

MELISSA NEWTON

The Five Ws and an H

Do You Have a Book Inside You?

THE RIGHT WAY TO WRITE BOOKS SERIES

Discover the **six key questions** to ask yourself to write and publish a book.

Q & A format to get quick **insights on approaches to write your book.**

Learn about ghostwriters, writers, and editors, and their different fee schedules.

AUTHOR OF CO-AUTHOR TEAM GUIDE TO WRITING BOOKS

The Five Ws and an H

Do You Have a Book Inside You?

Melissa Newton

Millcreek Media Group
Plainfield, Illinois

The Right Way to Write Books Series

The Five Ws and an H: Do You Have a Book Inside You?

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"Either write something worth reading
or do something worth writing."

--Benjamin Franklin

“Writing, the art of communicating thoughts
to the mind through the eye, is the great
invention of the world...enabling us to
converse with the dead, the absent, and the
unborn, at all distances of time and space.”

--Abraham Lincoln

The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln

Volume 3: 1858-1860



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INTRODUCTION

Our life is made up of moments strung together to create a series of different experiences. The longer we live, the more complex and diverse our individual story becomes.

It has been said that everyone has a book inside them. I invite you to pause and think about the following statements. You might want to jot down any thoughts that come to mind to refer to later in the book. Here we go:

1. Who in your personal and/or professional life has been the most influential?
2. What key events have happened in your personal and/or professional life that caused you to take a specific action?
3. Do you now have insights into choices and experiences you wish you had known when you were younger?
4. If you could share three lessons you have learned so far in life, what would they be?
5. What thought leadership, ideas and experiences would you share from your expertise to help the people you serve in your professional life?



When I teach, I always find asking the above questions a valuable exercise. It stimulates careful self-examination by students or my master class attendees. Asking questions is the beginning to discovering answers. It is why I chose the subtitle to this book to be *Do You Have a Book Inside You?* What do you think? What were your responses to the above questions? Do you have a book you feel needs to be written?

Let me tell you what I believe. I am certain everyone has one book, if not more, inside them. In fact, without knowing your personal and professional life story, I can unequivocally say you have a book inside you that deserves to see the light of day. There are people even now waiting to read your ideas, stories, and experiences.

How do I know this is true? Over the years reading, researching, and working with others to articulate their thoughts into the written word, I have learned there are three absolute truths that apply *only* to you.

Truth #1: You are completely unique.

Of the billions of human beings who have been born since the beginning of time, no one has ever been or will be just like you. Every person is completely unique in body, mind, and spirit.

Truth #2: You experience life from your point of view.

Building on Truth #1, every person you have engaged with, events you have witnessed, and knowledge you have accumulated, is viewed through your eyes. Everything that has happened to and around you has shaped how you see the world.

Trust #3: You learn from the life experiences of others.

Did you stop to realize that your life is a bottomless reservoir of experiences that have been influenced by your interaction with others? Think about it. The learning begins from our earliest childhood memories. We observe the people around us. We build varied relationships. We attend years of school. As adults, we have responsibilities with work, family, and our community. In everything we do, people are a part of our experience.

Do You Have Anything to Say?

As a ghostwriter, I occasionally have heard people say, “I don’t have anything to write about. Who would want to read what I have to say?” What is my response? I start asking questions. It is the single most important way to discover answers.

Every time this has happened, it opens up a fascinating conversation. Why? It is because they start to reflect on their knowledge, experiences, ideas, failures, and triumphs. It is like a curtain is pulled aside and a panorama of ideas and stories to share is seen. They begin to realize the three absolute truths – they are completely unique with their own life experience that has also been enriched by their interactions with others.

It is because you are completely unique I can reiterate my response to the book title question, *Do You Have a Book Inside You?* Yes! You do. Now that you know there is a book inside you waiting to be written, I want to share my formula for evaluating any book project. I apply this formula to my own books and to a book an author-client is considering.

My formula is the title of my book, *The Five Ws and an H*. What are the five Ws and an H? I have developed six questions based on the basic information-gathering principles used by journalists, researchers, and others. These questions help me evaluate a topic or theme for a proposed book based on an idea, experiences or a problem to be resolved. The questions start with the following words:

Who
What
Where
Why
When
How

In the pages to follow, I will provide the key question for each W and an H. Included beneath each question will be six related questions with additional insights to help you work through each W and an H. I have used this formula in all my writing experiences over the years. I hope you find it as valuable as I have to bring out your best work.

Let's get started. You have a book inside you waiting to become a reality!

Melissa Newton



The Five Ws and an H



As an author, your first task is to identify the audience who will read your book.

My formula of using the five Ws and an H can be really useful for authors. It provides an outline that allows you to evaluate the details of a topic or theme for a book. By the time you have reviewed the questions and provided the answers, you will know for certain if and how you should proceed with your book idea.

I have provided the key question for each W and an H. Beneath each W and H, I include six related questions

with additional insights to help you work through each W and an H. These questions are not all-inclusive. You may have other relevant points specific to your topic or theme. Feel free to add them in your evaluation.

1. WHO will need or want to read your book?

The most important question to ask yourself is WHO is the intended audience of your thought leadership, stories, ideas, research, professional advice, or life experience? Will it be your employees, clients, patients, patrons, voters, or family and friends?

