

Write *Your* Manuscript Now!

A 3-part course on the basics
of manuscript writing

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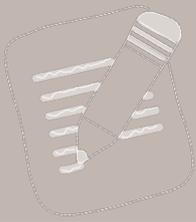
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INTRO TO MANUSCRIPT WRITING

PART ONE: THE BASICS

Reverse engineer. Know your end goal, your audience, and where you plan to market your work.

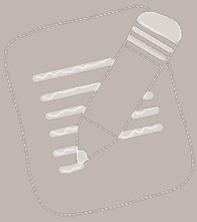
Traditional publishing. This has changed very little in recent times. Have a strong idea or argument, have an audience, and start trying to pitch people on your stellar work. An author sells a manuscript up front, and gains royalties once an agreement has been met.

Self publishing. This has gained reputable popularity since its criticized beginning. Both great and subpar work is published through self publishing, and author retains all rights and intellectual property.

Hybrid Publishing. This is a newer way for an author to both publish under a publishing house and still maintain full creative rights

All three of these options are viable, competent avenues of publication. Your writing process can depend on which you choose, so know the differences, and decide what may work best for you.

Start with a big idea. You will likely tweak it later, but simply state a succinct message you are trying to convey with this project.



KNOW YOUR BIG IDEA

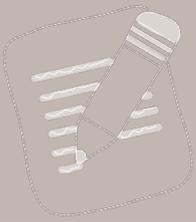
People believe _____

but actually, _____

_____ .

Every _____ can _____

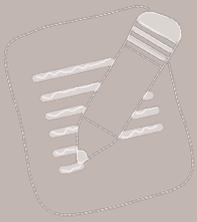
What do people think, how do they feel about your topic? What questions are they asking? What sounds like something that would help them? How can you see your work helping them? Tweak your big idea by asking questions.



What do you want your reader to do?

What do you NOT want your reader to do?

How does this book fit into my business plan?

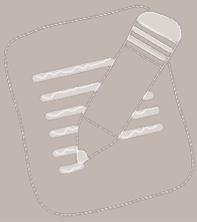


KNOW WHO YOU KNOW

Who do I know needs to hear this story? List a minimum of 20.

Who do you know who's already doing what you want to do?

How can you establish a strong, genuine relationship with one or more of the people already discussing your big idea?



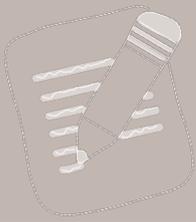
KNOW YOUR WRITING VOICE

Use the voice you already have.

Write a few words to describe what you think your writing voice is like now.

List a few words your friends use to describe you.

What writer do you admire? Describe how their writing makes you feel.



Identifying A Writing Voice

The Artist: The creative who writes to convey a love of the beauty that surrounds them. (example: Ann VosKamp, *A Thousand Gifts*)

The Prophet: A writer who skillfully conveys the hard truth about the world or themselves. (example: Stephen Pressfield, *The War Of Art*)

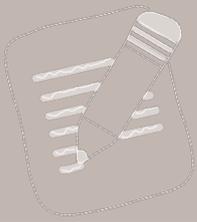
The Journalist: This is someone who has natural curiosity about the world. They are front and center questioning, assimilating answers, and sharing it with an audience. (example: Seth Godin, *Permission Marketing*)

The Professor: This writer will teach by taking something complex and breaking it up into small, actionable steps. (example: John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*)

The Celebrity: Readers are attracted to these writers simply because they feel like they are someone who they want to hang out with or be like. (example: Rachel Hollis, *Girl Wash Your Face*)

There are many ways to describe a writing voice and your variant may seem slightly different or very much like these listed based on what you listed on page 5. And this list is far from comprehensive. The point is simply to have a point of view and understand how people can relate to what you're saying.

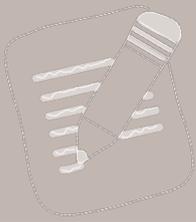
This compilation of voice types is based on writer, Jeff Goins', list of blogging identities, but can be used to identify any piece of writing. I suggest solidifying your voice for each project. If you are a self-help writer seeking to publish your first novel, the voice you use will most likely be very different from your last project, so take the time to think through this step.



