have a strong book idea, another important element is landing on a strong book hook. A book hook is a sentence or two that is meant to tease the reader to purchase or buy your book.

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Readers are inherently selfish. They are not going around caring about your book. They aren't even thinking about your book. They're thinking about their own lives and what they've got going on. They're distracted with real life, maybe even a little cynical or uncertain. Your book hook is going to need to capture the attention of your reader. She's disengaged. She's not paying attention. You've got to grab her attention. You've got to earn her attention.

What about your book is going to hook her? Notice the question is not, what is your book going to teach her? What is going to make her stop and take notice of YOUR book among all the others out there?

Your book hook should be intriguing, pique curiosity, and make the reader want to learn more.

A great angle to your Hook might be to ask a question. Gary Thomas is an author we've worked with for a while, and his book *Sacred Marriage* has sold over 1 million copies. His book hook is a question: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?

You can see in the hook he wasn't being prescriptive. He wasn't teaching the reader. Instead he was piquing the interest.

Another great example of a Hook is for the book *Boundaries: Learn when to say yes and how to say no, when you need to!* This hook is practical and clear. Who doesn't want to learn how to say yes and how to say no?

It can also be helpful to take a look at some of the books you've read and ask the question, "What about this book's idea/premise hooked me?" You start to see how the book was marketed to you, the buyer, using a "hook" to grab your attention.

9	Take a few minutes and brainstorm what you think might be the hook of your book idea. You might even have several hooks in mind. Write down all your ideas below. (It can take some time to hone and narrow your best ideas.)	
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9	When you consider your book ideas, are any of them stronger than the other when it comes to the hook and the question of <i>why now?</i>
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SECTION FOUR

AUDIENCE

It's often been said, if you aren't writing to Somebody, you are writing to nobody. Do you have someone specific you are writing to when you are crafting your book idea? Someone that is engaged and eager to listen, who is supportive, who values your writing. Don't be thinking of your critics. Think instead of people who you know that are *already* engaged with your message. Maybe they are your followers on social media. Maybe they are people who have sent you DMs with feedback.

Take a few minutes to describe your target avatar?

9	Most books have a primary audience, and they also have a secondary audience. Considering your book idea and your established audience, who would you describe as your primary audience? What are some of their characteristics?
9	Who would you say is your secondary audience?

	How well do you think your primary and secondary audiences wi book idea? Have you tested your message on them? Why or why ways you could test your idea on your target audience?	
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ACTION STEP

Take the next 90 days to share about your message/mission online and see if you can build interest and engagement on the subject that is your main message. Learn to share about your message from new angles. Practice sharing content with the public and getting feedback/criticism. If you can't handle criticism on Facebook and Instagram, how are you going to handle it when your book comes out?

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SECTION FIVE

FELT NEED

When you are looking at your book idea, you must consider, what NEED am I meeting here? Not just what am I offering? But what need am I meeting? And it must be a need that your target reader feels/experiences. Not something he/she *should* care about. But something they already care about at a fairly deep level. This is called the reader's **felt need**.

What does she want? In many cases, this will be a *question* she wants answered, a *problem* she needs solved, a *transformation* she desires, or an *experience* she wants to have.

Does your reader think she needs your book? Does she believe she needs it? If she doesn't believe she needs it, she isn't going to want to buy it.

Here are a few examples to help you better understand a book's felt need.

QUESTION

"I feel like I'm always losing my cool with my kids. How can I get in control of my emotions?" [Motivating impulse expressed as a *question*, for *Unglued*, a practical living book about how readers can make emotions work for them instead of against them.]

PROBLEM

"My husband and I just can't get on the same page about money, and it is driving me crazy." [Motivating impulse expressed as a *problem*, for *The Total Money Makeover*, a personal finance book about how families can transform their financial habits together.]

TRANSFORMATION

"I feel a million miles from God, but I wish that could be different." [Motivating impulse expressed as a desired *transformation*, for *Intimacy with God*, a spiritual growth book about how readers can develop intimacy with the Lord.]

EXPERIENCE

"I'd love to lose myself in a true story that makes me feel like a better person and maybe teaches me something." [Motivating impulse expressed as a desired *experience*, for *Bonhoeffer*, a dramatic, inspirational biography.]

9	Why should a reader spend their limited money and limited time on YOUR book above all the other alternatives? What is in it for them?
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9	There's a delicate creative balance when choosing your book idea: Do I write what I want to write or do I write what my readers want to read? Our answer is, you should aim to do both. What do you think your readers want, wish, hope for, and/or dream?
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9	Considering your book ideas, is there one idea that you think has a stronger felt need than the other? Why or why not?
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ACTION STEP

Consider joining a Writer's Guild/Writing Community where you can give and receive feedback. Some of these sites are membership sites. Some are free. Some are Christian communities, and some are not. Look for a community of writers who are in a similar lane.

