

Ten Tips To Get Started Writing Your Book

By Judy Cullins

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You are far more likely to successfully write and publish your book if you follow these tips before you write a single chapter.

1. Write your book's working title. It helps you focus and answer the readers' questions about the topic. Most non-fiction has subtitles as well. It's better to be clear than clever, but clever and clear are fine. Passion At Any Age: Twelve Ways to Unleash It, Self-Promotion for the Creative Person, Quadruple your book's Online Sales in Less Than One Month.

2. Write your book's thesis. A thesis is a sentence or so stating the audience's main problem and how your book will solve it. Knowing the thesis before you write the book keeps you on track. All chapters should support it. The thesis could be "Each of you has passion and you can unleash it through these twelve steps."

3. Test your book's significance. While most writers fear their book won't sell, it takes only two significances to write a book, and three for a great seller. Ask yourself, Is it relevant? Then write it! Does it present useful information? Does it have the potential to positively affect people's lives? Is it lively, humorous? Does it help answer important questions? Does it create a deeper understanding of human nature?

4. Pinpoint your target audience, all-important to your book's success. No, not everyone will want to read your book. How old are your prospective readers? Male? Female? Are they interested in personal growth, science fiction, mystery, how-to books? What challenges do they face? Are they business people? What magazines and Web sites do they like? Are they Internet savvy? What causes do they support?

Once you know them, write a letter and tell them why you are writing your book and what benefits it will bring them. Dear

over-50 reader, "I'm writing *Passion At Any Age* to help you live life full throttle--with more abundance, joy, and meaning."

5. Write your reasons for writing this book. Your reader, the media, the television and radio talk show hosts all want to know why you wrote this book. Be prepared up front, so you will shine when opportunities come your way. For instance, "I wrote this book because so many of my clients and students asked me to. They didn't want theory; they wanted practical how to's to help them live life well. This audience, primarily over 50, wants and needs practical and spiritual tools to let their passion out.

6. Write down your publishing goals for this book. Do you want to give it away to members of your family or a particular group? Do you want to sell it? How many copies do you want to sell your first year? How much money do you want to make each month? What publishing format will you choose--self-publishing, traditional publishing, Print Quality Needed or Print on Demand, or eBook?

7. Organize the parts of your book. In one file, keep your introduction; in another, your index or resource section. Include your bibliography and keep a file of all people you will quote in your book who may give you a testimonial later. Keep each chapter in its own file labeled correctly so you can find it within minutes. Twenty percent of your papers are important. Be sure to file them vertically and in order to save you time and frustration as your book projects grows. Keep computer files also.

8. Write down your chapter's format. Readers expect a clear map to guide them. They like consistency. In non-fiction, each chapter should be approximately the same length and have the same sections. To make your chapters sparkle, use stories, anecdotes, headings, photos, maps, graphs, exercises, tips. Readers like easy-to-read side bars in boxes.

9. Write the back cover material before you write your book. This "outline" helps give your book direction and helps you focus only on what's important to your thesis or theme. Your back cover has around 8 seconds to impress your prospective buyer.

Include what sells: reader and famous people's testimonials, a benefit-driven headline to hook the reader to open the book and read the table of contents, and bulleted benefits. Your bio and picture can go on the inside of the back cover to leave more room for your sales message on the back cover.

Use your back cover as a sales letter that can go on your web site or emails you send out to your prospective buyers.

10. Mock up a front cover in your book's early stages. Keep it by your workstation to inspire you. To sell your books, your cover and title have around four seconds to hook your buyer. Covers are more important than what is inside. Browse the bookstore and copy a few ideas to get you started. Do you have color preferences? Is your title powerful and short enough to be read across the room?

Writing a book is so much easier when you approach it in small bites. As soon as you get these ten parts written you will be able to start asking more specific questions that become your chapter headings.

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