

# Get the Word Out

## A Workbook

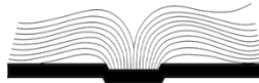
Nonfiction Book Development Exercises

## Welcome

Welcome, nonfiction author!

Are you ready to set out on your author journey? Perhaps you're already underway, working on your book or preparing to publish. Either way, the exercises in this workbook may help you approach the road ahead with clarity, confidence, and commitment.

This workbook collects the exercises mentioned in *Get the Word Out: Write a Book that Makes a Difference*. Use it as you read the book to process the ideas, or as a place to gather the information you want to keep for your project as it develops.



## Chapter 1: Clarify Your Purpose

Having a strong sense of purpose is central to the concept of *servant authorship*.

If you're not sure how to articulate the purpose for your book, here are a few exercises you can try to clarify your ideas.

### **Think small**

If you want to practice servant authorship, you must know who you want to serve.

Who are you trying to reach? Don't worry about the book's "market" right now—think about a single person as your future reader.

What difference do you want the book to make in their life?

## **Think Big**

What's the legacy you'd like to leave? Do the lottery imagination exercise: what would you do five years after winning the lottery?

## **Think back**

What would you tell your former self? What do you know now that you wish you'd known earlier, and would others find value in that same information?

## Chapter 2: Meet and Greet the Gatekeepers



The toughest gatekeepers aren't agents and editors; they are the voices in your own head. What is *your* inner gatekeeper telling you?

Write down the things that may be holding you back from writing your book. Come up with as many as you can. Write them down, even (and especially) if they sound ridiculous.

Reasons I shouldn't write a book:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

For each one, ask yourself: If my book achieves its purpose, is it worth taking this risk?

## Chapter 3: Pick Your Pond



As you explore the ideas for your book, identify its possible market segments (or *ponds*, using the analogy of this chapter in the book). Consider identifying ponds by subject, market, or lens. You may not be able to answer all of these questions, but they're good to think about.

*Subject:* What subject do you want to write about? Can you focus in on the subject and still produce a substantial book?

My subject is:

I could narrow it down by:

*Market:* How can you define the sets of people who would be most interested? Is there a specific audience of readers you would particularly like to welcome?

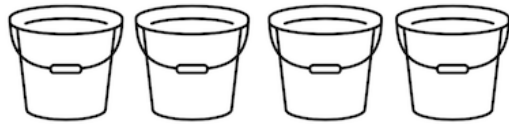
Groups of people who would be *most* interested include:

*Lens:* What's unique about your lens on the world?

My unique lens on the world is:

## Chapter 4: Explore Your Expertise

As you think about your book, list the sources of your existing expertise and categorize them into four buckets. Remember, expertise is the things you know or know *how to do*.



Academic—things learned in academic or research settings

Professional experience—skills or knowledge picked up in a career

Personal experience

Journalistic research—other perspectives available from research

How are the sources distributed among the buckets? Do you rely heavily on one or two categories? You may be able to extend your credibility and authority by adding research from other buckets.

Keep this list handy for when you're ready to make your research plan.



## Chapter 5: Assemble Your Authority

Create a master list of your authority building blocks. Try to come up with entries for as many of these categories as possible

Expertise (How can I describe my expertise in your topic? What do I know or know how to do?)

Credentials (What third-party credentials have I earned?)

Professional experience

Personal experience

Recommendations (from people who would influence your audience)

Social proof (proof other people like what I've done)

Keep this list handy— it is your starter kit of authority building blocks. You will then be able to pick the right ones for different situations.

As you write and publish your book, your collection will grow.



## Chapter 6: Picture Your Book



Answer as many of these questions as you can.

*Who* are your readers? (Choose two or three real people.)

*Why* will they read your book?

*How* will they read your book? (All at once? Over time? Print or ebook?)

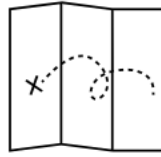
What is the book's genre? Pick 1-2 from narrative nonfiction, advice or how-to/self-help, creative nonfiction, memoir, personal essay, history, "big idea".

How long will your book be? (You don't need a word count, but make a guess about its ideal heft and length – 100 pages? 200? 300?)

What books will this live next to on someone's shelf? What are related books? List a few key companions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

## Chapter 7: Pick Your Publishing Path



If you've not yet decided on your publishing path, use the following questions to inform your decision.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is each of these factors to you? 1 is not important, 5 is very important.

**Unimportant      Somewhat important      Very important**

1) Speed in getting the book to market			
2) Earnings per book			
3) Control over the price of the book			
4) Credibility of an imprint			
5) Distribution in physical bookstores			

If items 1-3 are very important, consider an indie path. If items 4 and 5 matter the most, traditional publishing may be the best fit. And if you choose a path in between, like a small or hybrid press, use these questions to evaluate the vendors and options.