Using your list above (page 2) restate your big idea. Include the problem you solve, ensuring your idea is relatable.

What other story or book is your project like?

Research 3 to 5 other books on your topic or story line. If you are working in fiction, this does not have to be subtype specific to avoid “copying” a certain way of conveying your imagination. However, you should be reading other fiction books in order to hone your skill and know what your audience is reading.

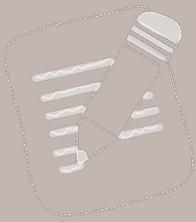


INTRO TO MANUSCRIPT WRITING

PART TWO: DEVELOPING A MANUSCRIPT

Begin by revisiting your big idea. You must know that people are already reading about and discussing your topic, they need the solution you bring, or are interested in your point of view. List any words or phrases below that people gave when you were asking the right questions. (pg. 3)

If you are a fiction writer, try a story grid here or on the back of this page. Split your story into three acts and add scenes you wish to develop. You should still be asking what readers want and can use the words or phrases you list to develop a gripping plot. This is a good tool for memoir writing as well.



HONE YOUR BIG IDEA

Go deeper. What do you *really* want to say?

People believe _____

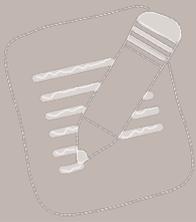
but actually, _____

Example: *Wicked*, the musical. Everyone believes that one witch is wicked and the other is good, but actually, there's a bit of good and bad in both.

What is your big idea similar to? Familiar but interesting.

It's like _____ but _____

Example: *The Lion King*. It's like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but with animals. The hero's story has been told before, but not in this way. What's your unique take on an age-old topic of conversation?



ESTABLISH A PRACTICE

[John Maxwell](#) says that everyday he reads, he thinks, he files, he asks questions, and he writes. To be a good writer, you will need to invest in these habits. Please file! Don't ever throw your ideas away! Write your when/where.

Everyday I read:

TIME:

PLACE:

Everyday I think:

TIME:

PLACE:

Everyday I file:

TIME:

PLACE:

Everyday I ask questions:

TIME:

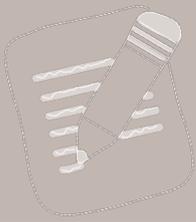
PLACE:

Everyday I write:

TIME:

PLACE:

Now, take it further. Select a date for your manuscript deadline and a wordcount goal for your project. For a task like manuscript writing, I suggest taking the number of days you think you can commit to writing one hour or more, and calculating a wordcount goal based on an average book in your genre.



Average wordcount for an informational non-fiction: 40,000 to 50,000 words. Average word count for fiction: 70,000 to 100,000 words.

These numbers, of course, can vary vastly, but a good rule of thumb is to have no fewer than 100 pages for non-fiction, a 35,000-word minimum, and write at minimum 200 to 400 pages for fiction, or 60,000 to 100,000 words.

If you are starting your habit and want to write daily, I suggest a 500-word start. Writing 7 days a week will allow you to have a minimum of 42,000 words by the third month. That is an entire manuscript for a non-fiction writer.

If your project is larger, or if you have a habit already, take the number of words you want to write based on your genre and divide it by the number of days until your deadline. For example, to write my upcoming fiction in the next three months, committing only 4 days a week to the project, 80,000 words is divided by 48 days. I must get in a minimum of 1600 words each writing day.

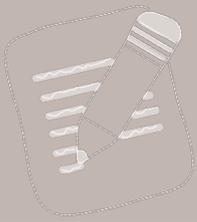
MANUSCRIPT DEADLINE:

GENRE:

WORDCOUNT GOAL:

DAYS PER WEEK:

WORDS PER DAY:



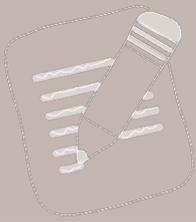
OUTLINING

Whether you are publishing traditionally or self-publishing, this step is essential. Write a basic outline of your story or teaching materials. Begin with 3 essential parts.

The problem.

The struggles.

The solution.



ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

After two weeks of committing to your writing goals, it's time to assess. Have you been reaching or exceeding your goals? Are you short of those goals?

Whatever the answer—there is no wrong here—simply assess. How many words have you been writing per week, or per day? That now becomes your gauge, your new writing goal.

