

A Step-By-Step Guide to Writing Your First Book

By Christina Gillick

Last year, I went to a workshop where I learned how to write a book quickly, with the goal of increasing my expert status in my niche.

The book I'm planning to write will be about marketing to potential customers in the self-help niche. It will be like a giant business card for my copywriting business, giving me immediate credibility.

Plus, I will have clients coming to me because they will see or read my book and know that I'm an expert. Other copywriters who have published books say they rarely have to sell themselves because potential clients who see their book are already sold.



It's a great plan, but I still haven't followed the advice in the workshop to finish my book (although I've set a goal of finishing the book this year). It's a shame, too, because the plan is quite quick and easy to follow ... and from what I've seen, very effective.

So I'd like to share a specific strategy from that workshop that allows you to finish an entire well-thought-out and professional book in a surprisingly short period of time. Let's both plan to finish our first books this year to showcase our expert status to the world.

Here are some tips from the workshop I'm using as I write my book. Let these strategies be your guide as well. (By the way, a lot of this advice comes in handy for any type of writing project.)

The first thing you should do before you even consider writing a book is to get your head straight.

You have to build up your belief in yourself. You have to believe that you can write and that you can be an expert in your field.

Learn to recognize negative thoughts and actions and replace them with positive ones.

If you think, "I'm not an expert," immediately stop and say, "I am an expert. I have the knowledge and training I need to position myself as an expert, and I know more about my topic than the average person."

Another example of a negative belief is, "I don't have time," or "This is a waste of time." Replace those thoughts with, "I have plenty of time to do what I want to do. If I want to write a book, I need to spend one less hour each day doing something frivolous and instead spend that time writing."

Or maybe you think, "I don't have the knowledge to write a book." Replace that with, "I do have the knowledge, and what I lack, I can make up in research and interviews." Many articles and books have been nothing more than interviews or other people's stories.

The next step to writing a book is to weigh your passion and experience to come up with the topic. Also, you want to tie it into your niche so you can gain credibility as an expert.

A great way to do this is to take out a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle to make two columns.

On one side, title it "What am I passionate about?" and the other "What am I good at doing?"

Put at least 10 answers into each column and see which ones match up.

When you have a topic on the passion side and one on the knowledge side that overlap, you've found the subject for your project.

Then try to tweak the topic to relate to your niche.

For example, I'm passionate about psychology, and I'm experienced with marketing. Because my niche is self-help, my book is going to be about marketing to the self-help niche and the psychology behind it.

My prospective clients who sell self-help products can use my book to increase their client base by understanding the psychology of people who want to improve and why they buy self-help products.

Now you can follow this outline to write it:

Step 1. Pre-Writing

Here, you outline everything you want to talk about and come up with ideas and stories you might share.

Within a week, you could have an entire rough draft outline of your book if you spend some time each day.

On day one, make an outline of your entire book, or if you prefer, mind map it.

On day two, use your outline to make a rough draft of your entire table of contents including chapters and sub-chapters.

On day three, add a few sentences to each section of your table of contents.

On day four, take a tactic used by Zig Zigler to build credibility and add ideas for two stories to each point you want to make. This also entertains the reader and gives you more to talk about.

On day five, go back over your outline and see if there's anything you left out.

Also, look at some other books on your topic and see what they cover. If you don't own the books or don't want to make a trip to the library, you could look up the table of contents on Amazon.

On day six, fix the flow of your outline. Make sure it all makes sense and moves from point to point with ease. If you need to move a point to another chapter or swap chapter 3 for 5, this is the time to do it.

On day seven, rest.

Step 2. Drafting

During drafting, avoid revisions and editing. Instead, just get everything written down or typed.

This isn't about formatting, spelling, grammar, or writing properly. This is a brain dump! Get it all out and get it out fast so you don't lose anything.

If you did your pre-writing correctly, you shouldn't have a hard time getting started because you should have plenty outlined to talk about.

