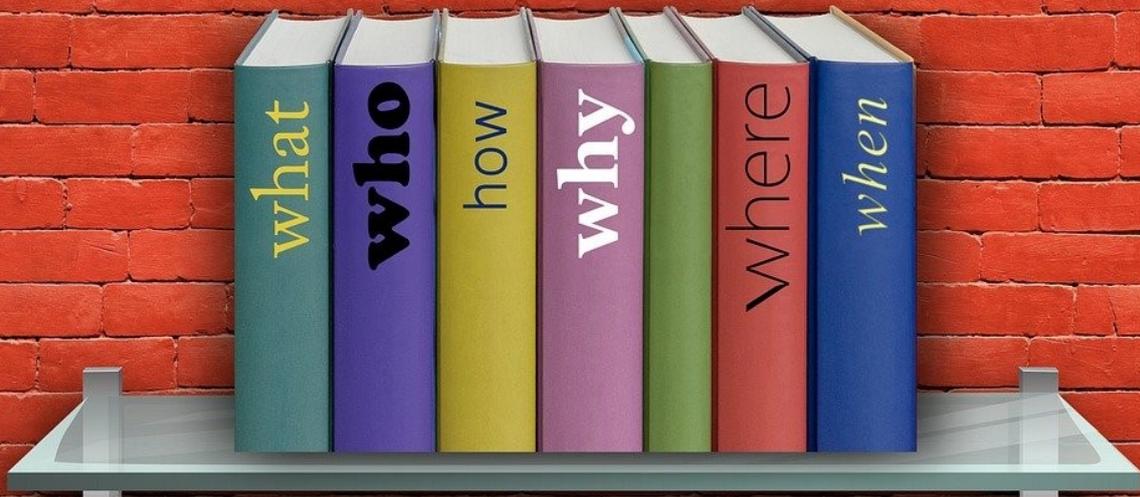


The WHAT, WHY and HOW of Writing a Book



A workbook to help you find your idea, plan your content, identify your reader and write that book!

ALISON THOMPSON, THE PROOF FAIRY
www.theprooffairy.com

So you want to write a book?

That's fantastic! Technology today means it's easier than ever for anyone to publish a book and no matter how many books are out there, there's always room for another – especially one written by YOU!

But while publishing a book is reasonably easy, writing a book isn't! And you may already be thinking, "Well, I want to write a book, but what will it be about, and how am I going to find the time to get it written?"

That's where this workbook comes in handy, because over the next few pages we will be working together to discover the answers to the following questions:

WHAT will you write about?

WHO is your book for?

WHERE and **WHEN** will you write it?

HOW will you finish it and get it published?

And **WHY** do you want to write a book in the first place?

There are five main stages to writing and publishing a book:

- ⇒ Planning
- ⇒ Writing
- ⇒ Editing
- ⇒ Formatting
- ⇒ Marketing

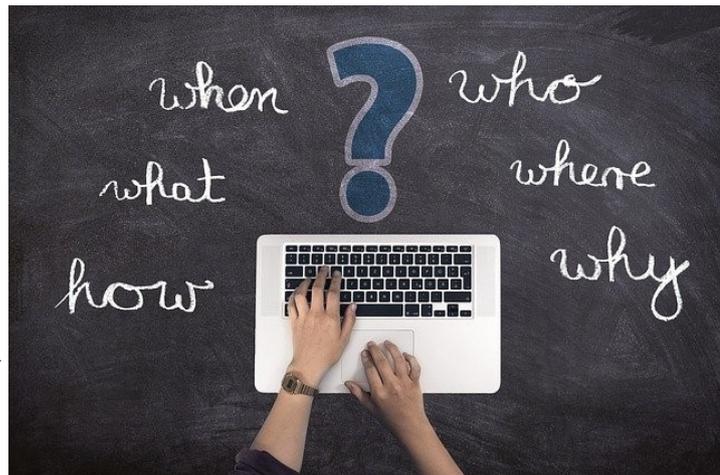
This workbook will help you crack the first stage – planning – and you'll also get some useful hints and tips to guide you through the rest of the process.

The book contains lots of exercises that will help you to find a topic, structure your book and plan your content. The best way to use it is to read it all the way through once before you start working on your book. You'll also find it useful to print it off, so you can complete the exercises.