This is an essential step in keeping on track. We're not judging whether or not you failed, we're judging what you've done and acting accordingly. If you have not yet committed to writing at all, and your wordcount is still at zero, then this may not be the right season for completing a manuscript. But the next step, we can all take a look at.

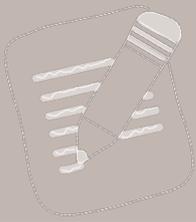
Partner with someone with whom you can be accountable. Join a writing group with weekly check-ins, or ask a friend or coach for help. The more you allow yourself to be seen by people you respect, the more likely you are to show up with some kind of work done!

My group or accountability partner:

My new daily wordcount goal.

My new manuscript deadline.

(Even if it's a year or two from now, don't let yourself off the hook!)



INTRO TO MANUSCRIPT WRITING

PART THREE: PREPARING FOR PUBLICATION

EDITING

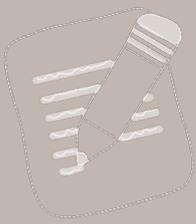
Write now and edit later. Stephen King says that a writer should always write a first draft with the door closed, and the second with the door open.

This doesn't mean you're not aware of what your audience needs or wants, but that your work should get out of your head and onto paper first, then critiqued and worked over. If you've done a good job collaborating with your big idea and outline, the bulk of your manuscript can and should be written before it's perfected.

Before your manuscript goes to a professional editor, you need to take the time to edit everything yourself.

1. Developmental editing—is my work flowing properly? Does it make sense?
2. Copy editing—is my writing correct in tense, punctuation, word usage, etc.?
3. Have I shared my writing with early or beta readers, a writing group, or my accountability partner?
4. Have I re-written or re-worked my ideas at least once according to feedback and critiques?

Once ALL these have been done, seek a professional editor.



COMMON TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL EDITING

Substantive (developmental) editing

The most intensive form of editing is substantive editing. The document is evaluated as a whole, and problems of structure, organization, coherence, and logical consistency are corrected. Sentences may be removed or added. Paragraphs may be rewritten, condensed, or expanded. Blocks of text may be moved from one section to another.

Copy editing

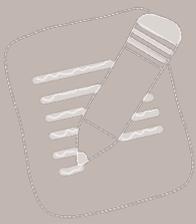
The editor corrects problems of grammar, style, repetition, word usage, and jargon. Copy editing includes one revision at no additional charge. Turnaround time for copy editing typically is three business days.

Proofreading

Proofreading is the lightest form of editing. Minor errors are corrected. Minor errors include: errors of grammar and style (e.g., verb tense, units such as ml, use of numerals and words such as “5” or “five”) errors of capitalization, punctuation (e.g., the use of commas, semicolons, colons, periods, dashes, apostrophes) errors of spelling and word usage (e.g., to/too, affect/effect)

Formatting

The editor will amend document text to ensure that it complies with the required format, such as the format required by a specific journal. Turnaround time can be negotiated.



ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

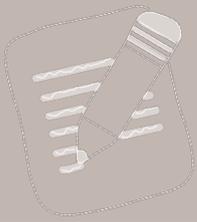
Remember that list of people who need your work? Have a plan to actively involve them in your process.

Email is still king. Acquire emails ethically and tell people about your work. If you have a business with an email list already, schedule teasers, promotions, challenges, and campaigns that will give you critical information for feedback and keep an audience interested.

Social media is an amazing, free tool for any writer or businessperson to engage with an audience. A good rule of thumb is to choose two platforms and focus a consistent strategy for them. Show up where you feel comfortable and be genuine with your interactions. Regardless of whether you may be a team of one, or you have a workforce that can help you be everywhere all the time, make sure you're creating interest around your subject as you go. Whether you self publish or seek an agent, engagement is what you want to prove that you can actually sell the book you're working on.

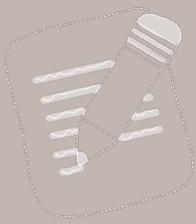
Blog. It's not a dying art. Have a schedule of topics that are pertinent to yours and publish content twice a month at minimum.

Community is key. In his book, *Real Artists Don't Starve*, Jeff Goins talks about joining a scene and practicing in public. With the mass information we're bombarded with daily, true community is what still gets your work noticed.