- Hope Writers
- Redbud Writers Guild
- Ink: A Creative Collective
- Critique Circle

CHOSEN GROUP(S):

- Scribophile
- Absolute Write
- She Writes
- The Reddit Writer's Group

To help you make a decision, below is space to take notes, write likes and dislikes, price, etc. about each group.

HOPE WRITERS:	REDBUD WRITERS GUILD:	INK: A CREATIVE COLLECTIVE:	CRITIQUE CIRCLE:
SCRIBOPHILE:	ABSOLUTE WRITE:	SHE WRITES:	THE REDDIT WRITER'S GROUP:

MODULE 2

Literary Agents



Start Here: A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Your Book SECTION ONE

LITERARY AGENTS

You may have heard that it's almost impossible in today's publishing industry to get a traditional publishing contract without having a literary agent.

But WHAT is a literary agent, and WHERE do I get one?

And you might even wonder, WHY do I need a literary agent?

There are expectations you can and should have for your literary agent. When you are fairly new to book publishing, you might not know what is reasonable to expect or require from your agent. That's why we're going to share with you eight things a literary agent is supposed to do for you.

- 1. The number one thing your agent does is help get you in the door with publishers. They "stamp" you as credible. They do the work to get you noticed in a very competitive industry. They send out your book proposal on your behalf to get you through the door with publishers and editors. An agent should get your proposal to the top of the stack, rather than buried among UNsolicited proposals in the slush pile.
- 2. Your agent should have excellent relationships with editors and publishers in the genre in which you want to publish. Like most businesses, publishing is all about relationships. Editors and publishers learn to trust certain agents and the quality of the talent they put in front of them. If your agent isn't trustworthy, it can reflect poorly on you. Likewise your agents will know which publishers and publishing teams are great to work with and those that are more challenging.
- **3.** Your agent is your advocate. Your agent works for YOU. The publisher works for the publisher. The publisher is always looking out first for the interest of the publisher. Your agent is on your team. She represents you, fights for you, advocates for you. The publishing journey can be wild and lonely, and so it's always nice to have an agent there with you, alongside you, championing you.

- **4. Your agent's job is to know the ins and outs of the publishing industry.** You can't keep track of what is happening in publishing, at publishing houses, and with editors and staff. You are busy writing your book and honing your craft. Your agent should be knowledgeable about all the industry happenings: new deals, trends, publisher turnover, brick and mortar stores, online retail, marketing efforts, publicity, etc. Basically, everything having to do with the industry, they should be abreast of it.
- 5. Ideally, your agent should be knowledgeable about publishing contracts. The publishing contract is complex and NOT something you should review and manage by yourself. Publishing contracts contain not just financial deal points, but also provisions about rights and permissions, copyright notices and registration, royalty payment periods, due dates, foreign language rights, cross-collateralization, and even a moral turpitude clause. Remember, by signing a contract, you are essentially going into business with that publisher, for years. If your agent isn't a lawyer, we recommend having an intellectual property lawyer review your contract.
- **6.** Your agent should serve as a translator/interpreter to help you during times of confusion and conflict with your publisher. Your agent is bilingual and can speak both languages of publisher and author. He should act as mediator and negotiator, especially in conflict when sometimes the publisher cannot be open and honest with you, or when you do not feel like you can be honest/open with them. The agent functions as a buffer between the author and the publisher both sides vent and express frustration to the agent, who helps diffuse.
- 7. Your agent should be a trusted voice that is honest with you about your book and your publishing. Beware of an agent who flatters, who doesn't shoot you straight, who never challenges and won't push back. Your agent should add value, not just get you a contract. They should help you get better as a communicator, as a writer, as a content creator. They should read your manuscript and provide feedback.
- **8.** Your agent should help you get a publishing contract. They get nothing if they don't get you a deal. Your agent is investing in you, a fact to always keep in mind.

Not All Agents are the Same!

The level and depth of service varies with different agencies, and also based on experience. And every publishing experience is different, so while some people might love one agent, another person might not love that same agent. Some agents have been around longer and have seen more. Some agents are used to only dealing with small publishers. And experience makes a big difference in agencies...just like anything else.

When evaluating an agent:

- More is not always an indication of better. Don't worry about "how many deals they've turned." Or how many people are on their roster. Look at the quality of their roster. Are you a fit? Do you see yourself writing in a similar vein? Would you be proud to be included on their team?
- Do you want a contract or do you want a career? Lots of very small deals means not very much attention to spread around to all of their clients. Most agents have a quantity-based business model they have a huge roster because they only sign small contracts.

Remember:

- You're not trying to "get signed" by agent
- You're looking for the right partner to help you advance your career
- You want someone who will invest in you, who believes in you and your future

SECTION TWO

HOW DO I FIND AN AGENT?