The later chapters include information on the writing and publishing process that's worth knowing before you begin to write your book.

But first, let's look at that very important question....

Why do you want to write a book anyway?!



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WHY do you want to write a book?

Writing a book is a fascinating process. Depending on the subject matter you may find it cathartic, illuminating, frustrating, emotional or exciting – or a mix of emotions!

Before you begin writing your book it's important you think about WHY you want to write it. Writing a book can take months (or even years – although I really wouldn't advise you spend that long on it!) so knowing why you're doing it and what you want to achieve can make all the difference to how motivated you feel during the writing process.

There are many reasons why you might want to write a book, from the prestige of being an author to creating a source of income. Here are five big of the biggest benefits.

1. Share your story

We are all unique beings with our own unique stories to tell. Whether it's an unusual hobby, a challenge you've overcome or an imaginary world you inhabit, you have a story worth telling ... so why not do just that?

2. Share your expertise

You have a huge library of knowledge in your head that deserves sharing with a wider audience. Just because something is second nature or comes easily to you doesn't mean everyone else can do it too!

3. Pass on advice

Take the most important things you've learned in life and turn them into a book that will inspire, support, comfort and help other people.

4. Raise your profile

Sharing your knowledge, expertise and experience, whether achieved through life or business, raises your profile. In short, writing a book makes you the expert.

5. Open the door to new opportunities

Media appearances, invitations to run workshops, speaking gigs, commissions ... the list goes on. Don't dismiss the idea that writing a book will change your life completely!

A word of warning

DON'T write a book simply to make money! It can be a good source of secondary income, but unless you have something equivalent to the Harry Potter series you're unlikely to make your fortune being a writer! Look on any income as a bonus and focus on the benefits above – and you will be well on your way to becoming a successful author!

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I want to write a book because ...

There are lots of reasons why people write books – and your reasons might make a difference to your writing style, the content, the publishing route you choose or the marketing you do. Tick below all the reasons you want to write a book – or add anything missing from the list.

I want to write a book because...	✓
I want to share my story, experience or knowledge	
I want to make a difference to people's lives/the wider community	
I want to raise the profile of me/my business	
I have always dreamt of being an author	
I want to share some advice or a message with a wider audience	
I want to be famous!	
I want to leave a lasting reminder of who I was	
I want a new career	
I want to make money	
I want to enter and potentially win awards	
I want to help other people in a similar situation to me	
I want to be a best-selling writer	
I want to be a full-time author – travelling, writing, visiting book fairs and conferences, and doing author readings and signings	
I want to have a book published by a famous publishing house	
I want to become an expert and maybe be booked as a speaker	
I want to have a book to give to my friends and family	
I want to be able to say "I am an author" or "I have written a book"	
Other reasons...	

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WHAT will you write about?

The key to writing a book is to choose a topic that:

- ⇒ You are passionate about (or at least have a strong interest in)
- ⇒ You already know something about
- ⇒ Other people will be interested in

Use the exercises below to find topics that you could write about.

Note: If you already have a topic in mind it's still worth doing the following exercise – you may be surprised by what comes out, and you may discover your second (or third, or fourth) book topic!

Topics I am passionate about include:

Topics I am knowledgeable about include:

Life experiences I've had include:

Things I enjoy doing are:

Some lessons I've learned from life are:

People often ask me about/ask me for advice on:

I love reading books about and learning more about:



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Now look at all your answers. You'll probably see the same things coming up over and over again. Pick out these recurring topics – the things that you have an interest in, enjoy **and** are knowledgeable about. Write them down here.

Choose ONE of the topics above – the one that appeals to you most – and write down as many ideas around that topic as you can! It doesn't matter how random or bizarre they are – just use this time to dump everything you have in your mind. Keep coming back to this 'brain dump' and adding stuff as it comes to you.

My topic is:

Ideas around this topic:

If you're struggling, you might find the following resources useful. Simply type in your topic to find out what other people are interested in. There's bound to be something there to inspire you!