## Chapter 8: Fill Your Buckets with Research

Use the list of ideas below to sketch out a research plan that adds to your current list of expertise buckets.

### **Personal experience**

Places to visit/other experiences to acquire	
Recollections to verify	
People to connect with	

### **Professional experience**

Industry data or research to confirm	
People to speak with or interview	

## Academic research

Topics to study and books to read	
Surveys/research to conduct	
Scientific/published research to peruse	



## Journalistic research

Interviews and articles to listen to or read	
People to interview	

Use this as the basis for your research plan. Try to include research from multiple categories.



## Chapter 9: Curate Your Stories

Collect and polish key stories even before you draft the book. This will make the process of using them in your writing easier.

Brainstorm anecdotes from your work or personal experience that support the ideas you want to share.

Then practice telling that story. Choose one small anecdote that makes a point. Identify the key elements in this story:

### **Story Elements**

Who is the main character? (That's you, if it's your story)

What were you/they were trying to do (the objective and opening)?

What happened to get in the way (the conflict)?

How did you/they resolve it (the resolution)?

What did you/they learn (the theme)?

### **Grounding Details**

In addition, make a list of all relevant sensory and emotional detail for this story:

What did it look like when this happened? What was the setting?

What did it feel like—physically or emotionally?

What did you/they hear or smell or sense?

Use your answers to these questions to summarize the stories you want to share.



## Chapter 10: Prime the Pump

Choose *one* idea from your book-to-be and try at least one of the pump-priming activities:

- Freewrite 1,000 words or more
- Blog: Write a short blog post
- Conversations: Speak with people about your book
- Public speaking: Give a talk or host an online meeting or webinar

Try as many of these priming activities as possible and see which ones get you ready for writing. Keep track of which ones you most enjoy.

### **Freewriting**

Try writing fluently, just for yourself, without assessment or self-editing. Aim for 1,000 words or 15 minutes. If you have a hard time turning off the inner critic, play around with [The Most Dangerous Writing App](#). If you stop typing for five seconds, it erases everything you've done.

### **Blogging**

Write a blog post on one of the concepts from your book. If you don't already have a blog of your own, consider posting it in a site like Medium, or contributing it to a blog that relevant to your topic (and that takes guest posts.)

## **Conversations**

Speak with people about the topic from your book—ideally someone in your general audience. Tell them you’re working on a book and want to get their thoughts.

## **Public speaking**

If you don’t already have a speaking platform, try giving a talk at the local library. Host an online webinar. Find a group that is interested in your topic and develop a short talk on it.

## Chapter 11: Craft the Provisional Outline

What's your favorite outlining approach? If you feel stymied when you sit down to outline, experiment with less-traditional methods:

- Use the storyboard method

If you're writing an experience-based book, consider Sam Horn's storyboarding method. Create a grid of four rows of five boxes, and fill each box with a pivotal lesson, scene, or anecdote. Then use this to create an outline for your book.

- Make index cards and sort them

If you're a tactile person, write concepts, themes, stories, and research areas on index cards and then arrange them in an order that would work for your reader. Use that as the basis for your outline.

- Draw mind maps connecting circles of ideas

Mind mapping is the process of drawing connections of nodes and ideas, in no particular order, as you think through them. You can use any of numerous mind-mapping software applications, or simply try pen and paper.

- Speak the outline into your phone

Use a voice recorder and/or transcription software like [Otter.AI](#) to talk through the general flow of the book.

Try these different techniques (or any other favorite outlining strategies) and see what works best for you.

## Chapter 12: Immerse Yourself



Create a schedule that supports your own immersion point.

### **Session duration**

Use these questions to figure out a good minimum duration for your writing sessions:

- Can you work in a steady, focused way for more than sixty or ninety minutes? Y/N/Sometimes
- How long does it take you to get into the work?

If it takes you a long time to get into the work, choose a minimum of 30-45 minutes. If you can't work for more than 45 minutes at a stretch, don't pick a long minimum time.

### **Writing frequency**

What time can you realistically find in your schedule? If you're ready, block that time off from other interruptions. Commit to it.

Then set up the systems to help you stick to it. Try one of the following:

- Keep a record of your writing sessions somewhere visible to you. Track on a paper calendar or use an online system. Consider adding a "writing" workout to your phone's health app and let the phone track it for you.
- Reward yourself for showing up for your defined session
- Find another writer to act as an accountability partner

## Chapter 13: SPRINT to a Manuscript

When you're ready to work on your manuscript, try the SPRINT method.

With your outline in hand, look at the various sections and think about which ones feel "ready" or which ones you're excited about writing. Pick one and think about it—then start your sprint!

- **S**tart with the easy part
- **P**rime the pump
- **R**elax your standards
- **I**ncubate with intention
- **N**otice what's missing and add it
- **T**rust in your future self

Find details on each step in Chapter 13.