- 1. Google. Try LiteraryAgencies.com to start.
- 2. Look at a book you love, in the genre in which you write, and see if they mention their agent in the acknowledgments.
- 3. Ask other writer friends who their agent is, and if they like their agent, would they be willing to make an introduction? Again, it is all about relationships. The majority of the authors we work with came to us through referrals. We trust our friends.

9	Take some time to research. Write down and why.	some names of agents you want to query
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SECTION THREE

HOW DOIQUERY?

Our recommendation is:

Send a short personalized email to a handful of agents you're interested in. Introduce yourself, share about your book idea/message, hook, and felt need, and your platform. Be concise, and to the point. Say why you are querying them. Ask if you could send them your proposal and a sample chapter.

- Don't write a form letter. ("Dear Agent,")
- Don't presumptively send your proposal in the email.
- Don't only email one agent. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. It's a numbers game, so if one agent turns you down, don't be discouraged. Send it out to two more agents.
- DON'T HAVE TYPOS. Proofread it.
- If you don't hear back, send a follow up a couple weeks later. Agents are busy. Be patient. Be persistent.
- If you have a mutual friend, ask for an introduction. The number one thing we look for is referrals. We always pay attention if a friend or author or colleague sends a person our way.
- DO NOT query over social media (e.g. LinkedIn or Facebook).
- DO NOT track down their cell phone and send a text.
- If an agent declines or passes, thank them for their time and move on. Don't argue or try to "make them see what they missed." Move on. You might need them or bump into them down the road.

Let's spend a few minutes working on an email query you could send to an agent.

Here is a fictitious example of a query for a book we've worked on.

Dear <Agent First Name>,

What if I told you that you could learn when to say yes, and how to say no, to take control of your life? Based on decades of experiences as a licensed psychologist, I've walked with hundreds of patients teaching them how to develop healthy boundaries in relationships. These clients are asking questions like:

- 1
- Can I set limits and still be a loving person?
- · What are legitimate boundaries?
- What if someone is upset or hurt by my boundaries?
- How do I answer someone who wants my time, love, energy, or money?
- Why do I feel guilty or afraid when I consider setting boundaries?
- Are boundaries selfish?

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l've written a book called *Boundaries* addressing these questions, containing actual situations from my clinical work, as well as practical strategies and advice to help people experience greater freedom in their relationships. I'm looking for a literary agent to help me launch my publishing career.

I learned of your agency from MUTUAL FRIEND, who insisted I reach out to you. I have a completed book proposal and two sample chapters. In addition, I have a growing platform, with an email list of XX,XXX names,

As you begin your query, start with the book hook and the felt need. Make a compelling case for the book idea and why it is going to resonate with people.

In the next section you will dive deeper into what the book actually is, communicating the book's premise and book's promise.

(3

XX,XXX followers on Twitter, and XX,XXX followers on Instagram. Additionally I have spoken at 14 conferences and churches as a guest speaker in the past year, and I already have multiple opportunities lined up for next year. You can learn more about me by visiting: www. mywebsitename.com.

Please let me know if you would be interested in receiving my book proposal and sample chapters.

Sincerely, <Your Name> Author 3 Finally, share why you are pitching to that particular agent, a mutual friend, referral, or a project that they've worked on that you enjoyed. Then share the status of your manuscript and book proposal, as well as basic statistics about your platform. If you have a website, be sure to include that too.

9	Using the lines below, take some time working on the <u>first paragraph</u> of your query. In this paragraph you will want to use your <u>book hook</u> and <u>felt need</u> to demonstrate what you have to offer the reader (and why the literary agent should sit up and pay attention).
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9	Now let's work on the <u>second paragraph</u> of your query. This paragraph will speak more directly to your book's premise and promise. What is your book, and what are you
	promising to give the reader?

9	Finally the <u>last paragraph</u> of your query should speak to why you are querying that particular agent (referral source, what you like about the agent, project that she represented that is similar to yours in some important way). And then share details about the status of your book proposal and your platform.
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WHAT NOT TO DO

Using an actual query sent to our team several years ago, we are going to show you another example of what not to do. (For privacy purposes we are redacting certain details of this query.

Dear

I recently came across your personal blog wherein you discuss your journey as a writer. I was drawn to it not only because I am also a Christian/mom/writer such that everything was very relatable, but also because I think we have a very similar "tone" in regard to how we write (and one not super common among Christian authors).

am seeking representation for my non-fiction book
—a humorous, anecdotal advice book
about keeping it real as a Christian and the power of living
an unstaged life. I know you are extremely busy and get
tons of these emails every day, but below is the two minute
pitch. (And, I would, of course, love to send you the whole
proposal if you are interested).