[Answer the Public](#)

[Ezine Articles](#)

[Quora](#)

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Next, look for common themes in the ideas you wrote down and group them together. Try to come up with twelve general themes ... These won't necessarily be your chapter headings but they are a good place to start!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

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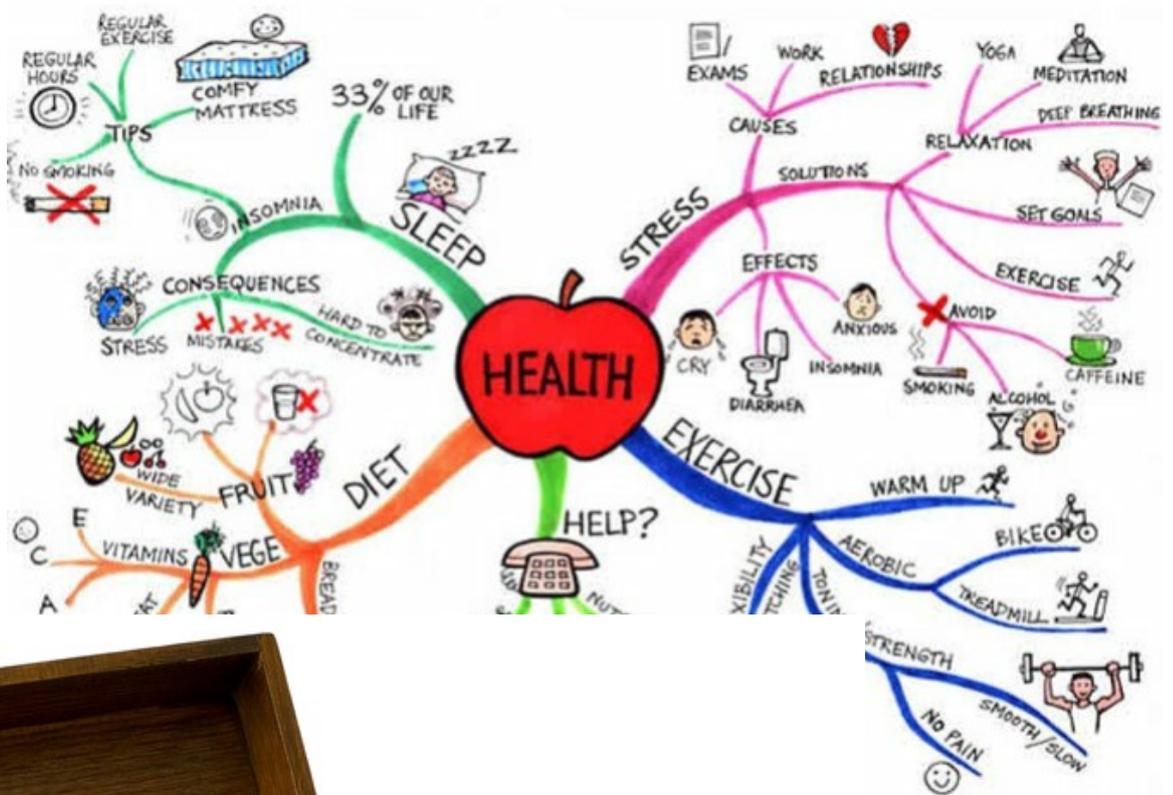
Now take a sheet of paper for each theme and write down as many ideas as you can within that theme. Some of these will be from your initial brain dump, but now you can focus more specifically on certain areas and other ideas will come to you. Use the idea generating tools again if it helps.

You should end up with 12 pages covered in wild and wonderful ideas.

Finally, pick out between 3 and 6 ideas for each theme. Using index cards, separate pieces of paper or mind-mapping, write each of the 12 themes and then add your chosen sub-topics on separate cards.

This will now form the main planning resource for your book. Expand on each sub-topic, and note down vital information, key points to include and any areas you need to do further research on.

Add to and rearrange the themes and sub-topics as much as you want until the structure feels like it will work. Keep your plan with you and add to it as and when ideas come to you!



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WHO is your book for?

By now you should have chosen a topic and broken it down into 12 themes, with 3-5 ideas for each one. You'll have written everything down on index cards and sorted them into an order that makes sense.

Next you need to think about who is likely to read your book – who is your ideal reader? Try answering the following questions:

Who will buy my book?

