

The Guerrilla Way to Build a Writing Career

The Guerrilla Way to build a writing career is to meet the challenges that will enable you to achieve success as a writer and a person:

- **Passion**
- **Purpose**
- **Plan**
- **People**
- **Process**
- **Professionalism**
- **Productivity**
- **Platform**
- **Promotion**
- **Patience**
- **Perseverance**
- **Publication**
- **Pleasure**
- **Profit**
- **Pivot**
- **Planet**
- **Peace of Mind**

Not all of these have handouts.

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- **Passion**

Writing as a Work of Heart

“Writing must be a labor of love or it is not writing.”
- Ernest Hemingway

How can you tell if what you’re doing is a labor of love?

You aren’t aware of time.

It’s challenging.

Your love overcomes your fear.

It’s creative.

It gives you pleasure and satisfaction.

You feel that you were born to do it.

You do it in the spirit of service.

It brings out the best in you.

It gives you peace of mind.

It has social value.

There’s beauty in it.

You return to it without prompting.

It enables you to grow.

It helps you fulfill your potential.

You don’t regret it.

You feel you’re creating a legacy.

How the World is Conspiring to Justify Your Passion

Here's why despite the turbulence and uncertainty we face, the world is supporting your passion for writing. This is a golden age for writers and readers--the most important people in the publishing process. If you are committed to achieving your goals, now is the best time to be a writer:

- **Now is the best time for reading:**
 - * You are writing in English--the international language of culture and commerce--in the age of instant translation.
 - * Now is the best time for serving the human family:
 - * The need for your knowledge, vision, values, guidance, and inspiration is greater than ever.
 - * You have more power and opportunities to make a difference as well as a living.
 - * The right book will change the world.
 - * More outstanding books are being published.
 - * More people in more places are reading books in more forms: ebooks, print, and audiobooks.
 - * Access to books, ebooks, and audiobooks is easier, faster, and less expensive: you can buy them at a discount, by subscription, or borrow them for free from your library.

- **Now is the best time for writing:**
 - * Your writing will be a gift and a legacy for those you love and future generations.

- * You can write anything you want as well as you want and publish it.
- * Writing is one of the easiest of the arts to enter, succeed in, and keep practicing. If you disagree, try ballet.
- * Writing can be a healing process that helps you understand and accept your life and yourself.
- * You can develop your craft and career in your spare time.
- * There are more books to use as models for your books.
- * You have more subjects to write about and more ways to write about them.
- * You have more ways to learn what you need to know about writing, agents, and promotion, including a bottomless ocean of free advice online.
- * You have more tools to help you write.
- * You have more ways to get feedback on your work.
- * You have more ways to prove your books work before you sell or publish them.
- * Technology, the communities it enables, and the growing numbers of readers worldwide keep generating more opportunities to profit from your work.
- **Now is the best time for publishing:**
 - * You have more control over writing, publishing, promotion, and your career.
 - * You have more ways to publish your work.
 - * Finding and submitting to publishers is easier.
 - * Agents and editors more eager to find new writers, the lifeblood of the business.
 - * There are more sources of help with contracts and subsidiary rights, such as film and foreign rights.
 - * Self-publishing is easier and faster, and more professionals are available to help you.
 - * You can start your own imprint and publish other writers.

- * You can use one of the online publishers who offer to publish ebooks and print books for free.
 - * Online, writers, like publishers, have access to readers, the media, influencers, and distribution.
 - * You already have the first customers for your work: friends, family, and business colleagues.
 - * The success of your books depends on how much readers like them.
 - * You can learn from more authors how to write, set goals, and build your career.
 - * You can build a career by continuing to publish books that sell each other.
- **Now is the best time for promoting:**
 - * You can reach readers worldwide in more ways faster and more easily for free.
 - * Word of mouth remains the most effective promotion.
 - * Social media enables you to share your passion for the value of your work and can make any book sell, regardless of who publishes it or how.
 - * There are more authors to use as models for promotion and your career.
 - * You have more ways to build and serve the communities you need to succeed.
 - * You can join or start an author co-operative that sells and promotes members' work.
 - * You can sell books and use an online bookseller to fulfill orders.
 - * You can earn income by being an affiliate at Bookshop.org, an online bookselling community, which supports independent booksellers.
 - * You can be an affiliate with other authors by promoting each other's books and events and earn commissions from each other's sales.
 - * You can partner with businesses and nonprofits on promotion.

Books and Publishers are Thriving

The pandemic proved that writers and publishers are needed, creative, innovative, flexible, and resilient. Sales of ebooks, print books, and audiobooks are up. Publishers are diversifying their staffs and lists and finding new ways to reach book buyers.

The Big Five New York conglomerates have to focus on books with the strongest commercial potential. This creates opportunities for thousands of small, niche, midsize, and university presses that are eager to publish new writers.

The greatest transformation in publishing since the printing press is accelerating a global shift in the creation and consumption of content. This shift empowers writers to develop their craft, communities, and career online. More than 4.5 billion people have access to the internet. Readers around the world have instant access to an exploding universe of information and entertainment. So successful writers make themselves indispensable by continuing to add value to their readers' lives through their work and their relationships with them.

- **Purpose**

Success is achieving your goals, so you have to decide what your goals are.

Create a portrait of the writer you aspire to be. List your short- and long-term personal, literary, and publishing goals, and how you will achieve them by answering these questions. When you can, start your answers with the word “I.”

Literary Goals

Your literary goals—what you want to accomplish as a writer--have to inspire you to get to your keyboard every workday:

- * Why do you want to write?
- * What do you want to write: novels, nonfiction, children’s, middle grade, or young adult books, poetry?
- * Who are you writing for?
- * What do you want to communicate?
- * What do you want your writing to achieve?
- * What are two recent, successful models for the books you want to write?
- * Is there an author who is a model for the writer you want to become?
- * Do you want to write your book yourself, work with an editor, collaborate, or hire a ghostwriter?
- * How many books do you want to write a year?
- * What literary legacy do you want to leave?

Publishing Goals

You can sum up your commercial goals with the answers to these questions:

- * Do you want to self-publish, pay to be published, or be paid to be published?
- * What size house do you want to publish your books?

- * How big an advance do you want for them?
- * How many copies do you want them to sell?
- * How much money a year do you want to earn as a writer?

Personal Goals

Consider how you will balance your literary and personal lives with these questions:

- * How will you support your writing until it can support you?
- * How, where, and with whom do you want to live?
- * How will you express your gratitude by giving back?

Your answers to these questions will be unique. But if they're in harmony and keep you going, they are the answers you need. The more clearly you can see your goals, the more likely you are to achieve them.

Capture the essence of your goals by writing a mission statement.

- **People**

Achieving your goals requires you to build and maintain communities to help you do all that has to be done to maximize the potential of your work and your career:

- * **Your personal community:** your family, friends, relatives, and professional colleagues

- * **Fans:** readers who follow you online, attend your events, and buy whatever you create

- * **E-fan-gelists:** readers who adore you and your work, and champion you and your books every chance they get

- * **Authors, especially those in your field:** writers with whom you share work and ideas

- * **Your test-marketing community:** people who give you feedback on your writing and promotion

- * **The community of the book:** writers, publishers, publicists, experts on the kind of books you're writing, and booksellers

- * **Your street team:** fan-atics who help you promote your books on publication

- * **Influencers:** their praise generates sales, publicity and attendance at your events

- * **Collaborators:** people who help you produce, monetize and publicize your work

- * **The media:** people who give you time and space, online and off

- * **Booksellers:** booksellers who do signings, display your books, and handsell them

- * **Techies:** who help you with technology and social media

- * **Your speaking community:** speakers, audiences, clients, bureaus, and members of speakers' organizations

- * **Your travel community:** people who know local media, booksellers, and literary events, and give you a place to stay

- * **Mentors:** friends with the smarts and experience to advise you

- * **A mastermind group:** five-to-nine professionals, perhaps in different fields and with varying expertise, who meet every two weeks, on the phone or in person,

as the board of directors for each other, sharing advice and making commitments to each other that they follow up on at the next meeting

* **Your causes:** institutions and causes that you are passionate about and with which you share your resources

- **Process**

The Invisible Book Chain: An Overview of the Publishing Process

Publishing a book is complex, subjective, collaborative enterprise. At a big house, it involves more than 200 people, but it begins with you:

You write your proposal or manuscript.