Some authors know exactly who their audience will be. Perhaps it is a book only for their clients. I have worked with author-clients whose target audience is not specific enough. Instead, they want to reach multiple types of readers. This can create issues not only in the messaging of the book, but later on when the book is marketed. What you need is a tactic to zero in on your target audience.

Identifying your intended audience is accomplished by developing a descriptive profile that represents your readers. A thorough knowledge of your readers give you a better understanding of the issues that matter to them. In the end, your book will give them what they want.

Below are questions to help you create an audience profile for your book.

WHO Questions

1. Is the audience going to be for current employees, clients, patients, patrons, voters, or family members?
2. What is the demographic of your audience, i.e., age, gender, marital status?
3. What is the financial status of your audience?
4. Where does your audience live? Is your book reaching a national or international market?
5. How does your audience think about things? What is their attitude towards the topic or theme you are writing about?
6. What problems does your audience need resolved?

As you can see, asking yourself detailed questions to develop an audience profile will help you zero in on exactly who your reader will be.

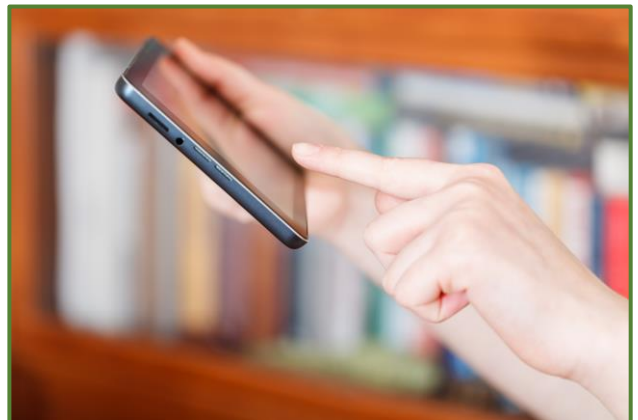


2. WHY would a reader benefit from reading your book?

You already have a topic or theme in mind for your book. A detailed audience profile has been developed. At this point, you need to think about what *value* your book will bring to the reader. In other words, will their life be better because they read your book?

There are supplementary types of content to include to complement the ideas, stories, and experiences that make up the core of your book. Improve the reader experience by including testimonials, interviews, research, lists, images, and quotes, just to name a few.

The key is to present your book content in a way so it is easily understood, applicable to their life, and delivers on the promises made by the topic or theme of the book.



Ask yourself how your reader will benefit by reading your book.

Let's take a look at some WHY questions to stimulate ideas about what benefits you can bring to your audience.

WHY Questions

1. How will your book solve a reader's problem?
2. Can you provide examples to explain concepts in your book?
3. If applicable, does the material you share put the reader on a path for positive change?
4. Will the reader be able to execute the strategies, if any, you present in your book?
5. Have you made it clear to the reader what they will get out of reading your book?
6. Will your book inspire your reader to make better choices, if applicable?



3. WHAT does your book plan to deliver to the reader?

Note: *If you plan to work with a traditional publisher, some WHAT issues discussed below will not apply. However, if you self-publish, all these issues will need to be addressed.*

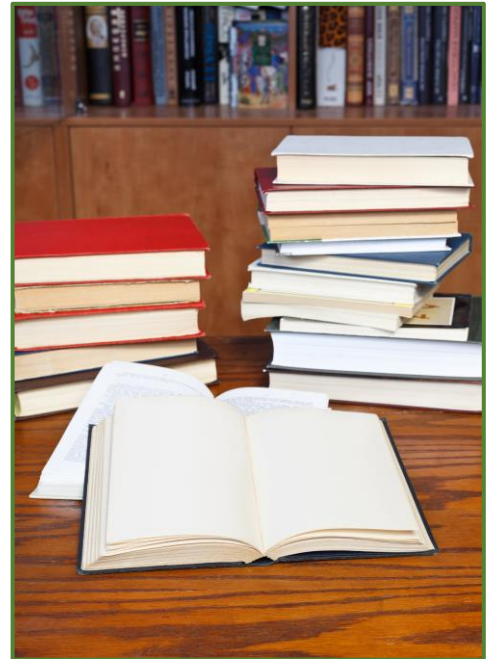
The purpose of the WHAT is to make some basic decisions about how your book will be categorized, produced, and delivered. This step is important because the answers to the WHAT questions will drive choices like the length of your book and the complementary types of content you can use.

Let me provide one example. If you opt for an e-book, it can be whatever page length you want because it is a digital book. However, if you choose a paperback format, there will be minimum page number requirements for printing. The volume will vary between platforms, i.e., Amazon's minimum page count is 24 pages while Barnes & Noble is 40 pages.

WHAT Questions

1. What nonfiction book genre will your book be?
 - A *book genre* is the specific literary type a book is classified.
 - Some book genre categories for nonfiction include: history, spirituality, self-help, business, health and wellness, parenting and family, memoir (also referred to as narrative nonfiction), and biographies.

2. What is the theme of your book?
 - Write one or two sentences that clearly explain what your book is about.
3. Have you determined a book format that ensures a positive reader experience?
 - How many pages (or word length) will your book be?
 - What book format do you want to use? Options include PDF e-book, e-book, print-on-demand paperback or hardcover, hardcover with dust jacket.
 - What size book do you want?
4. Do you want to self-publish or submit to a traditional publisher?
 - New York major publisher. You will require an agent.
 - Small press. Some independent publishers may require an agent.
5. Will your book include photographs, graphs, statistics, research, checklists?
6. Will you take an academic or easy read approach to your writing?



