

Steps in Writing and Publishing a Book

By Debbie Hardy

Many people with the urge to write a book have no idea what is involved. They've probably told amusing stories and heard someone say they should write them down. Only a special person can actually complete and publish a book. It's not easy, but it's possible.

Here's a list of steps in the publishing process:

1. Get an idea. Write what you're passionate about, maybe what someone else has written but from a different point of view.
2. Attend writers' conferences. There's more to learn than you thought possible. And if someone requests that you send something, send it.
3. Develop friendships. This is an industry of relationships, so create and maintain as many as you can. Facebook is a good way to stay connected.
4. Determine your audience and write directly to them. Don't write for "everyone."
5. Puke your book out. No book was ever published before the author wrote it.
6. Write a query or a proposal, depending on whether you write fiction or nonfiction. Get a book, attend a class, or search online to learn how.
7. Rewrite your entire manuscript. According to Stephen King, your second draft = first draft – 10%. If you wrote 90,000 words, edit out 9,000 of them.
8. Join a writers' group. Find one that will help you improve, not tear you down.
9. Have your manuscript critiqued. I cried after my first critique, but was pleased with the changes suggested.
10. Keep your voice. Take suggestions from others, but don't talk like them.
11. Build a platform (the people who are likely to buy your book within the first 90 days). Publishers use this info to make their decisions. Your platform will include your contacts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, e-mail, and any social media.
12. Grow a thick skin. Your words are not divinely-inspired, so be willing to let some of them go.
13. Rewrite and have your manuscript critiqued again. You want readers to love your work, so give it to critical readers for their reaction before publishing.
14. Repeat the last step as often as needed to get the best possible product. You may want to hire a freelance editor, but be sure they're good at editing.
15. Acquire a current copy of Writer's Market Guide and/or Christian Writer's Market Guide. Study it to determine which agents/publishers might be interested.
16. Send your query/proposal ONLY to agents or publishers who work in your genre.
17. Check out the agent's/publisher's website for submission guidelines and current contact information.
18. Keep accurate records of what you send to whom and when.
19. Wait. It takes 2-3 months or longer for most agents or publishers to respond. Some won't respond at all. Don't be offended; that's the way it is.
20. Keep building your platform. The more people you can get to talk about your book, the more you'll sell.
21. While you're waiting, keep writing. Move on to the next book, short story or article for publication (magazines).
22. When you get a rejection letter, don't take it personally. Think of it as a first date. You don't marry everyone you have a first date with. Thank goodness!
23. A rejection only means that the person who will love your manuscript is at a different address.

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24. Keep a record of suggestions included in your rejections, if offered. Most rejections are standard form letters, so if someone sends a personal note, thank them in writing. They could become your friend and ally!
25. Wait. It could take a year or longer to get an agent.
26. When an agent accepts your work and wants to represent you, they'll send you a contract. Do not pay your agent; they make money when your book sells.
27. Be nice to your agent, as he/she will now be the one getting your rejection letters. Treat them like a friend but with respect.
28. Your agent might be working on a deal without giving you particulars. Don't get upset with him/her, as having a meltdown may derail any plans in process.
29. Wait. It takes months, sometimes years, to get acceptance from a publisher.
30. Don't hold out for an advance. Very few publishers these days offer any money up front.
31. When you get an offer from a publisher, read the contract before you sign it. You may want to get an expert opinion. An agent is a great resource.
32. Research royalties offered and compare to the rest of the market. Sometimes royalties are paid on retail price, sometimes only on net profit.
33. Wait. Publishers schedule production months or years in advance. A contract doesn't mean you'll be published immediately or ever.
34. Hire a publicist. They will set up radio and TV interviews for you and will want to start publicity six months before your book is released.
35. Practice being interviewed. Your publicist will compose a list of questions for interviewers to use. Write your answers and have a friend role-play with you.
36. Find an image consultant who will help you look your best. They'll also give you tips for television appearances.
37. Research your interviewer ahead of time. It's more personal if you have listened and know a little about them before your show.
38. Let all your friends and contacts (your platform) know about any interviews you have. This will increase the number of listeners, which will please your host.
39. Write a thank-you note to the producer and the host after the interview. So few people do this that you'll stand out from the crowd.
40. Keep a detailed record of your appearances and contacts. This will come in handy when you schedule publicity for your next book.
41. Marketing is up to you, not the publisher. Learn all you can about how to market your book and yourself. Even if all your friends and family members buy a copy, you'll need to sell more.
42. Don't quit your day job. Only about 5% of writers can support themselves and their families on what they earn writing. It's like making it big in Hollywood. A few are lucky; the rest do it for the love of the craft.
43. Write every day. A painter paints, a baker bakes, and a writer writes.

These are not in chronological order and you may work on more than one step at a time. This is not an exhaustive list, but it gives you an idea of what's involved.

Having written a book puts you in an exclusive group, as very few people can make that claim. But that's only the first part of the process.

Whatever your goal, don't give up. You never know when your book might become the next bestseller. And you don't want to quit right before that happens.