## Chapter 14: Voice is a Choice

Experiment with your writing voice in both ways: the internal and external work.

### Internal Voice Work

Pick three adjectives you'd like to embody for the sake of your readers and your purpose. As a starting point:

How do your friends and colleagues describe you?

How do you think of yourself in your role as an author?

Need inspiration? Here are a few more...

Authoritative	Insightful
Comforting	Inspiring
Compassionate	Instructive
Energizing	Passionate
Entertaining	Powerful
Expert	Sincere
Genius	Trustworthy

Now, pick at most *three*.

Three adjectives that describe my ideal writing “voice” for this book:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If you can pick three that fairly represent you, you’re on your way to an authentic voice for your book.

*Bonus:* Give the adjectives to the book’s cover designer to arrive at a cover that matches the feel of the book.

### **External Voice Work**

For the external work, experiment with the impact of changing word choice, sentence length, and paragraph length.

- If your writing voice is informal, see what happens with longer sentences and paragraphs.
- If it’s academic, try shortening them.
- Look for opportunities to pop in unexpected words to snare the reader’s attention, or to swap out jargon for simpler substitutes.

*Remember:* A writing voice is like a pair of shoes; you *should* have more than one, with options for different occasions.



## Chapter 15: Fix It in Post

Try the telescoping revision plan described in Chapter 15 for your next major piece of writing, whether it's a book manuscript or a blog post.

Commit to taking at least four passes through the work. Use the checklist below to keep yourself honest. Then go through each and every pass fully.

Structural: Skim from start to finish and make sure the order makes sense. Don't stop and fix grammar (but you can mark it.	
Flow: Read from start to finish (consider reading aloud) and see where it might be confusing or awkward.	
Content and Words: What voice does your writing project? Do you find spelling or grammar errors? Do you use unfamiliar terms or a lot of abstractions? Do you use words that erode your authority, like some, very, and kind of?	
Proofing: In the final layout, look through once more for typos, formatting issues, punctuation problems, etc.	

Use software to help (especially in pass 3 and 4), but don't rely on software alone.

Did this feel awkward? Or does it give you more confidence in your revision? What would you do differently for your book?

## Chapter 16: Publication Day



There were no exercises in the book for publication day, but here are a few ideas for getting ready for it.

- Make a point of celebrating the accomplishment.
- Talk to other authors around and on the day: they understand the magnitude of it.
- Don't expect the world to stop revolving.

## Chapter 17: Beyond the Book

How will you operate in the world beyond the book, to support your book sales and your ideas?

Take a look at the following list of skills and activities that might support your book. Use that list to populate answer the questions below.

Writing blogs, writing social media posts, creating graphics, taking photographs, drawing, social media interactions, public speaking, talking one-on-one, recording audio (podcasting), hosting webinars, coaching individuals, teaching, training, advertising, website design and work, lead generation, connecting with influencers

### **Identify your opportunities**

What are you already good at doing?

I enjoy and am good at:

What are you willing or interested in learning more about?

I'd like to explore or learn about:

What are you unwilling to fit into your life? It's just as important to recognize and let go of the things that you *won't* do or that will make you unhappy.

I have no interest in:

## Chapter18: Find Your People

This chapter offered ideas for finding your people, building a community, and starting a movement. Use the following questions to brainstorm ways that you could connect with your people through and beyond your book.

How do you already identify and connect with the people that your book serves?

Whatever you're doing now, how could you take it one step further?

How can you use your book to connect with people, and connect them to each other (creating community)?

What kinds of ripple effects could you start by creating a community where people can gather, support each other, and take action?





## Chapter 19: Dealing with Detractors

Stockpile your positive feedback.

- Get a file folder, and use it to collect notes, reviews, testimonials, and positive comments from people you trust.
- Create an online file with links to any positive reviews so you can easily share them with others.

Set up the systems now. It's almost *never* too early to do this.



## Chapter 20: Listen and Adapt

Are you listening to what readers are telling you? You don't have to act on everything you hear, but you should pay attention.

Make a list of the kinds of questions and requests you hear. They provide insight into who you are reaching and what they need.

People ask me *about*:

People ask me *for*:

## Stay in Touch

I hope that these exercises help you with your book, wherever you are in its process. Let me know what you think!

Happy writing. I can hardly wait to see what you put out into the world.



*Anne Janzer*

Email: [anne@annejanzer.com](mailto:anne@annejanzer.com)

Twitter: [AnneJanzer](#)

LinkedIn: [AnneHJanzer](#)

If you found *Get the Word Out* helpful, you could help me spread the word by leaving an honest [review on Amazon](#), Goodreads, or wherever you buy books.

Copyright © 2020 Anne Janzer