What problems or fears are they dealing with?

What will they get from reading my book?

What will the outcome be? How would I like their life to improve after reading my book?

Write a short biography of your ideal reader – gender, age, home, occupation, family, beliefs, likes and dislikes etc - and keep this in mind when you write your book.

Two more questions to consider:

Why are you the ideal person to write this book? Why should people listen to you?

Are there any other books you could write that are related to this one?



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WHEN and WHERE to write your book

Once you have discovered your topic, found your sub topics and defined your ideal reader you're ready to start writing! Every author is different and there are no hard and fast rules to when or where or how you should write, but here are some tips to help you find the time, place and pace that works for you.



Write regularly

While some people can write a little bit here and there, the most successful authors are those who find a writing 'groove' and stick with it. Your own personal 'groove' will depend on your lifestyle and work/family commitments, but one of the following might work for you:

- ⇒ Write every day for 30 minutes or an hour, first thing in the morning or in the evening.
- ⇒ Set a word goal – for example, 500 words – and make sure you hit it every day.
- ⇒ Block out two afternoons a week for writing.
- ⇒ Write every Saturday (or any other day that suits you).
- ⇒ Go away for a few days on a 'writing retreat' and make a great start on your book!

Find the perfect writing place

Some people can write at their desk; others find they are too easily distracted by work/Facebook etc. Consider creating a special place that you only use for writing – perhaps a corner of the dining room or bedroom, or the conservatory – and your brain will soon start to associate that place with the act of writing.

Alternatively, many writers find they do their best work in a coffee shop. I've even heard of people dictating their book during their commute to work, or while they're at the gym! Try different locations and see what works best for you.



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How to overcome writer's block

Writers suffer from writer's block for many reasons, but often it's because:

- ⇒ You don't know if anyone will be interested in what you have to say
- ⇒ You haven't made a plan and don't know what to write
- ⇒ You are worried about making spelling mistakes

If you've followed the steps in this book you should have a solid plan written by now, so you know exactly what to include in every chapter. However, there still might be times when the words don't seem to flow. If that happens to you, here are some tips to help you overcome writer's block.

Stick to the writing schedule you have planned. You have got a writing schedule, haven't you? Just write something – anything. Sometimes even writing the lyrics to your favourite song or the same line over and over can overcome that fear of the blank page and get your creativity flowing.

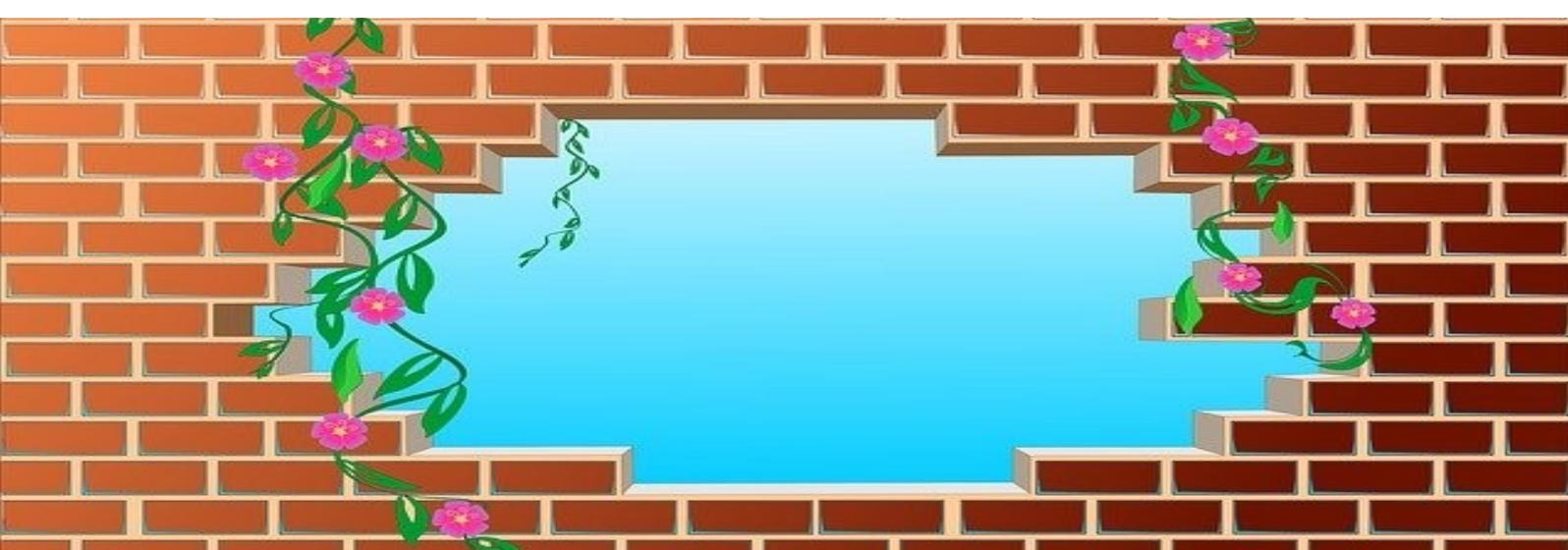
Try freewriting. Write continuously for ten minutes about whatever comes to mind. Again, the act of writing something – even if it's not related to your book – can overcome the blockage. And you never know what nuggets the freewriting might reveal – a plan for book number two, perhaps?!