As an author, you want to deliver the best reader experience possible.



4. WHEN is the right time to write your book?

As a professional writer, I naturally agree that any time is a great time to write a book. I not only write books for myself, but as a ghostwriter I collaborate with my author-clients to get the books they have inside them out to the physical and/or digital bookshelf. But, what about you? Are you in the right place in your personal and professional life to commit to getting your book written? After you are done reviewing the WHEN questions, you will be able to answer the previous question.

Before providing you the WHEN questions, I want to share an interesting statistic. I once read that over 81 percent of people want to write a book. Only 18 percent of people ever follow through on that dream.

As with any goal or dream, if you *really* want it, you have to make a firm decision to make it happen. You outline a step-by-step plan to reach your goal. To become an author is no different. If you do not CHOOSE to boldly take the actions necessary to get your book written, you will never see your name on a book cover.

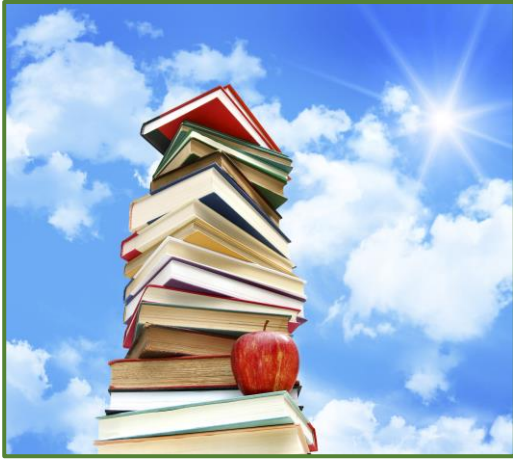
Let me share an encouraging thought. As the author, you are in charge of how to get your book done. As you explore writing and publishing, you will discover there are many tools, resources, approaches, and even people who can help you accomplish your book writing goals. The HOW questions on page 19 will help you begin crafting your strategy to execute your plan for success.

In the meantime, let us look at the WHEN questions to determine what barriers have kept you from writing your book. These are important questions to answer. You want to find solutions so you can move forward with your book. By the time you are finished reading this book, you will have an answer and solution to all of the following questions.

WHEN Questions

1. How long have you been thinking of writing a book?
2. What has been keeping you from getting your book written?
 - Do you lack the time to commit to writing a book?
 - Do you find it difficult to put your thoughts down in writing?
3. Are you afraid of failure?
 - Are you worried what people will think about your book?
 - Are you concerned you cannot get your book published?
4. Do you find it difficult to focus on organizing a book project?
 - Are you detail-oriented?
 - Do you know the steps involved in taking your book from idea to publication?
5. Are you familiar with the business of book writing and publishing?
6. If you cannot take the time to write a book now, do you know when?





There are many options to publish a book.

5. **WHERE** will you have your book published?

The options for authors to publish a book have completely changed in the last ten years. Today, you can either work with a traditional publisher or self-publish.

It is best to make this decision up front. Why? Your choice will determine (1) if and when your book will be published, (2) how you begin the process of writing your book, and (3) the resources you need to get your book from idea to publication.

What is the difference between a traditional publisher or a self-published book?

A traditional publisher

A traditional publisher will manage all the details of taking your book to market including assigning you an editor, copyright submission, book cover design, etc. You also sign over the rights to your book including paperback and digital rights, depending on the agreement. Also, to work with one of the “Big 5” New York publishers and many independent publishing companies, you will need to have an agent represent your work.

A self-published book

If you self-publish your book, you manage every detail of taking your book to market. The key advantage to this approach is you have complete control of your book including maintaining all rights to your work. There are numerous platforms that provide you the infrastructure to publish your book. In addition, the turnaround time to get your book to the marketplace is typically faster.

Both options have their pros and cons. I will go into greater detail about this topic in another book. The option you choose will depend on your goals as an author. I have worked with some author-clients who have a local practice. Their goal is to offer a book to their clients and use it as a sales funnel tool. Some author-clients have no interest in overseeing the details of self-publishing. Instead, they opt to work with an agent to represent a book proposal to a traditional publisher.

Whether you choose to self-publish or find an agent to represent your book to a traditional publisher is a personal choice. I think as you review the WHERE questions you can get a better idea of which approach will best fit your goals.

WHERE Questions

1. Do you want to keep the rights to your book?
 - Have you considered merchandise that can be developed based on your book?
 - Do you intend to create on-demand videos and/or training products based on your book?
2. Are you a detail-oriented person? Do you have any interest in learning the publishing process?
3. If you self-publish, are you open to working with contractors to outsource activities such as book cover design and graphic design for a print-on-demand book.*

** If you are comfortable with technology, you can do your own layout for a PDF e-book (using PowerPoint) or e-book (some allow Microsoft Word document uploads) using a platform's format instructions. No graphic design software or experience is required for these book types. A printed self-published book will require you to hire a contractor who knows graphic design software like Adobe In-Design to layout your book to upload to any platform.*

4. Are you flexible on your deadline for getting your book written, published, and distributed to the marketplace?
5. Do you feel comfortable creating a marketing plan to promote your book? (A book proposal submitted to a traditional publisher must include one. If self-publishing, you can outsource this expertise.)
6. If you self-publish, do you know how to research finding the best platform provider to distribute your book?