But if you're freezing up, tell yourself you can always edit later – and you will. For now, you have to get something on paper – even if you think it's horrible.

You can start slowly by adding a few sentences to each chapter. Then add a few more. Keep adding a few sentences until your table of contents grows into your entire book.

Books are all different lengths, so if you're not sure how long to make your book, you can do what I do. Choose a book that is about the same amount of pages you want your final book to be. Count the number of chapters, number of pages per chapter, and number of words per page. This will give you an idea of how long each chapter should be and how many chapters your book should have.

Step 3. Revision

In the revision step, you can finally go back and edit your work.

If you have parts that need to be moved, this is the time to do it. Reorganize your thoughts, add stories where you need them, and create new chapters if you need to.

Then do another round of revisions to clean, enhance, and polish it.

This process could take a while because you might want to go through several revisions to get it as good as possible.

Step 4. Proofreading and Editing

The instructor of the book-writing class said it would be very beneficial to hire out this process, and I agree.

Once you're finished with the book, you'll be so close to it that you probably won't notice minor errors and typos.

Hiring a copyeditor will give you a set of fresh eyes to find things you missed and fix the quality of your book.

If you can't afford to hire a professional copyeditor, at least have a few smart friends and family members look for problems like spelling and grammar and things that don't quite flow.

You might also try to find a fellow writer who has a book he needs edited. You could trade books and do each other a favor.

Step 5. Publish Your Book!

Finally, your book is ready to be read by your audience!

Of course, you could try to find a publisher. But if your book is mainly for building your credibility, it will be easier and faster for you to self-publish your book or even publish it as a PDF e-book to get it into the hands of your readers.

So, what about you? Do you have plans to write a book this year? If so, what's your topic?

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26 Responses to "A Step-By-Step Guide to Writing Your First Book"

Great article, and perfect timing, Christina! Thanks. Do you have any recommendations for print-on-demand services, or thoughts on publishing straight to Kindle?

Steve Roller – over a year ago

Christina, this is a great article and your timing is spot on for me! I'm in the midst of completing my first book "Big City Results for Small Town Businesses" and the tips you've given will help me greatly!

Guest (Melanie The Hometown Marketing Girl) – over a year ago

Hi Steve, I actually haven't tried any of the print-on-demand places. When the time comes, I'm going to try several to compare the quality. lulu.com is at the top of my list.

I think publishing straight to Kindle is a fine idea. I would do that... except it wouldn't fulfill my crazy desire to hold MY book in my hand. :)

I'll probably print a few copies for myself and people who want them, but mainly "publish" virtual books.

Let me know if you want to talk more...

Christina Gillick – over a year ago

I recently wrote an eBook about bartending. I sold my first book today!!

On my next one I am definitely going to use these steps. I can see where it will help a lot.

Mary C – over a year ago

This guidance plan to publish, and distribute a book helped me understand what a book really is, and now because of your help I will live my dream and become the successful writer I always wanted to be..... Thankyou!!!

Guest (jakelyn) – over a year ago

Nice guide, very helpful!

Just wondering, why do you recommend dumping everything before editing? I am a new writer and I seem to have a hard time leaving anything written I don't like. If I keep editing as I go, am I likely to get stuck?

And to the comments, I've just started using CreateSpace, which is an Amazon print-on-demand company. Haven't published anything yet, but getting setup was pretty easy. Might be worth checking out.

Guest (Mike) – over a year ago

Mike ... one of the ways to give yourself writer's block is to begin the editing process too early. Yes, it is difficult to keep from scrolling up and fixing typos and rewording sentences, so perhaps you could try turning off your computer monitor and just type.

The idea behind this is that you are at your least creative when you are being critical, and that when you are judging yourself (to find errors) it can be very difficult to express yourself freely.

Guest (Sparrowhawk011) – over a year ago

Also, if you don't try to "edit as you go" when you finally begin editing you know you will be tossing out some of what you wrote... so you are less likely to hold onto passages that don't work in your finished product because you knew that some if not most of what you "dumped" was not quality material.