V

You or your agent submits your book.

V

An editor likes it enough to do a proposal to buy it.

V

An executive or publishing board decides whether to buy it and for how much.

V

You sign a contract and receive the first part of your advance against royalties.

V

If you sold your book with a proposal, you write your book.

V

Your editor edits your manuscript.

V

You respond to your editor's suggestions.

V

Your editor accepts your manuscript.

V

You receive the second part of your advance on acceptance.

V

Your editor sends your manuscript to the production department, so it can be published simultaneously in print, and as an ebook and perhaps an audio book.

V

The production department copyedits your manuscript.

V

You respond to your copyeditor's comments.

V

The art department creates or outsources the interior design and the cover for a paperback or hardcover, ebook, and audio.

V

In a series of launch meetings, your editor and the sales, marketing, publicity, and advertising departments:

- position your book on one of your publisher's seasonal lists

- create a trade and consumer-marketing plan
- choose the print, broadcast, and electronic trade and consumer media to carry out the plan
- prepare sales materials for sales conference.

V

Throughout the rest of the process, your agent or publisher tries to sell subsidiary rights.

V

Your publisher will print advance reading copies (ARCs) and send them to early reviewers and for cover quotes.

V

Your book and the plans for it are presented to the sales reps.

V

Sales reps sell your book to bookstores, online booksellers, distributors, wholesalers, specialty stores, big-box stores, warehouse clubs, and if needed, mass-market distributors; and to school, college, and public libraries.

V

Your publisher's education department sells books with adoption potential.

V

Your publisher's special-sales department tries to sell books with premium and bulk-sales potential.

V

The production department arranges to print your book.

V

Your publisher's warehouse receives books from printers, ships orders, and receives returns from booksellers.

V

Your publisher's advertising and publicity departments:

- do prepublication promotion
- send out review copies of your book.

V

Your book is published as a pbook, ebook, and perhaps an abook, and has a brief launch window in which you and your publisher try to generate sales momentum with publicity, reviews, promotion, reading groups, and traditional and social media.

V

Readers learn about your book in a bookstore, in a library, from on- and offline media, a reading group, a review, or a friend. They read it, love it, and tell others they must read

it.

V

Your publisher promotes your book for as long as sales justify it.

V

You promote your book for as long as you want it to sell.

V

Reprint meetings decide when to:

- reprint and how many copies
- sell or remainder part or all the stock if sales are too low
- make your book available in a print-on-demand edition
- put your book out of print

at which time you can ask for the rights back and republish it.

V

You write the proposal or manuscript for your next book.

- **Professionalism**

The Three Keys to the Prose of Pros

The trinity of writing salable books is reading, writing, and sharing:

Reading: Know what readers want and find models for your books and career.

Read all the books you can, especially those like yours. Become an expert on the kind of book you want to write. First read books for enjoyment. Then analyze what makes them effective. What works for you in the books you love will work for your readers.

Downloadable audio is the fastest growing segment of publishing. Like reading your work aloud, listening to books will give you insights into your writing.

You don't have to figure out how to write a mystery. Take Sue Grafton's advice: Read a hundred of them, and you'll know what readers expect. You can establish criteria for style or voice, length, the first page, cover design, and perhaps for nonfiction, illustrations, and back matter.

Emulate the books you love and the authors you admire.

Giving Birth to the Same Baby Three Times

You bring your book to life three times:

- * When you have the idea for it
- * When you write it
- *When you bring it into the world on publication

Writing: Make every word count and write books that sell each other.

There are more subjects to write about than ever and more ways to write about them. A publisher will buy your idea in one of two forms: First novels and memoirs that should read like a novel usually have to be finished. The usual way to prove that you can develop story, setting, and characters for the length of a book is to do it.

Making Your Work Rejection-Proof: Readers Who Will Help Make Every Word Count

“Feedback is the breakfast of champions.” - Bestselling author Ken Blanchard

You will be too close to your work to judge it objectively. Agents and editors only read far enough to make a decision. So before contacting them, or self-publishing, enlist readers to help ensure every word is needed and right.

Suggestions for finding feedback:

* **Friends and family:** You need and deserve encouragement. Your friends and family will give it to you.

* **Writers:** Ask your peers at signings, retreats, book festivals, conferences, classes, workshops, and seminars. Offer to critique their work in exchange. What you learn from the work of others and from others about your work will help you improve your prose and build a community of writers.

* **A writing group:** Join or start a writing group, online or off—that meets regularly to discuss its members' work, so you can get feedback as you write. A tableful of writers can confirm what's working and provide constructive feedback or ask questions about problems they find. A group can meet in person, by phone, by Skype or Zoom, online, or with a combination of these.

To find a writer's group in your area, ask writers, writer's organizations, booksellers, librarians, reviewers, and independent editors. Try meetup.com. If you can't find a group, start one. If you're the least experienced writer in the group, you'll learn from everyone. Two fallbacks: wattpad.com and scribd.com.

Working with more experienced writers than yourself will be more productive than working with less experienced writers. Being able to give and receive constructive criticism is crucial. You may have to try more than one group until you find one that gives you what you need, and whose members will benefit from your advice.

* **Online sources:** They include readers on Forums, Twitter, Facebook, Goodreads, Absolute Write, Agent Query Connect, My Writers Circle, Wattpad, Scribd, LibraryThing, Query Tracker Forum, meetup.com, [Christian Writers](#), [Critique Circle](#), [Critters Workshop \(for Speculative Authors\)](#), [KidLit 411](#), [Lit Reactor](#), [My Writers Circle](#), [Writer's Carnival](#), [The Writer's Workshop](#), [Writing.com](#)

Sources on Facebook include Beta Readers and Critiques, 10 Minute Novelists, Indie Author Group, Christian Woman Critique Partners and Beta Readers, and a group for members of the Alliance of Independent Authors.

Most of the online suggestions are from a post by author K. M. Weiland. Googling "how to find beta readers," will lead you to advice on working with them.

***Test-marketing audiences:** A blog, talks, articles or excerpts, podcasts, and videos help you prove your work delivers, and may be sources of income, visibility, and promotion. Try local reading groups.

Although writing isn't the same as speaking, talks and readings are an excellent ways to test the impact of humor and anecdotes, and learn from questions and responses, and they may attract an agents and editors. Speaking and blogging also help you test titles for your book and chapters.

* **Potential buyers:** Would fans of books like yours buy your book if they found it in a bookstore or online? Try to enlist booksellers—you also want *them* to buy your book—to render an opinion at least on your idea, title, and promotion plan. The better customer you are, the more likely they'll oblige by taking a look at your work.

* **Experts in your field:** Approach people who know what you're writing about, including experts, academics, influencers, members of organizations in your field, and authors of books like yours.

* **Beta (test) readers:** Even if they're not familiar with books like yours, they know good writing: reviewers, writing teachers, and journalists.

* **A devil's advocate:** Find a mentor whose taste and judgment you respect, and in whose knowledge you have absolute confidence. A devil's advocate can combine truth with charity, analyze the structure and development of your book, and spot every word, punctuation mark, idea, character, and incident that can be improved or removed.