The 5Ws Wrap-up

Can you see how valuable the 5Ws are in thinking through writing your book? There is a lot more to producing a book than having an idea, writing down your thoughts, and creating a final manuscript. It is why many people dream of writing a book and only 18 percent of them follow through with doing it.

I am here to tell you that writing a book and taking it to the finish is doable. You can do! There are many resources available to make your dream of being an author come true. Your job now is to review the H - "HOW do you begin to write your book?" to find out how to get started.



6. HOW do you begin to write your book?

You have gone through the 5Ws. Writing a book has moved from an idea in your mind to more concrete plans. The last question that remains to be answered is the H – “How do you begin to write your book?”



The H questions provide the key for authors to make their books a reality.

There are three options for you to choose from and no approach is right or wrong.

It is a personal choice. The prime directive is to get your thought leadership, ideas, knowledge, and experiences documented in book form so it can be shared today and for years to come. HOW you arrive at the end game depends on which approach best matches your goals, time, comfort with writing, and financial resources. Let’s review your options:

Option #1: Do the writing yourself

If writing is a skill you have developed, I encourage you to write your book. Based on my many years of writing, I have learned two lessons I would like to pass on to you.

Lesson #1 – Put together your writer’s toolkit

There are three main resources in my writer’s toolkit. These tools will help you write a grammatically correct, well-written manuscript: (1) dictionary, (2) thesaurus, and (3) reference guide to style, usage, and grammar.* I use both physical books and the software helps available online and on my computer.

**I use The Chicago Manual of Style for my self-published books. Every type of publisher (book, newspaper, magazine) will have a preference.*

Lesson #2 – Read books from other authors in your genre

Many years ago when I was a member of a writer’s group, a seasoned author offered the above advice. I took her counsel and have read a variety of genres ever since. Although I do not ghostwrite in some genres, I have learned from other authors, i.e., their writing style, how they incorporate research into their content or narrative, etc. When it comes to reading works from your own genre, the benefits are twofold: (1) you become familiar with the format used in the books, and (2) provides the opportunity to critically read the work of other authors so you can offer a fresh approach to your work.

Writing your own books is a lot of work, but it is also extremely rewarding. However, making the commitment to write and develop a final manuscript is not a task everyone wants to do. When this is the case, there is another option. Find a professional ghostwriter to collaborate with you on your book.

Option #2: Collaborate with a ghostwriter

As you already know, I am a ghostwriter. My purpose in this section is to draw back the curtain of mystery that is ghostwriting. In case you are not familiar with ghostwriting, this will provide you a brief overview of the process. With this information, you can determine if working with a ghostwriter best meets your goals to get your book written.

What is a ghostwriter?

A ghostwriter is a writer you hire to write your book, but they receive no credit for the work. In fact, a ghostwriter should have a non-disclosure statement as part of their agreement to work with you. When the book is published, only your name is on the book unless another arrangement has been negotiated.

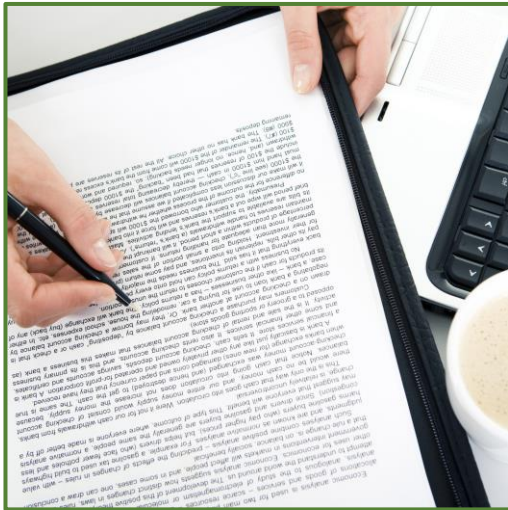
What is the ghostwriter process?

There are quite a few details involved in working with a ghostwriter, but those are for another book. I can, however, give you a broad summary of a typical ghostwriter's process.

- Following an initial interview with you, a very detailed outline of your book is developed.
- Once the outline is approved, the ghostwriter will record a series of interviews with you. Using the outline, interviews, and any other material provided by you, the ghostwriter will write the manuscript.
- Depending on the process of the ghostwriter you work with, you can review the manuscript as it is being written. (I provide my author-clients chapters at a time to review.) You can edit and provide feedback while the book is being written to ensure the book is proceeding as you like.*

**Here is a tip: A professional ghostwriter should write so the reader "hears" your voice. One requirement of every ghostwriter is they produce a manuscript that reads like you would have written it.*

- Once the manuscript is completed and approved, you are ready for the publishing and distribution phase of your book project.



Authors can write a book themselves or collaborate with a ghostwriter.

Every ghostwriter has their own process. As for me, I provide the option for author-clients to be part of the full creative process including editing input as they feel comfortable. It is why I use the word *collaboration* to describe my approach. They provide feedback, but I still do the heavy lifting of writing to share their expertise or story in their voice.