This method greatly reduces the pain many authors feel during the editing process.

When you struggle to craft the perfect sentence or paragraph (or chapter) you may be tempted to keep it even if it doesn't fit. So don't struggle when you start out. Wait until you have dumped out a good rough draft of your material, and read what you dumped looking for a book you want to publish.

And yes, I could probably have written a book on this... but who would read a book about how to write books by an author who has never sold a book? :-)

Guest (Sparrowhawk011) – over a year ago

Great write up.Well done Christina. I can't wait to publish my 1st book,using the steps outlined here. My only challenge is how to concentrate on one book @ a tym. I have ideas on different book I want to write. This has left me wit different "abandoned books". Please what should I do to avoid this? Thanks and God bless.

Guest (Sophie) – over a year ago

Thank you for all this information, I am sure it will lead me somewhere It has been a long time dream that someone one day would quote from my book, and I would feel like Whooooow

Guest (Pillas) – over a year ago

I am going to change the world history by writting my new book with the tittle.:".....?.....?....?.....?.....?....?".plz pray for me

Guest (Msarfaraz) – over a year ago

This is a superb article. thank you very much.

Guest (Ryan Foxhound) – over a year ago

This is wonderfully a directive Web site,that can help the books authorship dreamers like myself,and the copy writers to courageously enhance their writing skills.

Guest (Collins) – over a year ago

Excellent tips for those who attempt write their first book. Great!!!

Guest (Joseph) – over a year ago

Thanks for your help. I am a first timer everything has been put together. I have seen how some expert how to books are put together. Example: One hot summer day my son and I was. And they just go on and on talking about every other thing but what the book is suppose to be about. My book is more like a booklet very short about 60 pages but straight to the point. Can you give me the ABC's of how a straight to the point how to booklet is put together.

Guest (Percy Voorhies) – over a year ago

I have just begun writing for pleasure however could you provide me with potential guider or publisher

Guest (moshana maboy) – over a year ago

Thanks for the info. A nice straightforward plan to organize the process.

Now I just need a way to get around "idea block". How to go about finding the idea for the book...

Christoski – over a year ago

I am writing a book about my life and just need a few tips

Guest (Ebonie Prince) – over a year ago

Wonderful, i know one day i will come across an inspiration like this. This is just what i need to fulfill my life long ambition to become an author. Thanks for getting me off the flour.

Guest (azanuwhwa emmanuel) – over a year ago

Thank You for the information. Now I will organize my ideas, and start the process of writing my first book.

Guest (Betsy Sanchez) – over a year ago

Hi Great article! There's just one important aspect that's not mentioned, especially as it's stated that "it will be easier and faster for you to self-publish your book". I think mention should have been made about the formatting of the book, so that aspiring authors get a fuller picture of what's involved.

Regards.

Colin thecompleteselfpublisher dot com

Guest (Colin) – over a year ago

Hi Thanks for the article

I work as a service co-ordinator for community health industry.

I am writing about the dilemma of the theory and practice. I have a title.

I look forward to other articles

Guest (Mary Aust) – over a year ago

I am amazed and happy the same time ,to get details what I was looking for ,to start writing a book .thankyou so much for your Information.

Guest (Segu) – over a year ago

Christina, your article is full of encouragement. Now I can do justice to my writing, More power to your elbow dear.

Guest (Sule Christian) – over a year ago

This is an awesome tool that I am grateful to now have, Thanks!

I do plan to write a Book for my children, by Christmas 2022. I will share family stories and memories, facts, records, recipes, photos, timelines, etc in order to preserve history for future generations to use to learn from and discover for years to come. I even have a follow-up (topic: labels, lies, and loyalty).

Kelli Patton – over a year ago

This is awesome advice! I have been playing with ideas for a book for a while but this is such a simple step by step guide I think I can follow it and actually produce my book!

Joanne C – over a year ago

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