* **A freelance editor:** An experienced, independent developmental editor can give you feedback on your work writers can't, and may be able to assess your manuscript like an editor at a publishing house. If you self-publish your book, you will also need a line editor, copy editor, and a proofreader. Freelance editors may offer more than one of these skills and may also critique your query letter.

Find a developmental editor who has either worked for the kind of publisher you want or who has edited books like yours that were published by the kind of house you want. But don't rely just on an editor; the more knowledgeable readers you have, the better. Your book will also need line and copy-editing. If you plan to self-publish, a freelance editor is essential.

* **Your omega reader:** Before you submit your work and query letter, have the reader you trust most go over them and proofread them.

* **The ultimate judge:** What agents and editors see determines their response, and readers and reviewers will be judging *your* work. So you have to be the ultimate judge of your work.

Eyes on the Prize

The more qualified readers you enlist, the better your work will be. Getting the reception you want from agents, editors, and readers is the prize. Having the right eyes critique your work while and after you write it is how you win it. Offering to read others' work will make it win-win.

Sell Your Book Before You Write It: Writing a Proposal That Excites Agents and Editors

You can sell your nonfiction book before you write it with a proposal that provides editors the information they need to buy your book. Your proposal is an expression of your literary and publishing goals for your book. It has to show that there's an audience for your book and how well you can research, structure, write, and promote it. Every word must help answer two questions: Why the book and why you?

Most proposals range from 30 to 50 pages and have four parts: **Sales and Marketing Information**, an **Outline**, **Sample Writing** and **Supplemental Material** (optional).

The first page of your proposal is the title page. It has the title, and subtitle if you have one, and your contact information, including social media.

Sales and Marketing Information

This section *must* prove that you have a salable book and that you are the right person to write and promote it.

- **Pizzazz:** After the title page, include a page that will grab editors' attention--a blurb from a well-known writer or authority OR a mission statement OR a photograph OR an intriguing fact OR, for narrative nonfiction, killer writing from the manuscript OR the title and up to fifteen words that captures the essence of why your book is fresh and salable OR a combination of a few of these elements.
- Your proposal's **Table of Contents:** The third page of the proposal is the table of contents for your proposal.
- **Overview:** One-to-three pages about why your book will appeal to book buyers who will want to buy it. Lead with your strongest suit, perhaps a quote. If you have 100,000 opt-in email addresses, that's your lead. If you're the world's foremost expert on your subject, that's your lead. If your subject itself is its own best argument, that's your lead. Mention two recent, successful books (not bestsellers) that are models for your book. If you self-published your book, provide impressive stats or quotes from reviews.
- **Specs.** List or describe important thematic, research and production elements:
 - * If you're writing in first person
 - * If the structure is unconventional
 - * How many color or black-and-white illustrations, if any, you will provide
 - * How many words, including back matter, if any, the book has or will have
 - * How many months after signing the contract you will deliver the manuscript (and illustrations).

Audience. Your proposal *must* convince editors that there is an audience for your book. Use numbers to identify, in descending order of size, groups of consumers who will buy your book. In descending order of impressiveness, list the proof that there's an engaged potential readership for your book: magazines they buy, websites they visit, events they attend.

Become an expert in your field by investigating websites, digital content, and online experts serving your audience. Find out what books and other sources experts and librarians send people to for information.

(Optional) A bulleted list of **Sales Tips** to help editors buy the book. A how-to proposal may include a list of your book's **Benefits**--the reasons consumers will buy it.

Comps: a list of up to ten competing and comparable books published within five years that will help editors position your book in the field. Include books that will be on the same bookstore shelf as yours or discussed with your book in articles on your subject. Include author, publisher, year of publication, format, price, ISBN. Explain briefly why each book's similarities prove there is a market for yours, but your book still fills a need.

- **Bio:** up to a page, in descending order of importance, about your credentials for writing your book: your academic, professional, and publishing experience and awards. Start with your most impressive credentials. Then add personal and professional information in descending order of impressiveness and relevance.

Include a link to a one-to-two-minute video of you speaking, doing a media appearance, or demonstrating the skill your book teaches, and a video query showing how well you share your passion for the value of your book. If your links don't include an image of yourself, paste a small headshot at the beginning of your bio.

If you're writing a professional or academic book for which your credentials, experience, and publications will be important, include your CV or resume at the end of the proposal.

- **Platform:** To show your continuing visibility with potential book buyers, include a bulleted list with round numbers in descending order of size proving your ability to reach your readers.

- * **Online:** numbers of blog subscribers, classes, talks, website visitors, your social media presence. Editors will check on how engaged you are with your fans on social media.

- * **Offline** (before or after Covid):

- The number of articles that appear regularly in magazines and newspapers with links to the most impressive articles

- The number of talks or classes you give a year with the number of people you speak to a year and where with a link to a speech

- Continuing media presence with links to your most impressive interviews

- **Promotion:** Start with: "To promote the book, the author will, at her/his expense:" Follow this with a bulleted list in descending order of ability to sell books what you will do before, on, and after publication to share your passion for the value of your book. Begin

each part of the list with a verb, and if possible, use impressive round numbers. End with: “The author will coordinate his/er plan with the publisher.”

(For a promotion-driven book you want to published by a big or midsize house, your proposal has to show editors how you will use your visibility to sell books. Your platform and promotion plan will determine the editor, publisher and deal you get for your book.)

- **(Optional) Special Markets:** a list of opportunities like:
 - * **Special-interest markets**, on- and offline: retailers, organizations, institutions, schools, and businesses that might buy your book
 - * **Companies** that are likely to, or have committed to, buy bulk quantities of your book
 - * If you have an audience **abroad**, mention it.
 - * **Buyback commitment:** Business authors buy books to sell at speeches. Chefs sell them in restaurants.
- **(Optional) Foreword and Blurbs:** a foreword or the commitment to write one by someone whose name will give your book credibility and salability in fifty states two years from now. One or more cover quotes endorsement from well-respected, well-known authors or authorities will also help; perhaps as much as a foreword and they may be easier to obtain.

Outline

The first page of the outline is your book’s complete Table of Contents, as it will appear in the finished book. The following pages include the chapter titles with an outline. Provide one-to-three present-tense paragraphs about each chapter, using outline verbs like *describe*, *explain*, and *discuss*. For an informational book, you can use a bulleted, self-explanatory list of the information for each chapter.

Sample Writing

About twenty-five to fifty pages of sample chapters or writing, between one and three chapters. Choose material that will most excite editors by fulfilling your book’s promise to readers and by making your book as enjoyable to read as it is illuminating.

If your work is prescriptive--a cookbook, diet book, how-to book, include writing from the book’s introductory chapter, if needed to explain your idea, and a how-to chapter. Agents and editors need more chapters for narrative nonfiction and memoirs. Follow the guidelines on their website.

Supplemental Material

(Optional) Articles, reviews of previous books, platform-related lists, or other supporting material that would disrupt the flow of reading the proposal.

Getting the Most Out of a Writing Group

The following suggestions are based on my experiences with two writer's groups. They always had a spirit of friendship and mutual support that made meetings extremely enjoyable to participate in and extremely helpful to everyone.