How long does it take to write a book?

The above question is a common inquiry. The truth is every book is unique. What impacts how long a book will take to write? Below are some points that impact a book project:

- How many pages (or total words) will the book be?
- What is the complexity of the topic?
- Will research or third-party interviews be required?
- How involved does the author want to be?
- Does the author want to be traditionally or self-published?*
- Does the ghostwriter have any other current writing projects?

**If traditionally published, a book proposal would need to be developed and a book contract obtained before a book is written.*

As a frame of reference, let me give you some examples of how long a book may take to write. Keep in mind these estimates depend on the points referenced above.

A full-length book

For a full-length book (200+ pages or more), it may take six to eight months or more to write the manuscript.

A short book

For a self-published short book of less than 100 pages, it may take three or four months. These types of books work well for a quick-read book series. To consider this approach, you would brainstorm different book topics on a theme that could be developed into a book series. You could then embed teaser statements in the first book to build reader interest in the next book which has yet to be written.

Whatever the length and scope of your book, you invest time, money, and intellectual energy in this professional relationship. It will be one of the most important work relationships you establish in your career.

Before you start reviewing the HOW questions, let us consider the last ghostwriter option.

Option #3: Have your book completely ghostwritten

Not often, but some individuals may choose to have their book entirely written by a ghostwriter with little or no input from the author-client. Once the initial interviews are completed, the ghostwriter writes the book with a periodic review of chapters, after completion of all the chapters, or perhaps not at all. These author-clients may be top-tier executives, politicians, celebrities, etc.

In these cases, the ghostwriter has worked with the author before or has an exemplary writing and/or publishing background. Depending on the individual, the ghostwriter may be a referral from a publisher, literary agent, or other trusted referral.

When it comes to taking your book from idea to completed manuscript, there are options available to make your book a reality. Below are the HOW questions to help you work through what approach works best for you.

HOW Questions

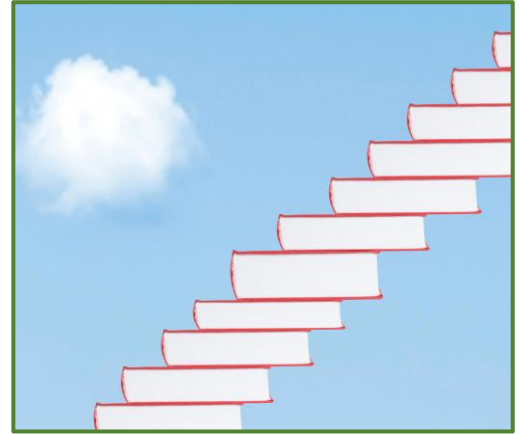
1. How seasoned are your writing skills?
 - Do you feel confident in your knowledge of grammar, sentence structure, and editing skills?
2. Do you have the discipline to stick to a writing schedule?
3. Do you like the idea of sharing the tasks involved in writing a book?
 - What are the strengths you bring to a book project?
 - What do you think are the benefits of delegating tasks to a writing partner?
 - Do you enjoy brainstorming with another person to stimulate new ideas on a project?
4. Have you talked with other authors about their writing experience?
5. Have you performed a Google search to learn more about ghostwriting?
6. What are your book writing goals beyond your first book?



The 5Ws and an H Wrap-up

You have now worked through all the questions in the 5Ws and an H. You now know my formula to start creating an amazing book.

If I may, let me close this section with one piece of advice. As with any goal that requires time, patience, and commitment, it is best to break up your actions into a series of steps. The same applies to writing a book. It is a step-by-step process that builds onto the next. Once you take this perspective, writing a book becomes a more enjoyable activity that will result in boundless rewards.



An author's journey is a step-by-step process.

Now that we have the 5Ws and an H complete, what is the next step? Please turn to the next and final chapter “Your Next Steps.” There is a decision you need to make that will change the course of your life forever!



Your Next Steps



Begin as you want to finish – committed, confident, and organized.

You are standing at the fork in the road. It is decision time. Do you want to start an incredible journey of self-discovery and view new horizons that only can be experienced by an author? Or, would you prefer to shelve the dream of sharing your thought leadership, ideas, stories, and experiences to have a positive impact on others?

I am confident you have chosen the “Write my book” path. Congratulations! You are about to commence an exciting journey that will change your life forever. What is your next step? The actions you take will depend if you are planning to write the book yourself, work with a writer/editor, or collaborate with a ghostwriter. I will separate my insights by the different approaches.

Write the book yourself

As an author, you need to have a good knowledge of how to write a book and the publishing phase. Trust me, it will save you frustration down the road.

- Read some articles by other authors who talk about how to write a book. In your Google search, use keywords like *how to write your own book*, *how to write a book for beginners*, and *how to write a book outline*.

- Understand the basics of copyright. Familiarize yourself with the rules and how to protect your work. If you are in the U.S., register your final book with the U.S. Copyright office. The process may appear relatively straight forward, but there are a lot of nuances to properly manage copyright. Visit www.copyright.gov to review their Frequently Asked Questions to get started.
- Begin your research early to learn what is involved in self-publishing. Do this while you are writing your book. It will not be as overwhelming if your learning curve is at a steady, level pace. There are many articles, books, and videos about the process.