Be kind to yourself. So long as you are writing, your book is progressing. Even if you think it's rubbish now, you could get a pleasant surprise when you read it back later ... and there's plenty of time for editing!

If the writing is really not flowing, just make notes. You can fill in the gaps another day.

Don't worry about grammar or spelling. That can all be fixed later on! Just take pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), relax and let the words flow. The best books are written when the writers are in full flow and not worrying about the detail.

Set a deadline. Sometimes setting a deadline of when you want to finish – or even publish – your book can help the writing process. If you're really brave, set a realistic date for a book launch – virtual or physical. Organise an event and invite your friends. There's nothing quite like the idea of letting people down to motivate you!



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So you've finished your book ...

Congratulations! You've completed the first two stages of publishing a book – planning and writing! What's next? Here is an outline of the remaining three stages.

Editing

Editing is the process of taking your raw material and turning it into a book that people will want to read. The editing process can be as long as you want – but beware getting stuck in an 'editing cycle'. In some ways your book will never quite be perfect ... so go for 'as good as it gets'!

The editing process looks something like this:

First edit. Do this a week or two after you finish writing, so you come to it with fresh eyes. Read through and look for issues with continuity (Does a main character's name change from Tracey to Stacey partway through?) and clarity (Will someone with no knowledge of the topic understand what you mean?). Look for sections you want to expand, delete or rewrite. Then make the changes.

Second edit. Read through your second version, changing any clunky phrasing, spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

Send to 'beta readers'. These are people who have volunteered to read an early draft of your book and give you feedback. Choose people who are likely to be your target readers. Warn them there may be typos and ask them to comment on the content – what they want more of, what they want less of and what makes no sense!

Respond to feedback. This could mean a few tweaks here and there or a complete rewrite! Of course you can disregard everything the beta readers say – but remember, they are your target market!

Read again. By now you should have a manuscript that you are happy with. Read it through one more time to spot any errors that have crept in during the editing process.

Send to a proofreader. This stage is vital. No matter how good you are at spotting errors it is actually impossible to proofread your own work, so do invest in the services of a professional proofreader to ensure your book is published without any typos.

Formatting

Formatting is quite simply getting your book into the right format for publication, whether in print or digitally. How you format your book depends a lot on how you plan to publish.

Traditional publisher

If you have been lucky enough to land a contract with a publisher then they are likely to manage the formatting process for you.

Short run printing/print on demand

Every printer will have their own requirements for your manuscript so check with them how they want it formatted. Print books can usually be formatted in word processing programmes and supplied as raw

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text or a PDF. However, you need to know about margin measurements and gutters and trim size and be aware of things like page numbering. You also need to choose suitable fonts for your printed book – Comic Sans is rarely likely to make a good impression!

Kindle ebook

Because they can be read on so many devices and apps, Kindle books need to be formatted carefully to make sure they display properly. There's a very useful program you can download from Amazon called Kindle Create, which will help you build your book perfectly.