- * Decide what kind of writing you want the group to discuss.
- * Gather about five writers, online or off, who agree on goals and how the group will work. The more diverse the group, the more diverse the feedback. The larger the group, the less often you get to read and the less time you can spend discussing members' work.
- * Members agree on decisions, including the best day, starting time, length, frequency, and place(s) for meetings. They are flexible about changing the schedule as needed.
- * Members agree on when to send their work and send five to eight pages of work to other members.
- * The format their work is printed in 12-point Times Roman type, 25 lines to a numbered, double-spaced page.
- * The first page is a title page that also indicates what part of the proposal or manuscript follows. Include contact info in lower left corner. If you wish, indicate specific feedback you're seeking.
- * Members send their work as a Word attachment.
- * Members use track changes for their suggestions.
- * When groups meet in person, members print each other's work, write questions and suggestions on it, and use it to make comments at the meeting. If you're meeting online, you send your critiques before the meeting at a time you agree on.
- * The group decides how to divide the meeting time between members or to let each discussion take its course.
- * Before C19, one of my groups met every six weeks on Saturday from 10-5 around a round table in a member's house. We arrived around 9:30. We socialized so we could start at ten. Members got about an hour with a five-minute break between writers and a lunch break around noon after discussing the work of two members.
- * Members have their work discussed in the order they choose. First members comment on what they like, then ask questions and make suggestions, combining truth

with charity, and then give their marked-up copy to the member. After discussion of a member's work, the member responds to what others have said. Comments spark ideas, so other members often chime in.

- * Someone keeps time.

- * The group decides what, if anything, to do about sustenance. One member brought a coffee maker, another pastry, another lunch. We were extremely lucky that a member provides a perfect intimate, well-lit dining room with a round table for meetings.

- * The group brings drafts, but members are expected to be writing at a professional level. Members shouldn't be seeing first drafts. If a member needs help with writing skills, the member should find someone, perhaps a member of the group, to provide feedback before sending it to other members.

- * Members bring calendars, so they can agree on the date for the next meeting which may vary.

- * Members share contact info.

- * The group experiments and changes how it works as the members wish.

- * Writers leave the group, so members key an eye out for new members. Prospective members send their work for a meeting and receive the work of other members. Then they attend a meeting to judge how well they fit into the group and the quality of their feedback.

Doing It Between the Lines: Finding a Freelance Editor to Help You

“Hire the best editor you can afford. In fact, borrow money and hire one you can't afford. Hire one who is not impressed with you, and will not tell you what you want to hear. I'm convinced that if you don't do this, you will end up with self-serving garbage that no one wants to read.”

– Indie author Carter Niemeyer

- * Three writers have told me that when they pick a novel in a bookstore, they read the first line. If it doesn't excite them enough, they put it back.

- * Agents and editors also only read enough to decide. Your books will be published. The questions are *when*, *how*, and *who* will do it. To ensure your proposal or manuscript is ready to submit or self-publish, consider hiring a freelance editor. If you're a novelist, want to self-publish, or publish with a New York house, a freelance editor is essential.

But the only justification for spending a four-figure sum is that when you, your editor, your community of early readers, and your agent (if you use one) agree that every word is right and that your work has the impact you desire.

Four Gifts

The native tribes of the Northwest believed that they didn't carve totem poles, they just removed the excess wood. The best embodiment of your idea is waiting for you to bring it to life word by word, draft by draft.

The right editor for you will understand what readers, agents, and publishers expect in books like yours and can suggest how to revise your work. The four most important gifts an editor can offer are

- * An understanding of your literary and publishing goals
- * A vision of the perfect embodiment of your idea
- * The ability to help you come as close to that as you can
- * The knowledge of how agents and publishers will judge it

There are hundreds of editors around the country who can help you improve your prose, but not all of them can bring an agent's or staff editor's perspective to your work. This requires publishing experience as an editor or as an author of books like yours. If you want to sell your book to a New York house, this is vital.

You have more options for publishing your books than ever, from self-publishing to the Big Apple Five. Each option has trade-offs. You and your editor need to agree on your book's literary and commercial at the outset. If you think your book is a bestseller, and an editor thinks self-publishing is your only option, you have to accept that judgment or go elsewhere.

A Telescope and a Microscope

The three stages of editing require using a telescope and a microscope:

- * **Developmental editing** looks at the big picture--pacing, structure, what to add and delete, and how to revise
- * **Line editing** includes style, language use, tone, and redundancies
- * **Copyediting** includes fact-checking, consistency, spelling, and grammar

Independent editors provide developmental editing. They may also offer line editing or recommend someone who does it and copy editing. Some do all three and may rewrite or ghostwrite if needed. If you're self-publishing, you need all three levels.

Editorial suggestions have three possibilities: they're right, they're wrong, or there's a better alternative. If an editor catches something, others may. This forces you to change it or decide you're right.

You have to trust your instincts and common sense. You're the ultimate judge of advice from anyone, including me. If a comment doesn't feel right, and an editor can't explain it so it does, ignore it.

Editing is complex and subjective, the results unpredictable. An editor will mark up your manuscript, perhaps with track changes, and send you a revision letter. You may

follow the editor's advice and think you're ready to submit. But assuming the advice is correct, who knows how well you followed it or whether your revision created new issues? The process will usually require more than one revision.

Continue to revise until you and your editor agree your work is as good as you can make it. The time and cost are impossible to predict. Every book and writer is different. Editing is expensive, and you hope sales will justify the cost, but predicting how books will sell is also impossible. However, Elmore Leonard is right: leaving out the parts people skip will help ensure your books sell.

How to Save Time and Money

Here's how to save time and money on an independent editor:

*** Become an expert on the kind of book you're writing.**

Agents and editors need to know the models for your book, so whether you want to write history or a mystery, take Sue Grafton's advice, read a hundred of them.

--You'll know what readers expect.

--You can establish criteria for length, style, tone, and structure.

--You'll find two recent, successful books to use as models for your books.

Agents and editors will want to know the models for your book.

*** Make your work as effective as you can before contacting editors.**

A writer's group and beta readers will help you improve your work.

*** Choose the right editor for you and your book.**

--Ask your writing community for suggestions.

--College writing teachers may edit.

--Authors of books you love may have suggestions.

--Most editors work independently, but organizations of editors include:

www.bayareaeditorsforum.org, www.bookarchitecture.com, www.editcetera.com,
www.edsguild.org, www.the-efa.org, www.prosedoctors.com, www.reedsy.com,
www.SD/PEN.org.

Editors' websites answer some of the following questions. If not, ask them in any order you wish:

- ✓ How long have you been an editor?
- ✓ What kind of editing do you offer?
- ✓ Do you rewrite? Ghostwrite?
- ✓ How long do you expect the editing to take?

- ✓ How do you handle revisions?
- ✓ What, when, and how do you charge? By the word? Page, Project?
- ✓ How much do you estimate the editing will cost?
- ✓ How long will it take?
- ✓ How do you like to work? Track changes? Hard copy? Phone? Email? In person? A combination of these?
- ✓ Do you offer a trial edit? Is it free? Do you refund the cost if I'm not satisfied?
- ✓ Have you worked in publishing? What did you do? What was your last position?
- ✓ If not, how did you learn the craft?
- ✓ Are you a member of an editors' organization?
- ✓ Have you worked on books like mine that are published?
- ✓ Have clients acknowledged you in their books?
- ✓ Do you have testimonials?
- ✓ May I contact your clients?
- ✓ Have they edited books published by the kind of house you want?
- ✓ Have they written books, ideally like yours, published by the kind of house you want to publish yours?

Learn all you can about editors before speaking with them, so you know what questions to ask. Make your questions feel like a conversation, not a third degree.

*** Have your editor help you with your query letter.**

Your query letter has to be impeccable. If it's not, agents or editors may not even look at your work. Editors may charge extra for this. Knowing what agents and editors need to see in a query for a book like yours is essential.

A Working Marriage

You hire an editor, but the relationship is a working marriage with personal and professional aspects to it. Meet with editors if you can, to test the chemistry for your relationship. An editor may be able to recommend an agent or staff editor to submit your

work to, and allow you to start your query letter with the editor's name, a door-opener if the editor's name carries weight.