Another good resource is Writer's Digest (www.writersdigest.com) and its publication *Writer's Digest Magazine*. It is an industry standard and provides a great introduction to many topics related to writing. Check with your local library Reference Desk to see if they carry the subscription.

- Start your research early to select the publishing platform you want to use to distribute your book. Decide if you want to publish an e-book or a printed book. Depending on your choice, you will likely need to outsource to experts to take your book to the next step, i.e., graphic designer for a book cover, a professional to do the book layout for a print-on-demand book using software like Adobe InDesign.

The above steps is a place to begin. As with any new endeavor, there is much to learn. However, I think you will thoroughly enjoy finding out how the writing and publishing world works. The advantage for authors today is there is an abundance of information at your fingertips. Plus, there are many options available to share your book with your targeted audience.

What if you do not want to tackle a book project on your own? The next best option is to find an experienced writer/editor to team with you on a book.

Write your book with a writer/editor

Working with a writer/editor is an approach to writing a book that many individual and small business owners opt to do. A big benefit to this option is it can be a more budget-friendly approach since no ghostwriting is involved.

Let me share some key points about working with a writer/editor.

- A writer/editor is NOT a ghostwriter. A writer/editor will not remain invisible behind a curtain of anonymity. They may request a testimonial after the book is completed.
- A writer/editor may choose to have their name notated on the book cover, inside title page or mentioned in the book's Acknowledgements as an editor. If the book is a compilation of content (stories, for example), a writer/editor's name may be shown as *edited by* or *compiled by* on the book cover.
- You are a part of the writing experience. There are two options: (1) you write the manuscript, and the writer serves as your editor, or (2) the writer records you (typically via a video recording platform like Zoom), transcribes the audio, develops a working manuscript based on a detailed outline, and provides a final first draft manuscript for your review.
- The professional writer/editor brings highly valued skillsets to the collaboration. They can develop a detailed outline, organize the raw transcripts into book chapters, perform additional research if needed, and manage the project to meet pre-determined deadlines.
- Working with a writer/editor is a good option if you want to self-publish a book or series of books. Based on your budget, you can do many books while maintaining the rights to your work for merchandising, on-demand training materials, and more.

What if you want a more white-glove writing experience? Would you rather have a professional writer work invisibly behind the scenes to produce a manuscript using your ideas, stories, and concepts? A ghostwriter is your next option.

Write your book with an independent ghostwriter

Collaborating with an independent ghostwriter who has their own business can be a good choice for professionals. A big plus is your working relationship will be with an individual, not a business where writers come and go or the writing is outsourced to an unknown contractor.

Over the years, I have collaborated with many people on a variety of different types of book projects. There are essentially four reasons people choose to team with a ghostwriter.

1. They do not have the time to write.
2. They do not have the writing expertise to produce a high-quality book.
3. On specific book types, they do not have the tech expertise to do the layout or use digital platforms.
4. They prefer to have someone who is knowledgeable about writing and publishing manage the book project.

Keep in mind that once you decide to team with an independent ghostwriter, finding a good, experienced writer is not always easy. Plus, not all ghostwriters provide multiple areas of expertise outside of writing a manuscript. An example would be the ability to produce a manuscript for an e-book and also input it into a digital platform for publication and distribution if you decide to self-publish.

The nature of ghostwriting work is that we are invisible. The other aspect of ghostwriting is that fees charged to clients are difficult to pin down. No place will you find a definitive document that outlines ghostwriter fees. Some writer or agency websites will offer ranges, but it still remains a mystery. To help unravel that mystery, let me share some insights about ghostwriting, including some general fee ranges (mine included), that you may find valuable.

Ghostwriting fees

I want to address the topic of ghostwriting fees up front. It is the first question authors want to know. Once you are familiar with some general ranges, you will feel more comfortable exploring the topic of ghostwriting. Keep in mind: every ghostwriter's fee is different. Each ghostwriter has their own process. Some will only write a manuscript while a select few will also do layout, publishing, and distribution if you choose to self-publish.



Are you too busy to write a book? Team with a professional ghostwriter to get your book done.

I think it is best to be upfront about fees. After all, why waste everyone's time if a ghostwriter's fee is outside someone's budget? Most importantly, no matter the scope of a book project, my attitude is an author-client is spending their hard-earned money to see their book come to life. Why not address the proverbial elephant in the room so we can get down to business!

As part of my initial Zoom conversation, I ask questions to understand someone's goals and vision for a book project. I also ask about their budget range. It is then we can evaluate together what is the best book option and approach to meet your specifications. I recommend you follow this protocol for any ghostwriter you interview for a book project.

Let's take a look at some ghostwriting fee facts as you consider your budget.

1. **A non-negotiable set fee.** Some ghostwriters only write full-length books and thus have a set fee. I have seen some ghostwriter websites where they clearly post their fee, but this is not common. Most of the time you will need to contact the writer. Agencies or companies who specialize in a suite of services, including ghostwriting, may post a set fee. Others will require you to call them as well.
2. **Priced by project, per word, or hourly.** Some ghostwriters charge per book project. Others charge by the word or by the hour. Personally, I charge by the project and invoice additional pre-approved hourly fees if the project scope expands beyond the agreement.