To many people Christianity seems unobtainable because of how we, as Christians, "filter" our lives. Case in point: I have a friend on Instagram who seems to only read the Bible next to a latte with heart-shaped foam art, a fresh vase of peonies flowers, and a view of a snowy mountain. Really? REALLY?

Because here I am reading my Bible with a lukewarm cup of coffee in a chipped mug that says "I can't adult today," with acne cream on my face, and with a view of two toddlers watching Paw Patrol for the zillionth time:

h a world with so many lies, people are craving real. The theme of this book is how we, as Christians, must be that real. And, being real isn't sharing anecdotal struggles;

- 1 We suggest moving this to the last paragraph, and instead use your premise and promise to convey what your book is and what you are going to give the reader.
- This whole paragraph should be deleted. It actually distracts from the rest of the query.
- 3 Turn this into the hook and put it in the first paragraph.
- Delete this. You don't need to say it outright.

it's sharing the raw ugly stuff. It's sharing those the when you find yourself crying on the floor of the shower because that is the only place where no one can hear you and where the evidence of tears will be washed away with the water. Because if we are not real about the ugly, we cheapen what we, as Christians, get next—we cheapen the beauty of His grace, love, and forgiveness.

Targeted to women in their 20s–40s, particularly mothers, is the book us regular Christians
would write—you know, the ones that love Jesus, but just silently said a string of curse words as they watched their toddler knock down the display at Target today; the ones that believe Bible study and a glass of wine can go hand-in-hand. The tone of this book is reliability—much like a Christian version of Mindy Kaling—such that it feels like you are talking to your best friend on a patio during happy hour, instead of on the pews of a church during Sunday service.

This book holds nothing back on relevant topics such as friendship, careers, motherhood, marriage, body image, decision-making, and more; and is unique in its ability to capture what so many modern Christian woman are thinking, but not necessarily saying.

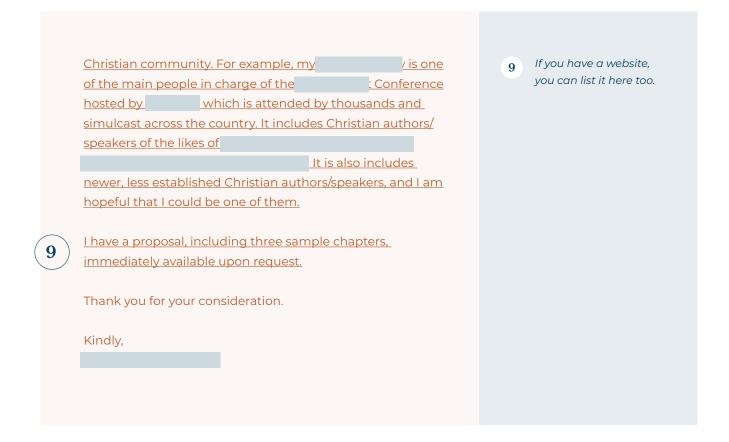
I am a 31-year-old mom of two nuggets, ages 2.5 and 4. I am a journalist turned lawyer turned law professor. I love Jesus.

I also love Netflix, wine, and bad reality television. My happy place is wandering aimlessly around Target with coffee in hand. I am a hot mess most days, but I think God can and does use the mess. I attended , where I earned a B.A. in journalism in 2008. I earned a J.D. from in 2011.

8 Senior Pastor. Through

I have several influential connections in the

- 5 Also delete. Fluff.
- 6 This paragraph is great for your book proposal, in the Target Market section. But you don't need it for the query. Your goal is to get the agent to "bite" on your idea.
- 7 Fluff. You are pitching your book. Not your personality.
- In one sentence, explain why you are pitching this particular agent. Then share about your platform, including email, social media, speaking engagements, businesses, connections/ affiliations, awards, corporate connections, your "downstream," etc. Even if you have a small platform, that's okay. Acknowledge that it's growing and how you plan to grow it in the months to come.



As we wrap up, we want to remind you that finding a literary agent can feel a little bit like dating. If they "bite" on your query, you might exchange a few emails. Then they might initiate having a first phone call where you get to know each other. Next you might have a meeting in person or a video conference over Zoom. Each "date" is an opportunity for you to evaluate, is this someone I want to represent me, to be on my team?

MODULE 3

Acquisition & Publishing Process



Start Here: A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Your Book Rather than thinking of the publishing process as having a start and a finish, we'd rather you look at this process as exactly that: A PROCESS. Publishing your book is one continuation of a creative journey. Your development is always ongoing.

We want to give you a visual reference of the general timeline of the traditional publishing process, to help you in your planning. (As you are reviewing this document, keep in mind that no two publishing journeys are alike. This is not an exact scenario. It is a general guideline to use to help you in your planning.)

DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR BOOK PROPOSAL (Typically 3-4 months) Refining your book outline and chapter summaries Honing your audience and platform Sharpening your book proposal ш Your agent sends out your proposal to publishers Z **ACQUISITIONS PROCESS** (Typically 4-8 weeks) ш Acquisitions editors review your book proposal \geq First hurdle—Ed Board Second hurdle—Pub Board \bigcirc Acquisitions editor will either make an offer or decline Z I **CONTRACT PROCESS** (Typically 2-3 months) S **Deal Points Memo** \Box **Contract Negotiation** \supset \Box **EDITORIAL PROCESS** (12-18 months) Write manuscript (6-12 months) \triangleleft Z Deliver to publisher (12 months before On Sale Date) \bigcirc Substantive edit (2-3 months) Copyedit (1-2 months) Pass manuscript off to marketing \triangleleft α MARKETING PROCESS (6 months before On Sale Date) Marketing meetings begin Long lead publicity (4 months before On Sale Date) Pre-order campaign (1-2 months before On Sale Date) On Sale Date! Launch day! You did it!

MODULE 3: ACQUISITION & PUBLISHING PROCESS

•	Looking at the length of the publishing journey, are there any events or factors in your life, work-related, personal, speaking opportunities, new initiatives or launches, you are trying to plan around? Is there a time of the year that you would prefer to publish your book? How might you be strategic in planning around these factors?
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Every professional athlete will tell you the work you do in the offseason absolutely has an impact on the traditional season. And it's no different in publishing. You've gone through the lengthy process of your book idea, proposal, manuscript, editorial, marketing, publicity, on sale date, all the way to where your book is technically now a "backlist" book, and you are in the "off season" of your career. But that does NOT mean you are just sitting around waiting for the next contract, the next book idea, the next publishing opportunity.

Your fate is really in your hands here in terms of maximizing the offseason.

9	What might offseason training look like for you? What are some things you need to work on as an author? Honing your craft? Book mapping? Audience engagement? Public speaking? Growing your platform?
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There's an ancient Chinese proverb about planting trees: The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago or today. The same is true about your audience: The best time to start growing your audience is today.

It is almost impossible to get a publishing contract these days without an established and engaged audience. Remember, your goal is not to just write a book and get it published. But you want people to buy that book, and for them to be impacted by it.

9	How might you go about reaching your audience with authenticity and engagement? How would you rate yourself on a scale of 1-10, in terms of your active participation in engaging your audience?
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Take some time to evaluate your current platform.



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WEBSITE:

- Do you have a website/blog?
- Do you post on your website/blog once a week? If you don't, consider posting ONE post on the same day every week.
- Do you have an email capture on your blog where you can grow an email list?

• How might you improve or develop your website/blog?



EMAIL:

- Do you have an email subscriber list that you send emails to on a consistent basis? Consider emailing your subscribers twice a month, around the same time each month, to stay in front of your audience.
- Are you practicing putting your work in front of your audience? What is holding you back?



SOCIAL MEDIA:

• Are you on social media? Which channels are you on? Take time to write down the number of followers you have on each social media platform.

Facebook	Instagram	Pinterest	YouTube	Twitter

TIPS:

- You do NOT need to be on each social media platform. Pick one or two that you do really well and can do consistently. Pick the ones you are most comfortable with. Growth is slow.
- Many people are tempted to buy followers. Don't do it. You need to slowly win an audience. Those people will read and buy your book. Bought fans won't buy your book. You didn't earn them.
- Many people are tempted to quickly build their list through culture commentary rather than content creation. You can get followers by building up or tearing down. Focus on creating content, not commenting on it.
- Balance your posts between milking and feeding. You don't want to over ask and over appeal. You also don't want to over preach or over sell.
- Keep three or four varied people in mind when you post on social media. Remembering your mom, your son, your high school buddy, and your pastor will see your posts might help you keep in check rants, vents, and posts that are outside of tone. Write down the names of those friends, and refer back to them before you push "post."
- Ask three or four different in-real-life friends who know you well to hold you accountable to self promotion, deception, and aggrandizement. Too many aspiring authors begin to take on a false self, and it leads them to temptation and swallows their dignity. Your soul is worthy of protection and accountability.
- Plan a Sabbath day when you are NOT on social media. Take one day a week where you are not on technology, where you are living actual life. Your content will flow most authentically out of everyday life.
- Get intentional about audience building and engagement. Don't just expect it to come to you. You have to be strategic. Come up with a content calendar to implement and follow for the next 90 days. It might look like this:

Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Instagram Post (funny)	Email to list	Insta Post (serious) + Faceook Post	Blog Post (share to socials)	Insta Post + Insta Live	Facebook Post	OFF
Instagram Post (funny)	Facebook + Instagram to promote others	Insta Post (serious) + Faceook Post	Blog Post (share to socials)	Insta Post + Insta Live	Facebook Post	OFF
Instagram Post (funny)	Email to list	Insta Post (serious) + Faceook Post	Blog Post (share to socials)	Insta Post + Insta Live	Facebook Post	OFF



Use the empty grid below to plot how you might intentionally develop your platform over the next month.

Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.

Book Format & Length



Start Here: A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Your Book Your book format and length might not be something you've ever really thought about before. Who dreams of writing a book all the way down to the trim size and word count?

And yet when you are considering where to start and what your book is going to be, book format is essential because it sets the tone for how many words you need to write.

Publishers do not look at page count. What they care about is word count. A typical non-fiction book ranges from 40,000-60,000 words, with each chapter being approximately 3,000 words.

This means your book might have: 40,000 words, 13-14 chapters 50,000 words, 16-17 chapters 60,000 words, 20 chapters

You also might consider your reader, and whether or not they need shorter chapters (2,000 words).

Shorter chapters might mean your book has: 40,000 words, 20 chapters 50,000 words, 25 chapters 60,000 words, 30 chapters (that's a lot of chapters!)



Find a couple books that are similar to the one you wish to write. Are they hardback? Paperback? How many chapters do they have? What is the price point? (If you don't have the book in hand, research them on Amazon.) Write the title and details of the book in the space provided below.

Title:	Format:	# of Chapters:	Price:

MODULE 4: BOOK FORMAT & LENGTH

9	Looking at these Comparable Titles, approximately how many words do you plan your book to be? How many words do you intend to make each chapter?
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•	Which format do you think is best for your book? Consider your reader. Is she a busy mom? A business guru? A political junkie? A historian?
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TIP:

When writing your book, it is always better to have more words to work from than not enough. Your editor will help you to cut away anything that is extraneous during the editorial process.

9	Now that you have an idea of the number of words you need to write, you'll want to consider how to pace yourself. Realistically, looking at your current responsibilities, how many words do you want to challenge yourself to write each week?
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	Spend some time writing down the different chapter ideas for your book. What topics do
V	you want to cover? What stories are you planning to tell?
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MODULE 4: BOOK FORMAT & LENGTH

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TIPS:

- Did you know there are software programs you can download to help organize your book? The one we recommend most is Scrivener. If you are self-publishing, you might consider Book Design Templates: https://www.bookdesigntemplates.com/
- Understand that you must deliver your manuscript in Microsoft Word.
- Publishers don't want a Google Docs file or link. They will not accept it. Bigger authors than you have tried.
 - Neither do agents, by the way. We hate Google Docs.
- Additional design/format features you might want in your book:
 - Doodles, charts, or designs
 - Space for journaling, or journaling pages
 - Discussion questions at the end of each chapter
 - Pull quotes
 - Section headings

MODULE 5

Writing & Editorial Process



Start Here: A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Your Book

"Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere."

- Anne Lamott, Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life

There's so much we could say about the actual writing process, but the reality is, writing is a very subjective experience. If you are a first time author, it can take a while to figure out your writing style. We've worked with authors who write manuscripts on legal notepads, using dictation apps, in one continuous document in Word, working with a co-writer using previous speaking engagements, bubble, tree, and flow maps, and using software like Scrivener.

You've already brainstormed your book format and word count. Now it's time to look at what your book is going to be.

A key component of your *book proposal* is going to be a chapter outline and summaries. You will have to include a chapter outline, with chapter titles as well a two-to-three sentence description of what the chapter is and how you plan to address, enhance, or expound on the main idea of the book. (FYI, you will also have to write two chapters to send out with your proposal!)

9	In the last section we asked you what stories and topics you wanted to cover in your book. Now spend some time below organizing your chapters, moving them around, noticing if there are ways you can lump them together, what they might have in common, in order to best organize your book. Some people like to use colored post it notes for this — or colored pens. Don't worry too much about getting the exact title right. Think more about content collection/development.
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MODULE 5: WRITING & EDITORIAL PROCESS

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•	Consider the different people you could hire to help you with writing your book think you might need a book mapper, writing coach, or collaborative writer? Will why not?	
•	hink you might need a book mapper, writing coach, or collaborative writer? W	
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Start writing by...writing.

TIPS:

- Get the words from your head onto the page
- Don't edit or critique yourself as you write
- Get as much out of your head as fast as you can
- Editing is a different skill, different brain process
- Stay in content generation mode as long as you can and crank out content
- If you get stuck, hop on the phone and discuss the idea with a friend
- Use a dictation app, or speak your idea into your cell phone
- Find a transcriber who can download and collect content from your speaking engagements

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Very few of the authors we work with start writing until they have a deadline. Have you created a writing schedule? If you don't have a deadline, why don't you set one for yourself?