An editor is a lifetime investment in your craft. You'll be able to save time by avoiding mistakes and being a better judge of your work. But no matter how many books you write, you will always need feedback.

- **Platform:**

How to Make the World Ready for Your Books

Here's how to making the world ready for your books:

- * Find out where your readers congregate online and join them.
- * Consistently create and curate content that keep readers readers look forward to.
- * Use as many media as you can that will work for your book and your readers: text, images, audio, and video.
- * Repurpose your content for other media and platforms.
- * Be a regular guest or contributor for an outlet that amplifies your reach.
- * Attend events for writers, the public, and in your field so you can meet and learn from writers, readers, gatekeepers, collaborators, and influencers.
- * Register your name as your website asap. If your name is taken, tweak it by, for example, adding your middle initial.
- * Use your name for your email address: [your first name]@[your first name followed by your last name].com. Make your address clear, simple, and easy to remember.
- * Build and maintain a presence on the important social media where your readers are: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, and SnapChat. There are also forums, message boards, chat rooms, and groups in your field. Tumblr is big with young readers. Service and community come before sales.
- * Write a blog. Share your passion for your field; discuss developments in your field; relate other news to your field. Blog part of your book to get feedback on it, promote it, and attract book buyers, agents and publishers. (Use Nina Amir's *How to Blog Your Book*.) Send posts to social media and build a community of bloggers in your field by exchanging posts and comments. Include your blog in your email signature, on your business card, and in other print materials.
- * Build your website around your blog:
 - Provide a go-to source of information about your field.
 - Keep adding opportunities for visitors to learn and enjoy themselves.
 - Give visitors the chance to give you feedback on the site and your work.

--Post and update speaking and media kits, including a list of speaking and media appearances with audio and video links, links to your articles, and testimonials about your and your books.

* Build your ranking on search engines. Use keywords in your blog, the rest of your site, and in your other communications.

* Make your email signature and business card like brochures. Include your book cover(s), products, services, info for email list sign-up—perhaps with a freebie--on- and offline contact info, and if it will help, a headshot. If you need to, make it vertical, so flat, it's a bookmark, and folded in half, it's a business card. Do an online search for “free business cards” and you'll find free designs.

* Read books and articles in trade and consumer magazines, newsletters, websites, and blogs. Listen to podcasts watch authors' YouTube channels. You'll find news you can use, writers and influencers to meet, and opportunities. Make yourself an authority in your field by reading and writing about it.

* Write a newsletter; articles for trade, consumer and academic media; reviews; op-ed pieces; letters to the editor; a self-syndicated column and articles (ezinearticles.com); contributions for Wikipedia; audios and videos.

* Give talks, classes, seminars, webinars, teleseminars, teleconferences, and workshops; do consulting, coaching, and training at businesses, nonprofits, conferences, and conventions.

* If you want to be a speaker, join Toastmasters (www.toastmasters.org) to learn the craft and the National Speaker's Association (www.nsaspeakers.org), if you want to get paid. Join or start a community of speakers. Send your speaker's kit to speaker's bureaus, meeting planners, and organizations and individuals who can book you to speak.

* Appear in digital trade and consumer media or on an online radio or television show you start.

* Start a podcast or YouTube channel to test-market your work and interview influencers.

* Build relationships with organizations, event organizers, and people in the media, academia, government, and professionals in your field.

* Build an email list of people to send a newsletter to, promote to, and who will give or sell you access to their email list.

* Participate in and lead community, writing, and professional organizations.

* Partner with a business, nonprofit, or foundation.

* Win contests, awards, and prizes.

Put your efforts in the service of your visibility, income, and building your brand. These keys were adapted from an interview writing coach Lisa Tener did with author, blogger, and the *Hot Sheet* newsletter editor Jane Friedman.

Branding Yourself

Here's how to capture the essence of who you are as a writer:

* **Write books that sell each other.** Find an idea for a series or standalone books that you're passionate about writing and promoting.

* **Provide experiences readers love.** Give your books maximum impact.

* **Integrate how you serve your communities.** Unify how you write, speak, dress, act, communicate, relate to people, and your colors, typeface, and design in a way that lets your voice, personality, and desire to serve shine through.

* **Share your passion for the value of your books and ideas to gain your readers' affection, respect, and loyalty.** Make providing content and service a labor of love for your craft, your field, and your readers.

* **Keep adding to the lifetime value of your readers through service.** You will create a community of evangelists who buy whatever you produce and share their passion for you and your books.

Tips:

* Follow what authors, especially those in your field, are doing.

* Get feedback on your efforts to help ensure they're effective.

* Keep learning from readers how to serve them better.

- **Promotion**

You can divide promotion into two parts: what you do before and after your book is published.

Test-marketing Your Book to Prove It Works

Before publication, you promote your books by test-marketing them to prove they work. Publishers test-market books with the first printing. They do a small first printing with minimal promotion, hoping for a lucky break. But you have more ways than ever--for free or to make money—to develop and test-market your books:

* A blog is the simplest, easiest way to share your passion for your work and test-market at least part of your books. **Novelists can draw on their passion for writing, books, research, or another subject as close as possible to what they're writing to help build their fanbase.**

* **Speaking and teaching are another way. Before his bestseller, *An Inconvenient Truth*, was published, former Vice President Al Gore gave a thousand talks about the environment.**

* **Smartwatches, smart speakers, and mobile devices that enable consumers to listen to audio when and wherever they want have made podcasting and downloadable audiobooks hot platforms. An app called “Anchor” shows how to do podcasts. Like bloggers and YouTube stars, podcasters are getting book deals.**

* **If it's right for you and your book, start your own video channel.** YouTube viewers around the world watch a billion hours of video day. Most consumers would rather watch a video about a product than read about it.

* **Newsletters are also an effective way to serve your communities and build an email list for promoting what you offer.**

Save time and prevent disappointment by proving your work delivers before you publish it. Take the guesswork out of publishing by test-marketing your books before you sell or publish them.

You can test-market:

* **The idea:** Try it out on writers, authors in your field, booksellers, and book buyers to help gauge its potential.

* **The title, chapter titles, and content:** a blog, a website, articles, talks, videos, podcasts, and social media will provide feedback and help build a community of fans eager to buy your book.

* **The nonfiction proposal and/or manuscript:** Create a community of readers who can give you feedback as you write and after you're done to make sure every word is right, and your work has the impact you want. Ask the ranger of readers you want to buy your books to grade every part you want to be funny, moving, insightful, or inspirational, and the whole proposal or manuscript on a scale of one to ten. If appropriate, ask about its impact on their lives or thinking.

* **The book by self-publishing it:** If you can write your book before you sell it, and you can promote and sell the book, you may want to prove it's salable by self-publishing it, either with either:

--A "Special Limited Early Reader's Edition" without distribution or marketing that you use for test-marketing, getting quotes and feedback, and seeking bulk sales. If you want to sell it to a publisher, don't make it available online, or publishers will expect you to have impressive sales.

--A self-published edition through Amazon for distribution and IngramSpark to get into bookstores. How well you promote it and the number of copies you sell, and the rate at which it's selling will affect a publisher's decision to buy your book, and the editor, publisher, and deal you get.

* **Your ability to get a foreword and endorsements:** Having a foreword and cover quotes from people whose names will give your book credibility and salability around the country will help you, your agent, potential editors, and your publisher sell it. You can use your proposal, manuscript, ebook, or printed edition to get cover quotes or the commitment to give them.

* **Your website:** Make that it attracts as many visitors who stay. Use the sites of authors and professionals in your field as models.

* **Your promotion plan:**

--Share your plan with your communities to help ensure it will help you to achieve your publishing goals.

--Once your book is out, test your campaign in your city or the nearest major market to see if it generates publicity and sales.

--Integrate what you learn from your first city into your plan and your promotion materials to make them more effective.