Start with now. What does a weekly engagement plan look like for you?
Start with an area to plan and add as you feel comfortable.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S



NEXT STEPS

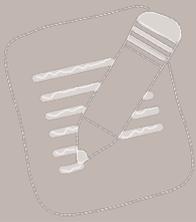
The Self-Published Author:

Editing–Best practices for editing is to edit three to five times before submitting your manuscript for publication. Whether it's twice yourself and two or three times with the professional you choose or are assigned, a professional must be involved.

Presentation–a book proposal is helpful for the self-published author simply because it makes one focus on content flow and structure. This consists of a complete outline, chapter summaries, and a one-chapter sample. This will not be comprehensive or edited like a traditional publisher would expect, but still allow yourself a good two or three weeks to think through your project entirely.

Book cover and formatting–if designing this yourself, please be sure to research what other books on your topic or genre are trending. A good, inexpensive resource for book design is 99designs.com where you can run a campaign and select a designer you love. Follow all guidelines from your selected printer for formatting. Kindle direct for amazon sales has their own program, kindle create, for e-book formatting. To create an account for amazon book sales, go to Kindle Direct Publishing. (kdp.amazon.com)

Book Launch–have a launch plan. First, in a prelaunch, create a sense of excitement of what's to come. Do a survey, asking readers what they want to know on your subject, or if a fiction, ask your followers to help you name a character or another fun thing they might engage with. What's important is marketing as you create. Second, in a launch phase, have a launch team. Connect with people who will be advanced readers and get them talking openly while flooding the market once you're ready to launch. Preorders are part of this process. Create bonuses, and schedule interviews during this phase. In the post launch phase, focus on community. Continue with readers groups or various programs to connect with readers.



NEXT STEPS

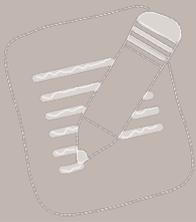
The Traditionally-Published Author:

Editing—your editing process should be discussed with your agent and during the process of accepting an offer. However, best practice with editing is to edit three to five times before submitting your manuscript for publication. Whether it's twice yourself and two or three times with the professional you choose or are assigned, a professional must be involved.

Presentation—a book proposal is what you need to spend a good deal of time on. An agent will be able to help you through the process, but once again, this should be something that multiple eyes critique and a professional is hired to edit. This consists of a complete outline, chapter summaries, and a one-chapter sample. Allow yourself a good two or three months for this process.

Agents—the most likely way to get traditionally published is through an agent. No matter how much technology evolves, most businesses still rely on relationship. Agents know and are trusted by publishing companies. How do you meet an agent? The old-fashioned way. You can attend conferences, ask if anyone in your network works as an agent (many of them are part-time because they are journalists or writers themselves), and ask an author you know who has been traditionally published for a recommendation.

Book Launch—have a launch plan. First, in a prelaunch, create a sense of excitement of what's to come. Do a survey, asking readers what they want to know on your subject, or if a fiction, ask your followers to help you name a character or another fun thing they might engage with. What's important is marketing as you create. Second, in a launch phase, have a launch team. Connect with people who will be advanced readers and get them talking openly while flooding the market once you're ready to launch. Preorders are part of this process. Create bonuses, and schedule interviews during this phase. In the post launch phase, focus on community. Continue with readers groups or various programs to connect with readers.



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Books to read:

[You Are A Writer \(So Start Acting Like One\)](#) and [Real Artists Don't Starve](#) by Jeff Goins

[Atomic Habits](#) by James Clear

[Big Magic](#) by Elizabeth Gilbert

[The War of Art](#) and [The Artist's Journey](#) by Stephen Pressfield

Tools to use:

[Scrivener](#) – Writing software that helps you stay on task and so much more!

[Learn Scrivener Fast](#) – Scrivener is not an overly complicated program, and you can figure it out as you go, but there are a lot of features. This course helps you learn how to use all the bells and whistles Scrivener offers to get the most out of your investment.

[Calendly](#) – For any appointment planning including your writing habits!

[My 500 Words: A Writing Challenge](#) – This is a free writing challenge with author, Jeff Goins, to help you with establishing your habit, 500 words at a time.

More from me at:

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