I recommend paying by the project. You know *exactly* what you will be paying – no surprises! Also, large scope project fees are typically paid in equal monthly installments, which is a lot easier on an author-client's budget. On some small scope projects, I will break up the fee into two equal payments, one at the start of the project and the final payment on delivery.

3. **Three types of ghostwriters to choose.** As in any industry, there are different levels of skills and experience of talent. It is no different in the ghostwriting business. You will pay accordingly. When it comes to your book, it will represent your personal brand and/or business. This is not the time to take short-cuts or choose talent based on only fees charged.

Considering my previous statement, I must add you will not know the quality of a ghostwriter's work or how you interact with them until you start working with them. I *strongly* recommend at the start of the project you receive a very detailed outline and at least the first few chapters of the book. In this way, you can review the material to ensure the writer can deliver on promises made.

Let's move forward on our discussion about ghostwriter fees. In this segment, I will provide fee ranges based *only* on writing a manuscript. Since ghostwriters who provide additional services is not common, you will need to evaluate those on a case-by-case basis. Also, I will address special book projects and its pricing in the next section.

- Budget-level ghostwriters. Fees can be up to \$15,000 for a full-length book. These ghostwriters may be beginners in the ghostwriting business or less experienced writers. Budget-friendly writers may also be found on bidding writing websites.
- Mid-range ghostwriters. Fees can range from \$25,000-\$30,000 and \$40,000 - \$75,000+ for a full-length book (200+ pages) depending on the track record of the ghostwriter and scope of the project. Writers in these ranges have varied levels of experience as a book author, ghostwriter, or book editor. What determines the cost?
 - Full-length books can take 6-12 months.
 - How long will the book be?
 - Will there be research, data gathering, or other third-party interviews?
 - How long has the ghostwriter been ghosting books?
 - Has the ghostwriter published their own books?
 - Is the ghostwriter knowledgeable in editing, the publishing industry, and copyright?
 - Do you prefer to work with a ghostwriter whose language they write in is their native language?
 - How customized will the ghostwriting experience be? A white-glove experience will cost more, and not every ghostwriter will offer this option. (An example: reviewing edits via a Zoom meeting versus managed through e-mail or Google Drive for document sharing.)
- Celebrity ghostwriters. Fees are in the six to seven figures.

If you are considering writing a full-length book, I believe there is an advantage to working with a ghostwriter who falls in the mid-range level. Do you think it is better to collaborate with an experienced writer who has published and written other books? In business, talent with certain skills to achieve the best results is based on the people you hire. The same applies to your book, which is meaningful and will represent your brand or business to the world.

What if you do not want to write a book yourself or hire a ghostwriter for a full-length book. Instead, you are interested in a smaller book project with a more budget-friendly bottom line. Maybe you would like a sales funnel e-book for your website? Have you and other colleagues in your industry wanted to collaborate on a book? Once again, technology and self-publishing platforms make many other special book projects available to explore.

Writer/editor fees for special book projects

When I am serving as a writer/editor, I always enjoy working on special book projects. They offer a unique experience every time and provide a budget-friendly option for many individuals and businesses.

As a writer and publisher, I also like that these types of projects allow for greater diversity and depth of knowledge to be added to the collective world of books. Whether working with a single author or a group of authors on a book project, each is a custom experience.



There are many different approaches to writing a book.

Technology in all its variety from software, the internet, e-publishing platforms, and access to publishing in general, has opened the door for anyone who wants to write a book. Being an author or contributor to a book compilation can really benefit your personal brand and business.

Let me share some of the approaches available to individuals and groups of authors who combine their voices to do a special book project. For a frame of reference, since these types of book projects are customized, I have included fee ranges I charge. Keep in mind, not every writer/editor may provide these options.

- **Short books/e-books.**

The fee for a short book can range from \$8,000 – \$15,000 depending on the scope of the project.

- These books can be done with an experienced writer/editor.
- Books can be 50 -100 pages (up to 25,000 words). These are considered *quick reads* or *short read* books.
- If an e-book, the writer may be able to select an e-publishing platform, create an account, and upload the manuscript using Microsoft Word and book cover on your behalf.
- If you want a printed book (print-on-demand), the layout of the manuscript will need to be done in a desktop publishing program like Adobe InDesign. This will be an additional cost.
- A graphic designer would create a book cover for both book types.
- Platforms provide free ISBNs so your book can be sold globally in many retail outlets including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Ingram Network, and 40,000 stores, schools, and libraries.
- Short books can be written by one author or a group of authors who want to collaborate on a book.
- Multiple authors can collaborate on a book and share the writer's fee. These types of books work well for professional networking groups or colleagues in the same industry.

- **PDF e-books - single or multiple authors.**

The fee for a PDF e-book can range from \$2,500 – \$5,000 depending on the scope of the project. They are similar to this e-book you are reading now.

- These books can be done with an experienced writer/editor who can do the book layout for you.
- Books are typically short, i.e. up to 20+ pages. Includes photographs and manuscript content.
- PDF e-books are designed to be uploaded to a website.
- These e-books can be multi-purpose: (1) a sales funnel book for lead generation, (2) establish credibility as an independent author, (3) use in special marketing campaigns, or (4) develop a personal catalog of e-books on your LinkedIn profile.
- Cost-effective option to produce an online library of content for your target audience for free or behind a paywall.