--Or start by promoting your book to its core audience. If you've written a self-help book that will interest psychologists as well as the general public, consider trying to get psychologists, the core audience for the book, excited about it first, so they recommend it to their patients.

--Use what you learn from your first city to launch a regional campaign, then, if you can, go national.

--Create a timeline for carrying out your promotion plan and get feedback on your timeline.

* **A series with the first book:** If you want to do a series, the sales of the first book may determine the fate of the second one.

* **Your brand:** Get feedback on how effectively you are integrating the experience of reading your books with how you speak, dress, act, communicate, and relate to people.

* **Your goals:** Evaluate your efforts by determining if they are helping you achieve your short- and long-term personal, literary, and publishing goals.

* **Your commitment:** These opportunities test your commitment to your craft and your career.

Sharing Your Passion for the Value of Your Book: Steps to Promoting Your Book

Here are steps to take to prepare to promote your book:

* **Write a manuscript that your community of knowledgeable early readers assures you is as good as it must be to achieve and publishing goals.** Promotion can't make a book sell if doesn't deliver.

* **Figure out who your book buyers are.**

--Talk to:

- ✓ Fans of books like yours to learn what makes them buy books—personal or professional interest, the subject or kind of book you write—and where they congregate and communicate
- ✓ Booksellers, authors of books like yours, members of organizations in your field, and other professionals in the field about who buys such books
- ✓ Librarians about potential readers, whether libraries will buy it, and in what form(s)

--Have a realistic sense, based on sales of comparable books, of the size of your audience and your book's promotion potential.

* **Learn how to reach your readers.**

--Ask fans of books like yours:

- ✓ How they find out about them: other readers, reviews or ads online or off, Goodreads, the author, browsing online or in stores
- ✓ Where they buy them—online, offline, both whether they prefer ebooks, ebooks, pbooks, or more than one of them

*** Create and carry out a plan to build a community of rabid fans.**

--The goal: Create enough word-of-mouth raves to ensure your book's success.

- ✓ Learn from authors, books, blogs, classes, and events how to create a plan that:

--Generates maximum impact with the fewest resources

--Maximizes your book's sales momentum when it's published and keeps growing

--You will enjoy carrying out

Look at your efforts as part of your mission as a writer.

A Recipe for Effective Promotion: Choosing & Blending the Right Ingredients

Guerrilla marketing is substituting time, energy, and imagination for money. Writers have to be guerrilla marketers. Promotion has two basic elements: finding where your readers are, online and off, and serving them as often and in as many ways as you can.

Promoting your books gives you the chance to share your passion for the value of your work. But if you just want to write one book, you have to decide how much effort you want to devote to promoting it.

What follows assumes that you:

- * Are passionate about writing and promoting a series of books that sell each other
- * Will repurpose your books and services in other forms, media, and countries
- * Will integrate everything you do to build your brand

The cumulative impact of your efforts over time will enable you to build a community of fans eager to buy everything you create. Publishing is a pre-publication-oriented business. Before publication, you assemble the ingredients for the recipe for making your books sell:

* **A promotion file:** The moment you decide to write your book, start a list of ideas, people, media, and organizations that can help you.

* **Social media:** Be active on the social media where your readers are, including blogs and Goodreads. Successful authors focus on the one social media platform that they most enjoy doing and on which their readers enjoy spending time.

* **Your communities:** Every field has its own communities of events, organizations, media, and influencers in the media, government, business, nonprofits, academia, health, and spirituality. The community in your field can help you with cover quotes, publicity, talks, reviews, email lists, and can connect you with other members of the communities you need.

* **The right ingredients for your book:** Read articles, books, blogs, websites, and the swelling sea of info online about promotion. Ask authors and booksellers what makes books like yours sell (What convinces you to buy them?); read competing books, books about writing in general and books like yours, and blogs and magazines in your field; research the audience for your books, the best tools for reaching them, and the cost and effectiveness of online ads.

* **Your pitch:** Information has to be scalable. You have to be able to describe your book in as little as one line, depending on the opportunity and the interest of your listener. Prepare a pitch that you can use for different media and every occasion. Get feedback on it.

* **Your podcast, or online radio or television show:** Start an online interview show to test-market your work and meet influencers in your field.

* **Your email list:** It empowers you to generate sales and attendees at your events.

* **Your media kit:** Make the job of media people easy by including on your website a continually updated media kit with a media release, a photo of your cover, a bio and photo, a Q&A sample interview, excerpts, clips of you speaking or being interviewed, future events, and media-worthy information about the subject.

* **Interviews:** getting media people to commit to interviewing you or doing a story about you, or reviewing your book

* **Cover quotes:** or the commitment to write them from people who will give your books credibility and salability around the country when your books come out

* **A foreword for nonfiction:** whoever will most effectively help sell your books

* **Strategic alliances** (Optional): the written commitment from one or more businesses or nonprofits to buy X books, feature you and/or your books in their ads, on their websites, and in their newsletter; sponsor a tour with you as a spokesperson; have

the head of the organization write a foreword, perhaps for a customized edition of the book; get local stores relevant to your book to stock it.

* **Promotional commitments** on or after publication from bloggers, reviewers, interview shows, and organizations and events that will book you to speak.

* **Pre-orders:** use an order form at appearances and email blasts to your email list and others you can use or rent to generate pre-orders to build your online sales ranking on publication.

* **Book mailing/request for a Book:** build mail and email lists of people who can help the book enough either to justify the cost of a printed copy with a personalized letter; or an email, offering a copy of the book or ebook.

* **Book signings:** befriend booksellers and get commitments for signings.

* **A Plan and a Budget:** integrate everything you will do in the right order for maximum impact; get feedback on your plan from authors and a staff or freelance publicist.

Mixing ‘em Up

Based on what authors of competing books are doing, and what you think will work best for you and your books, mix the ingredients for your promotion plan:

* **Social media:** Focus on the most productive ones for your book, and decide how best to use them.

* **A virtual book tour:** Line up a combination of podcasts, webinars, a blog tour, audio and video interviews, social media.

* **Talks:** If you enjoy speaking and can customize talks for different audiences, organizations will publicize your talk and if they don't sell books, they may let you sell them. Depending on your topic and skill, you may be able to earn enough to finance a national tour.

* **Interviews:** Prepare a list of trade and consumer print, broadcast, and electronic media, including blogs and podcasts.

* **Reading groups:** Offer to discuss the book in person, by phone, zoom or Skype.

* **A tour:** If you can justify the time and expense and maximize your visibility in the media and in person, travel. Your publisher will want you to go wherever you can reach the most book buyers for your book, usually the major markets.

* **Seizing opportunities:** the success of a book, movie, television show; a news story; something on the Web; or a trend can create chances for promotion. Authors keep creating new ways to promote their books.

Thinking Long-Term

Members of the Author's Guild promote their books seven hours a week. See what other authors, especially those in your field, are doing, but try to do it better, faster, cheaper, longer, and more creatively. Make your efforts enjoyable and sustainable. Promotion isn't peddling products; it's the opportunity for you to take advantage of all the media and techniques you can to:

You have more ways to reach more readers in more places faster and more easily than ever for free. Continue to:

- * Build your relationships with your promotion communities.
- * Keep learning about promotion.
- * Write promotable books that sell each other.
- * Improve your ability to promote your work.
- * Share your passion for the value of your work.
- * Generate exposure for your books and yourself.
- * Build your brand.
- * Build and serve your communities.
- * Develop content you can write, talk, and teach about.
- * Sell your other books, products, and services.
- * Create alliances with authors, businesses and nonprofits.