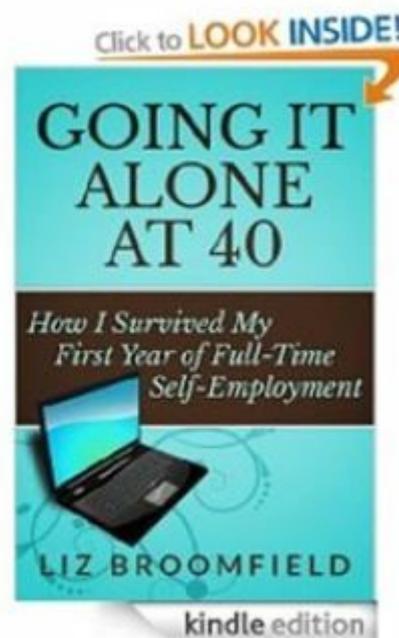
Cover Design

Proofreading is one vital expenditure; cover design is another. It's easy to spot DIY covers so unless you are a graphic designer don't try to do it yourself!

Book covers are available to suit every budget, from pre-made designs with your title added, to custom covers that cost from very little to a huge amount! Work out what your budget is and then see what's available for the price.

Also bear in mind that digital books only require front cover artwork, whereas print books need the back cover and spine artwork too.

Spot the professionally-designed cover below!



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'Write that book' checklist

There's a lot involved in writing a book – probably a lot more than you anticipated. Use this checklist to help you through the process.

FIRST...

- Identify your motivation for writing a book
- Identify a topic and subtopics
- Define who your ideal reader is
- Research what other books are out there on the same topic
- Find a coach, mentor, accountability partner or writing buddy to support you
- Plan your content
- Set a writing schedule
- Write that book!**
- Choose a title (and subtitle)
- Check no one else has used that title!
- Decide whether to use your own name or a pen name
- Check whether there are other authors using that name
- Do a first edit
- Choose some beta readers
- Send the first edit to beta readers
- Make changes based on feedback
- Write acknowledgements, disclaimer, dedication, etc.
- Write an author bio

THEN...

- Write back cover blurb
- Add a copyright notice
- Find any quotes or images you want to use
- Do a final edit
- Send the book to a reputable proofreader
- Research publishing options – traditional, short run, POD, digital
- Choose your ideal publishing route
- Format book for your chosen publishing route
- Arrange cover design
- Upload/send book to printer/publisher
- Buy ISBN number, if required
- Create an author platform using social media, a website etc
- Write press release
- Send press release to relevant local/national media and organisations
- Send PDF copy of book to relevant people/organisations for reviewing
- Promote, promote, promote!
- Order copy of book
- Hold book in hand (or on Kindle) and let the celebrations begin!



PHEW!!!!

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If you need any help...

This checklist is not exhaustive but it will give you an idea of everything that's involved. Depending on the publishing route you take, not all the steps will be necessary – for example, if you get a traditional publishing contract the publisher is likely to do a lot of the work for you. If you self-publish you will be responsible for every element – though of course there are plenty of people out there who are able to help you. Please don't be put off by the list!

Writing a book is an amazing experience and a massive achievement ... and help is at hand. Whether you want someone to coach you through finding a topic and keeping you accountable, or you need more practical help with proofreading, formatting and marketing, I am here to help. Just [email me](#) or [make an appointment for a chat](#). I'll do my best to help you and there's no obligation to take things any further.

Here's how I work with authors:

Author coaching

If you need someone to help you with the planning and writing stage of your project then I can help. As your book coach, I can help you find a topic, structure the content, set goals and overcome obstacles so you can turn your dream of being a published author into reality. I offer [a fully comprehensive package](#) that includes everything you need to write, publish and market your book, or [ad hoc coaching](#), payable by the session, for those times when you just need a little extra help.

Self-publishing package

If you've already written your book then I offer a [complete self-publishing package](#) that includes proofreading, formatting for print and Kindle, cover design, set up of an Amazon KDP Print account in your name and upload of your book.

Marketing package

I can also provide you with a [book marketing package](#) including a website, Amazon author page and social media tools to help you promote your book.

I specialise in helping people take their idea for a book from possibility to plan to publication ... and I'd love to help you too!

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what's your story?**

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Taking your idea for a book
from possibility to plan to publication