Now that you have fee ranges and various book options to consider, you can plan your budget and connect with the right ghostwriter or writer/editor for a book project. The next question is how do you go about finding a writer?

How to find a ghostwriter or writer/editor

Before you begin your search, prepare for the process by researching the business of ghostwriting and working with writers. Why? It will be to your advantage to have a working knowledge of the industry.

There are certain terms, conditions, and expectations of working with a writer you need to know. It will allow you to more easily discuss your needs with others and the writer you ultimately choose.



Finding the right ghostwriter or writer/editor is like going on a treasure hunt!

Everything you need to know is available on the internet. Perform a Google search by using the keywords *what is ghostwriting, how to find a ghostwriter, why do I need a ghostwriter, working with writers, what should I look for in a writer to hire*. After reading some articles, you will be ready to use some of the following standard approaches to begin your ghostwriter or writer/editor search.

- **Referrals.** Ask people within your personal and professional network if they know a ghostwriter or writer. Do you have a friend or colleague who has worked with one?
- **Ads.** Some ghostwriters place Google ads. Start your Google search using the keywords *ghostwriters for hire to write a book*. Agency and company ads will appear at the top of the search results. Skip those and browse down the page to look for an independent ghostwriter's ad or for ghostwriter websites.
- **Google Search.** Use various keywords to perform a search like *ghostwriting services, ghost book writers, hire a ghostwriter, hire a writer*, and similar word combos. Keep in mind this may not turn up all potential results. Unless a ghostwriter or writer/editor has a fairly powerful search engine optimized website, their site will not make the top of the search results.
- **LinkedIn.** To piggyback on referrals above, tap your LinkedIn network. Ask for referrals. Also, review any tools that LinkedIn may provide for a search.

- **Third-party author services and listings.** You will see ads and listings for author services, freelance author listings, and the like. If you use this option, develop your must-have checklist of writing skills, experience, genre, and budget range BEFORE you begin your search. Refer to your list to narrow your search using a platform's filters. These filters will include freelancers and agencies, location of the writer, specializations, talent type, hourly rate, and even self-reported English level. These websites use data, which their algorithms apply to present candidates to you for consideration.
- **A ghostwriter or writer/editor contacts you.** To be honest, I do not know any peer who does this approach. I added this checkpoint because I actually do it. As a voracious reader of books, articles, magazines, and consumer of business news through my newsfeed app, I come across many fascinating individuals. I would relish the opportunity to share their thought leadership, stories, and experiences. So, I contact them.

Whether you receive a referral, contact a writer through an ad, decide to dig through a database of writers on a third-party website, or if you happen to hear from me, do not rush the process. Perform your due diligence. Research the individual, ask questions, and obtain writing samples if none are available. Also, NEVER make your decision based solely on pricing. The complexity of hiring an experienced ghostwriter or writer/editor cannot be decided only on one checkpoint.



Be patient. Finding the right ghostwriter or writer/editor for your book project takes time.

Let me wrap-up this discussion with a closing comment. You have ideas, thought leadership, and experiences to share. Writing books is the best way to achieve sharing your thought leadership. When you find the writer meant for you, it will be a collaboration that can last for many years.

As you perform your writer search, do not rush the process. Be patient. The investment of upfront research and time will be worth it.



Closing Comments

Whether you choose to take on writing a book yourself or collaborate with a ghostwriter or writer/editor, it is an experience you do not want to miss. It is a unique opportunity to grow as a person. You will learn new unknown depths about yourself. Skills and abilities you discover along the way will be nurtured. As an author, you literally enter into an exciting land that only another author will understand.

You will also learn so much about the writing and publishing industry that only a fraction of people know. There is nothing so rewarding as utilizing the power of the written word. When you write a book, your thought leadership, ideas, stories, and knowledge will be shared with readers now and for years to come. U.S. President Abraham Lincoln was correct; writing connects people of “all distances of time and space.”

Live your dream and become an author. Leave your footprint on the path of history for others to follow. Enjoy the journey!

Melissa Newton



About Melissa Newton

My Early Years

I have enjoyed reading all types of books since I was a child. The first book I collected for my personal library was on Pocahontas. I was nine years old. I still have it.

As for writing, it has been a part of my life experience since high school. When it came to college, I made certain to include some literature and history classes in the mix. Why? I was a student who thrived writing essays and research papers. My great interest in reading, research, and writing followed me into my professional work life.



Books are an integral part of my life. The books on my office bookshelf are very special to me. Some of these history books were my father's.

Writing, Editing, Publishing, and Ghostwriting

I have decades of writing, editing, ghostwriting, and publishing experience. My writing, editing, and publishing background includes being a former managing editor of two online magazines. One was a literary magazine with a subscriber base of over 600,000 and a small team of writers. My most recent magazine was niched in money and financial literacy, which I published until 2016.

As a prolific author and writer, I have authored 15 books, hundreds of blogs, articles, newsletters, and white papers. I also have enjoyed a rich experience ghostwriting blogs, articles, and books with c-suite executives, business owners, and leaders in various industries as a confidential and trusted ghostwriter.

I invite you to learn more about me by visiting my website at MelissaNewton.com. If you would like to have a conversation about how we might collaborate on a book project, feel free to e-mail me at Melissa@MelissaNewton.com.



Live the life
you've imagined.

--Henry David Thoreau