How much exposure you get depends on:

- * Your ability to communicate
- * Competing books
- * When your book is published
- * Your looks
- * The competition for media-consuming stories about scandals, weather, and politics

* The ability and commitment of your publicist

* Luck

- **Perseverance**

Honoring Your Commitment to Your Craft and Your Career

Persevere by living your commitment to your career with:

- **Courage:** Steve Jobs said: “The only way to do great work is to love what you do. Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow know what you truly want to become.” Have the courage to fill blank screens, accept rejections, and enlist the people you need to succeed.
- **Discipline:** Make every workday as productive as you can.
- **Focus:** Even if you can do anything, you can’t do everything. Focus on what helps you reach your goals.
- **Preparation:** The ace, king, queen--three of the five cards in the royal flush—are about preparation. You need the will to succeed, but you also need the will to prepare. The prep work before publication assures your success after publication.
- **Enthusiasm:** Enthusiasm is contagious and it starts with you. You and your work have to generate the excitement that you want your readers to communicate to everyone they know.
- **Optimism:** Optimism is also catching, and it’s better for you and more productive than pessimism. As long as your glass is half full, you’ll never be thirsty.
- **Simplicity:** Simplify your life. Health and family first, but avoid or minimize what doesn’t help you reach your goals.
- **Patience:** Be patient with your readers, your agent, your publisher, your suppliers, your communities, the media, your collaborators, and yourself.
- **Confidence:** Zig Ziglar said: "**Confidence is going after Moby Dick in a rowboat and taking the tartar sauce with you.**" Have the faith in your work and yourself that you want your readers to have in you.
- **Resilience:** About 500 BCE, Lao Tzu said: “Failure is the foundation of success.” Whether it’s walking, talking or writing, failing one’s way to success is the human condition. You need resilience to bounce back from mistakes, rejections, frustrations, and disappointments. Arianna Huffington said: “Failure is not the opposite of success, it’s part of success.” A failure you learn from is a success. Look at mistakes, failures, and obstacles as opportunities to do something better or do something else.
- **Sacrifice:** Giving up money, time with friends, and pleasurable pastimes are part of the price you pay for earning and maintaining success.

- **Motivation:** Let fun, your successes, getting closer to achieving your goals, and support from family, friends, and your literary community help keep you motivated.
- **Gratitude:** Express your gratitude daily for what's good in your life. Balance giving and receiving by giving to causes, projects and organizations you're passionate about. Like companies, individuals will be known by what they give as well as what they get.
- **Celebrations:** There's a bumpersticker that says: "Wag more bark less." One way to bark less is to celebrate victories like completing your proposal or manuscript, finding an agent, an offer, or even a glowing rejection. The prospect of celebrating will help keep you going.
- **Joy:** Find joy in the journey.
- **Perseverance:** If you persevere and console yourself with the certainty that persistence rewards talent, success *is* inevitable.

- **Publication**

Why You Have More Publishing Options Than Ever

- * **You can publish it by:**

- Doing it as an ebook, a hardcover, or a mass-market or trade paperback
- Using print-on demand (POD) at no cost or by paying for services
- Recording it as an audiobook
- Using print-quantity-needed (PQN) for short runs, offset for longer runs
- Publishing it for free online as blog posts, articles, or a manuscript,
- Publishing it with a publisher that has self-publishing imprint
- Collaborate with a hybrid publisher: you pay for professional help
- Crowdfund the cost with an online fundraising service
- Selling it chapter by chapter as a subscription
- Hiring an agent who helps clients self-publish and may pay for it
- Hiring a professional who will take care of the process for you

- * **You can sell rights to:**

- One of the imprints at one of the Big Apple 5
- A small press, midsized, regional, or niche publisher
- A publisher for a flat fee as a work for hire
- An academic or university press
- A professional publisher that publishes books for a specific field
- An audio publisher

- * **You can post a sample** on Wattpad, Scribd, and Inkshare's app Properties.

- * **You can publish it in other forms** such as an app, video, software, a podcast, audiobook, or sell the rights to a company that produces these products.

* **You can try Publishizer** which offers services and connects writers to publishers.

* **You can pay for all of the costs** to publish your book with a vanity or subsidy publisher.

* **You may be able to partner with a business or non-profit** that will underwrite the writing, publishing, and promotion of your book because it will promote their agenda and enable them to profit from publicity and perhaps book sales.

* **You can work with a packager** who provides publishers with a file ready for the printer or finished books.

10 Steps for Selling Your Book Yourself

1. Make sure your proposal or manuscript is ready to submit.
2. Ask your writing community about their experiences with editors and publishers.
3. Research publishers online, in bookstores and directories, and on their websites to make a list of editors and publishers.
4. To prepare a list of editors, use directories, acknowledgments in books, and calls to publishers to verify that editors are still there. Email authors and ask them about their experiences with their publishers.
5. Follow publishers' submission guidelines. Email a personalized one-page query letter to up to about ten editors at a time simultaneously, letting them know you're contacting other editors.
6. Email or snail mail, with a self-addressed, stamped envelop (SASE), a multiple submission of your proposal or partial manuscript, following publishers' guidelines and letting editors know that other publishers have it. If the first submission doesn't work, use what you learn from the process to do the next submission.
7. Submit your work, impeccably prepared, following publishers' guidelines.
8. Research when to expect a response, and if you don't receive one, follow up by email or phone every two weeks to find out when you can expect a response.
9. If you receive an offer, thank the editor and say you'll respond as soon as you can. Contact other publishers who have your work, tell them you have an offer so you need to hear from them in two weeks. If you don't, you'll have to decide whether it's worth waiting longer or respond to the offer. You may be able to use it to get an agent. If you don't, get help with the contract from writer's organizations, the Web, books, or from an agent or intellectual property attorney.

10. After you sign the contract, celebrate!

How an Agent Can Help

What an agent can do that you can't:

- * Align your goals with the needs of the marketplace
- * Know what publishers are looking for
- * Know the best publishing option for you and your books
- * Judge the quality and salability of your work
- * Provide editorial guidance and perhaps suggest a freelance editor
- * Advise you about publicity and self-publishing, and perhaps offer these services
- * Know which editors and publishers to submit your book to and which to avoid
- * Absorb rejections and be the go-to business person, helping free you to write
- * Have more influence with editors than you
- * Be an advocate for you and your book
- * Answer questions and solve problems
- * Negotiate contracts, so you don't have to haggle about rights and money
- * Reserve subsidiary rights, such as film rights, perhaps long after the initial sale, so you receive more income from them sooner than if your publisher handles them. Publishers will take 50% of sub-rights income and usually pay royalties twice a year.
Agents and co-agents just deduct a commission and forward income immediately.
- * Use co-agents to sell subsidiary rights that the agency doesn't handle
- * Be a knowledgeable go-to person for your business dealings, helping free you to write
- * Be an administrator who keeps track of income and paperwork and knows how to follow up on questions and problems
- * Monitor trends and the industry, so they can mentor you about your writing, publishing, promotion, and your career
- * In what may be a desert of rejection, be an oasis of hope and encouragement

Why Getting an Agent is Hard

Writers and editors believe it's hard to get an agent. Here's why:

- * Agents reject more than 99 percent of the submissions they see.
- * Agents build their agencies with writers who are passionate about building a career by writing and promoting books that sell each other. They're less interested in one-book writers and writers who want to write different kinds of books that don't create synergy.
- * Agents may sell to small and midsize houses, but they want to sell to New York publishers, because they offer larger advances and have more resources for editing, producing, marketing, and promoting books. Few new writers have the writing and promotional skills Big-Apple houses need.
- * Writers approach agents before their work, their platform, and their ability to promote are strong enough for publication.
- * Writers aren't professional in how they contact agents and submit their work. Not following agents' submission guidelines and faulty query letters that aren't personalized are common problems.
- * Agents have to be more selective than ever about the books they accept.
- * Agents are trying to make a living from fifteen percent of their clients' income. Most of the country's 1,000+ agents can't. It takes luck and at least five years to making a living.
- * Agents want writers who are eager for advice and use it.
- * Because most books don't sell, agents want to enjoy working with their writers. They avoid those who may become problems and those they think they can't get along with.