I PLAN TO WRITE	number of words	WORDS EACH WEEK.	
I'M GOING TO WRITE	HOURS number of hours	DAYS EACH WEEK.	
I PLAN TO FINISH MY		date	

9	What is your plan for where and when you are going to write?
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9	When I reach my weekly word count goal, I'm going to reward myself with:

TIPS:

- Writing a book can be lonely
- Find someone to be on the journey with you
 - Accountability partner
 - Writing group
- Consider Stickk.com for accountability
 - You pick a dollar amount that you're putting on the line
 - If you don't hit your goal, you lose that money
 - It works!

We want to help set your expectations for what to expect from your editor.

- 1. Your editor should make you better. They should help you with arc, flow, balance, cohesion, grammar, spelling. Their job is to polish and refine. They're going to give you some critical feedback. You want this.
- 2. Your editor is also your internal advocate or in-house champion. Usually they are helping communicate to the rest of your publishing team what your book is: premise, hook, felt need, audience, etc. Believe it or not, not everyone on your publishing team has read your book. But your editor has. And she helps the marketing team, the publicity team, the sales team, all of the people internally at your publishing house to know all about your book and what makes it unique and compelling.
- **3.** Your editor is also responsible for managing the internal schedule. There is a fixed timeline within a publishing house, and the editor is usually the one that manages and tracks the timeline.
- **4. Your editor is your shepherd.** In most houses, your editor will stay with you through the whole process, serving as your primary point of contact. If you have questions and don't know who to ask, go to your editor. You'll likely come to feel most connected to her out of your whole publishing team.

As we close out this module, we want to challenge you to write <u>one chapter of your book.</u> We realize this is a big task. But you will have to include a chapter in your book proposal, so it is not wasted effort. Consider writing whichever chapter you think is most accessible. What story and message is easiest to craft? If it's chapter nine, that's okay. Start there.

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After you've finished writing your first chapter, <u>consider sharing it with someone</u>. Ask for their honest, critical feedback. Part of being an author is practicing sharing your words and ideas with an audience. A social media post, or a blog, or an article, is significantly different to share than a book chapter.

9	Who are you go	ing to share you	ır book chapte	er with? Writ	e down that	name.	
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MODULE 6

Titling Your Book



Start Here: A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Your Book The question of what you should title your book is extremely important. Finding the right book title is a mixture of art and science.

One of the reasons it's so important you pick a remarkable book title is because it is your most important marketing asset. Your title will be used for:

- Selling your book
- Branding
- Credibility
- In speaking engagements, media, publicity
- Possibly as the URL for your book's website
- In your bio
- On your website, on social media
- As the hashtag for your book
- In reviews, on blogs, articles, posts tagging you

Most importantly, you are going to live, eat, breathe this title for potentially your entire career!

You don't want to be casual about titling your book.

At the same time, remember that when you start working with a book publisher, they will want to be involved in helping you land on the strongest book title.

Things to Keep in Mind as You Are Titling Your Book

- 1. The title and subtitle of your book should work together to complement and support each other. If the title is intriguing but ambiguous, the subtitle must provide clarity about what the book is about or what it is going to provide. If the title is simple, the subtitle might be more attention-getting and arresting.
- 2. Today, more than 70% of books are sold online. There are a lot of ways that readers find your book, but it is essential your book title is both memorable, and has a strong Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This means you have strong key words that resonate with your audience so that your book is searchable in Google, Amazon, Yahoo, etc.

- **3.** Your book title should be memorable. You don't want it to be too abstract, nor do you want a title that is too general. You want a title that readers will remember when they tell their friends about it.
- **4. Your book title should have a clear felt need.** Try to title your book not for what it is about, but for what you are offering the reader. This is probably one of the biggest mistakes that we see people make. They start with titling the book for what the content is, rather than what the main felt need is for the reader. Remember readers are always thinking, what's in it for me? You want to pick a title that helps them understand what they are going to gain if they read your book.
- 5. Aim to communicate the genre of your book through the title you choose. If you are writing a book that is a romance, you want to title that book to make it clear it is a love story. Similarly, if you are writing a book on leadership, you want it to sound like a leadership book.
- 6. Choose a book title that is not going to embarrass your reader. Don't use offensive language either. You want your reader to tell a friend about your book, to carry it around in a purse or backpack, or post about it on their social media.
- 7. If you are a previously published author, you want your book title to be different enough from your last book, but also on brand for your audience. This can be tricky to do, but branding is important.
- **8.** Lastly, when titling your book, don't chase phenoms. Stick with what is tried and true. A clear, concise, compelling, memorable title wins the day.

