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Book Publishing Cheat Sheet

A checklist for writing and marketing your book



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Writing and publishing a book is a big step for your career or business, so wherever you are in your process, congratulations on making as far as you have.

Even if you haven't started writing yet, congratulations are still in order because simply making the decision to write a book is something worth celebrating—here at SPI we'll be the first to tell you it's not for the faint of heart. You're committing to a long and potentially arduous process, depending on how strong of a writer you are, how quickly you can write, and the path to publishing that you choose.

We'd like to help make the process seem a bit less overwhelming and so we've put together this checklist for you to have a high-level overview of all the steps involved in getting your book out into the world, from concept and writing, to publishing and marketing.

Phase 1: Pre-Writing

- Determine your purpose for publishing a book: what's your main goal?
Hint: Imagine it's a year from now and your book is published. Complete this sentence, "My book helps me to . . ."

- Determine your ideal reader: who do you want to reach with your book?

- Determine your book topic and focus: what is the one thing you want readers to take away from reading your book?

- Brainstorm and brain dump any and all ideas on the topic of your book. Use Pat's popular Post-it Note mind-mapping exercise.

- Create an outline of your book's structure, including an introduction, sections, and chapters.

Phase 2: Writing

- Write a quick first draft.

- Use your outline to treat each chapter like a blog post or writing prompt. Check each chapter topic off your list as you go to keep track of what you've written and how much you have left.

- Review all of your material and identify any gaps, missing topics, anecdotes, or other information.

- Complete writing any additional material needed to complete the draft.

- Review all of your material again, and put it in the most logical sequence possible: Hint: Imagine your book takes your reader on a journey and you, as the author, are leading them along the path. Is the path (your structure) the most clear, logical and straightforward way to get to the destination where you want them to arrive?

- Polish the draft as best you can on your own before hiring an editor or asking others to read it.

Phase 3: Editing

- Ask trusted friends to read your draft and give you feedback. Hint: Only ask people to read your draft at this stage who you know will give you honest and useful feedback.
- Continue to revise as much as necessary based on the feedback you get from initial readers.
- After you have taken your draft as far as you can on your own, look for an editor (or editors) to hire.
- Ask for referrals from people you know who have published books of their own.
- Work with a developmental editor until you feel like you have a solid draft.
- Send final manuscript to people in your network, and ask for “blurbs,” two-three sentences of praise to include in the book.
- Compile your front matter (praise page, title page, copyright page, foreword, preface [if including], table of contents, dedication, epilogue, etc.) and back matter (afterword, appendix, index [if including], about the author, email sign up, etc.).
- Get your manuscript line edited or copy edited (your draft may need one or both of these depending on the shape it’s in).

Phase 4: Publishing

- Research and determine which publishing option you will pursue: self-publishing, traditional publishing, or hybrid publishing.

- If self-publishing, ebook
 - Get book cover designed
 - Get book converted to .mobi for Kindle on Amazon
 - Get book converted to .epub for other ebook platforms
 - Create Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) account, add book information, and upload files
 - Create account for other ebook platforms (Barnes & Noble, Apple, etc.), add book information, and upload files

- If self-publishing, print
 - Determine if you will use print-on-demand (POD) such as KDP (formerly CreateSpace), or get a traditional print run
 - If a traditional print run, find a printer specializing in books
 - Determine if you will get a hardback or paperback
 - Get full book cover jacket (front, spine, back for paperback) or dust jacket (front, spine, back, front and back inside flaps for hardback) designed
 - Get interior designed and laid out
 - Create KDP account, add book information, and if POD upload files

- If traditional publishing
 - Write a book proposal. Hint: If pursuing traditional publishing, write a proposal before writing the book draft.
 - Use your proposal to query a literary agent.
 - Work with literary agent to sell your book to a publisher.
 - Start at the beginning of this checklist once the book is sold.

If hybrid publishing

Determine where in the publishing process you'd like support, such as design, printing, distribution, etc.

Research options for publishing partners.

Hire desired partners in the stage at which you need them, and follow their process and procedures through to completion.

Phase 5: Marketing

- Determine any marketing to be included in your book. Items to consider:
 - Unique link for email signup page..
 - Unique link for exclusive download opt-in.
 - "Join me" or "follow me" page, with an invitation to connect with you on appropriate platforms.
 - Companion course page, with an invitation to sign up for free course that includes supplemental material to book.

- For marketing items included in the book, create materials, create web pages, and set up URL redirects as necessary.

- Create a book page on your website.

- Update social media profiles to include book.

- Update email signature to include book info and link to buy.

- Create launch marketing plan. Consider:
 - Offer a pre-order bonus (if making pre-orders available).
 - Recruit a launch team to help promote book.
 - Create social sharing assets for launch team to use.
 - Seek podcast interviews on shows your target audience listens to.
 - Go live on your social media platform of choice.
 - Host a launch party, live or virtual (or both).

- Remember that marketing for your book continues well after the launch, for as long as you hope to sell books.