Why Getting an Agent is Easy

If you have a book that will excite big or midsize houses, here's why getting an agent is easy:

- * Agents must find new writers to make a living.
- * The more challenging publishing becomes, the harder it is to find writers who meet publishers' needs. If your work will excite big and midsize houses, getting an agent is easy.

- * Agents are motivated by love, money, and the desire to help writers. The more they like a writer, love a book, or see the writer's potential, the less they care about the book's commercial potential.
- * Agents need you more than you need them. Like editors, they're perpetual optimists who want to love every submission.
- * Contacting agents is easier than ever. Their websites and directories, online and off, describe what they handle and how to contact them.
- * Agents are on social media. You can pitch them on Twitter. Many have blogs.
- * Agents participate in conferences and other events where you can meet or pitch them.
- * New agents keep popping up. They need to build a client list as quickly as possible, are more open to new ideas and writers, and they have more time to spend on their clients.

The Hooks, The Book & The Cook: The Three Parts of a Query Letter

Agent Katharine Sands believes that the writing you do about your writing is as important as the writing itself. A query is a one-page, single-spaced letter with three or four indented paragraphs with a space between each. Without sounding self-serving, it explains why, what, and who--the hooks, the book, and the cook:

1. The Hooks: whatever will best justify reading your work

The Connection Hook

- * A selling quote about your book (or a previous book) from someone whose name will give it credibility and/or salability. The quote could also be about you.
- * The reason you're writing the agent or editor:
 - the name of someone who suggested you contact the agent
 - the book in which the author thanked the person you're contacting
 - where you heard the agent or editor speak
 - where you read about the person or something the person wrote

The Book Hook

- * Whatever will most excite agents or editors about your book:

--the opening paragraph

--the most compelling fact or idea about your subject

--a statistic about the interest of people or the media in the subject or the number of potential readers

2. The Book: the essence of your book

* A sentence with the title and the selling handle for the book: up to fifteen words that will convince booksellers to stock it and consumers to buy it

* The model(s) for it: two recent, successful books (not bestsellers) that prove the market for your book and convey your literary and publishing goals.

* A one-paragraph overview of your book and with its benefit to readers

* The book's biggest markets

* A round number for the actual or estimated word count of your manuscript

* The number of pages in your proposal and sample chapter(s) and how many additional pages of the manuscript, if any, you have ready to send

* (Optional) A list of back matter and how many manuscript pages they will be

* (Optional) The names and/or credentials of people, if they're impressive, who have agreed to give you a foreword and cover quotes

* (Optional) The number and kind of illustrations you will provide with samples in the sample chapter(s)

* (Optional) If you're proposing a series or standalone books that will sell each other, the subjects or titles of the next two books

* (Optional) Information about a self-published edition that will help sell it

3. The Cook: Why you're the person to write the book

* Your platform: the most important things you have done and are doing online to give yourself continuing visibility with potential readers, with round numbers if they're impressive: your online activities, links to impressive published work, and media and speaking experience with links to audio and video

* Your promotion plan: the one-to-three most impressive things you will do to promote your book, online and/or off, with numbers, if they're impressive

* Your credentials; years of research; experience, positions, prizes, contests, and awards in your field

* (Optional) A link to a video query up to two minutes long in which you make the case for your book

Baiting Your Hooks

* Assemble these building blocks in the most effective order. Front-load the letter by putting what is most impressive as close to the beginning as you can, and include anything else that will convince agents or editors to ask to see your work.

* Rewrite the letter until it's as convincing as you can make it.

* Get feedback on it, and have someone proofread it.

- **Pleasure**

The Joys of Being a Writer

Personal Joys

The personal joys you experience will give you reasons to get out of bed:

- * Reading
- * Writing
- * The excitement you feel when your writing is going well
- * Coming up a great idea for a scene, character, plot twist, or title
- * Experiencing other times, places, and lives
- * Browsing in bookstores and buying books
- * Building a library of books you love
- * Using your local library for reading, writing, research, and speaking
- * Finding the right words to express your ideas
- * Living to work instead of working to live
- * Escape
- * Being a lifelong learner

Professional Joys

Your professional joys will justify your time, effort, and sacrifices, and prove you were born to be a writer:

- * Finishing your books
- * Creating something only you can that has lasting value for your readers
- * Sharing your passion for the value of your work
- * Finding an agent and publisher you love
- * Holding the first copy of your books

- * Receiving checks
- * Seeing your name in print
- * Serving your readers as often and in as many ways as you can
- * Getting rave reviews
- * Being asked to write stories, articles, and reviews
- * Being part of the reading and writing communities
- * Selling your books in other forms, media, and countries
- * Hearing from fans around the world who love your work and keep buying it
- * Watching your craft, career, creativity, and communication skills develop
- * Supporting readers, writers, booksellers, libraries, literary events and organizations, and causes you believe in
- * Being friends with writers you admire
- * Helping and inspiring writers
- * Being invited to speak
- * Having writers ask you for feedback, a foreword, or a cover quote
- * Meeting fans
- * Being acknowledged in books
- * Acknowledging people who help you in your books
- * Dedicating your books to those who have helped and inspired you
- * Earning enough to live a fulfilling life and maximize your creativity
- * Leading a life that has meaning, value and purpose
- * Fulfilling your potential
- * Building a legacy

- **Planet**

Creating WEtopia: Being a Citizen of the World

“We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.”
- Benjamin Franklin

The ultimate paradox of life may be that we’re all unique yet inextricably bound together in a mutually dependent web of existence. How can we best face an uncertain future? Here’s a starter set of ideas:

* Support three keys to our future:

--Gender equality. Enable women to show why they are the world’s greatest untapped human resource.

--Diversity in a multicultural country and world

--Parents and teachers who will help determine our future

* Buy from local, independent businesses so 25% more of your money stays in your community.

* If you can, build a small business doing something you love.

* Avoid doing or consuming things that cause harm or diminish your humanity.

* Control the technology you use or it will control you.

* Avoid institutions, organizations, and businesses whose size, age, culture, management, or internal agenda renders them unable to fulfill their purpose, unless you can help them change.

Utopian Fantasy or Survival Strategy?

Can this idea inspire men and women, young and old, to build communities and create a way of life without the constraints of politics, religion, tradition, or culture? Communities that:

* Find ways to compromise and to reconcile differences. We’re all unique, so conflict and imperfection are the human condition.

* Compromise but make decisions by consensus.

* Grant everyone freedom of belief and action, if they aren’t harmful.

* Welcome the creative challenge of reinventing religious traditions like (true) stories, art, symbols, music, education, meetings, rituals, practices, celebrations, and holidays that add to members' comfort, unity, pleasure and sense of purpose and belonging.

* Integrate practices like sacrifice, forgiveness, community service, and expressing contrition and gratitude.

* Serve members and their local community in ways that attract new members.

* Treat everyone like a member.

* Are coordinated by rotating volunteers.

* Give individuals and institutions enough power to be effective but not enough to be corrupted.

* Aren't large enough to require a hierarchy and institution that compromise their values.

Is this a utopian fantasy or a survival strategy? WEtopia has to start within each of us. Then we have to find kindred spirits. Only the most effective version of this vision is worthy of the human family's potential. Consider our plight and how little time the humanity may have left to create a just, fulfilling, sustainable global civilization.

For WEtopia to endure, it has to keep renewing itself to respond to change, because as Heraclitus also wrote: "Only change endures."