TIP:

Before you seriously consider a book title, google that title. Search for it on Amazon. See if anyone else is using that title. See if there is a movie with that title. If there is a website with that title. If you find other books with your title idea, ask these questions:

- How old are the books with your title?
- Is the book traditionally published or self-published?
- How many Amazon reviews does it have?
- What is the sales ranking of the book with your title idea?

MODULE 6: TITLING YOUR BOOK

9	Spend some time brainstorming titles for your book. Write those ideas below.	
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MODULE 6: TITLING YOUR BOOK

9	Going back to the felt need of your book, what is in it for your reader? How can you weave the felt need of your book into the title or subtitle?
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	Have a brainstorming session with a few close friends! Invite them over for two hours,
9	feed them snacks, and share with them about your book. Then, using a white board or large Post-It note, throw everything up there and see what sticks! Write all your ideas down below!
•	feed them snacks, and share with them about your book. Then, using a white board or large Post-It note, throw everything up there and see what sticks! Write all your ideas
Q	feed them snacks, and share with them about your book. Then, using a white board or large Post-It note, throw everything up there and see what sticks! Write all your ideas
Q	feed them snacks, and share with them about your book. Then, using a white board or large Post-It note, throw everything up there and see what sticks! Write all your ideas
	feed them snacks, and share with them about your book. Then, using a white board or large Post-It note, throw everything up there and see what sticks! Write all your ideas
Q	feed them snacks, and share with them about your book. Then, using a white board or large Post-It note, throw everything up there and see what sticks! Write all your ideas
•	feed them snacks, and share with them about your book. Then, using a white board or large Post-It note, throw everything up there and see what sticks! Write all your ideas
	feed them snacks, and share with them about your book. Then, using a white board or large Post-It note, throw everything up there and see what sticks! Write all your ideas

9	If you have a handful of title options for your book and you have followers on social media, consider using a poll to see which title they like best. You can also poll your audience to understand what their pain points are — then title your book to address those pain points — either in the subtitle or the title.
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TIPS:

- Again, if you work with a traditional publisher, they are going to speak into the decision about the final title for your book. So, remember that during the proposal stage, you are trying to land on the best working title. However, know that your working title can significantly impact how an acquisitions editor and publishing team respond to your proposal. So, you'll want to put your very best foot forward.
- Your title often comes out of the writing of your manuscript, so if you are struggling with your title, spend some time writing your sample chapters you might find the title comes as you concentrate more on the writing.

NOWWHAT?

First, we want to celebrate the huge accomplishment of completing *Start Here: A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Your Book!* When you began this workbook, you didn't really know what to expect, or how to start on your publishing journey. But you persevered!

If you are interested in taking your publishing to the next level, there are additional ways our team can help. Consider investing in your future success by bringing the experts at Author Coaching onto your team. We would love to serve you through one or more of the following options:

- **OPTION 1: SIGN UP FOR AN AUTHOR AUDIT** In this 90 minute session, we will review and analyze your publishing journey and personal platform and share with you our best customized ideas for taking your career to the place you want to go based on wisdom gained from decades of guiding the careers of bestselling authors.
- OPTION 2: JOIN OUR GROUP COACHING Each year we work with a select group of rising writers. This 9-month coaching program provides mentoring through live trainings with our team of experienced literary agents, access to an exclusive online community where you'll collaborate with your peers, find accountability and motivation for your journey, and establish new partnerships that will help you get from idea to bookshelf in your publishing journey. Space is limited for the 2022-2023 group.
- **OPTION 3: PARTICIPATE IN AN AUTHOR SUMMIT** This full day summit is a comprehensive, specially designed opportunity to do strategic planning related to your publishing and your career. It's an intensive crash course where we deep-dive into your publishing history, audience, platform, and future career goals in publishing, suggesting ways you can sharpen, enhance, or improve your current publishing, and build a plan with you to help you achieve your publishing dreams. Contact us for an application.
- **OPTION 4: FOR IMMEDIATE HELP:** Book a one-on-one coaching call with one of our team members. No publishing journey is the same. Sometimes you need to brainstorm, collaborate, and receive customized, expert feedback unique to your situation. Simply choose your coach, and sign up in a 30-or 60-minute slot that is convenient to your schedule.

To learn more about any of these opportunities visit www.AuthorCoaching.com.

Yates & Yates Author Coaching, LLC ("we" or "us"), is a coaching and consulting business affiliated with Yates & Yates, LLP, but we are not a law firm that dispenses legal advice, nor a substitute for an attorney or law firm. We cannot provide any kind of advice, explanation, opinion, or recommendation about possible legal rights, contractual provisions, remedies, defenses, options, selection of forms or strategies. Communications between you and us are not protected by the attorney-client privilege or as work-product. No amounts paid by you to us shall be considered fees paid for the legal service of Yates & Yates, LLP.