

**Skim *Writing Nonfiction*.** Click to get a look at each chapter

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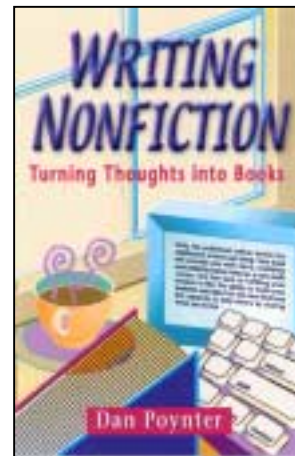
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## Chapter One

### What Your Book Will Do For You

Would you like to be recognized as someone who knows what he or she is talking about? Be someone worth listening to? Would you like to get paid for what you know? Would you like a job that is stimulating, interesting and challenging—a job you look forward to? Can you imagine doing what you love and loving what you do?

There are many justifications for writing a nonfiction book. Some are fame, fortune, to help other people and because you have a personal mission. Let's take a look at each of these reasons.

#### **Fame**

Imagine being a published author. Picture people coming up to you at a meeting with a copy of your book and requesting an autograph. Visualize passing a bookstore and seeing your book in the window. Consider being interviewed for an article. Imagine the fame that comes with being published.

**“The author is the author-ity.” –Joe Vitale, *CyberWriting***

A book provides you with more credibility than anything else you can do: more credibility than an audiotape, videotape, a seminar, a screenplay or a song. People place a higher value on a book than on a tape—even though the same amount of work may have gone into the production. The fact is authors are highly valued in our society.

**“Recognition is everything you write for; it's much more than money. You want your books to be valued. It's the basic aspiration of the serious writer.” —William Kennedy, novelist and Pulitzer Prize winner.**

People think if you wrote a book, you know something. And you probably do. When you think about it, you are writing your book from the very best research plus personal experience. You research every book and article, distill their contents down to the essentials, direct your writing toward a specific audience and illustrate it with your personal experiences. You are earning an advanced degree in the subject by conducting the research and writing the paper. Your book validates your expertise and lends more credibility to what you say.

I serve as an expert witness in skydiving cases. I am not a lawyer or an engineer and yet I advise attorneys, judges and juries what happened (or what should have happened) in parachute mishaps. My eight technical

books on parachutes and popular books on skydiving give me the credibility to be hired and the credibility to be believed.

**“Writing ranks among the top 10 percent of professions in terms of prestige.” —Jean Strouse, *Newsweek***

**More business.** A book makes you stand out. An author speaks with authority. A book brings customers to your door. Writing your book can be the cornerstone for a rewarding and successful future.

**“Your book is your best business card. People do not throw out books, they put them on their shelf.”**

Once your book is published and you become an authority, your value and opportunities increase. You can charge more for seminars, articles, speeches and consulting. Imagine the credibility and recognition your book will bring you.

**“Books are a form of immortality. The words of men whose bodies are dust still live in their books.” —Wilfred A. Peterson, *The Art of Living by Day***

### **Fortune**

Your book will be a new profit center. There is money to be made in books.

It was a long flight home from the Maui Writers Conference and the guy in the next seat struck up a conversation. He finally got around to “And what do you do?” I sat up proudly and announced, “I’m a writer.” “No, no,” he quickly replied, “What do you do for a *living*?”

There are some starving writers out there but most of them are working on fiction, entertainment that is more difficult to sell. If you write nonfiction, put it in book form and publish it yourself, you can do very well. Many people are working on their own schedule, giving the world a piece of their mind and getting paid for it.

**How much?** But what does it cost to publish a book? That is like asking how much is a car? All books are different. But if you are planning to publish yourself and if you want to print 3,000 copies of a 144-page, 5.5 x 8.5 softcover book with a few photographs, black ink on white paper with a four-color cover, your printing and trucking bill will run about \$1.55 each for a printing bill of \$4,650. However, if you use short-run book production, a direct-to-image (drum) electrostatic process, you can print and bind the same book in a quantity of 500 for \$2.20 each, for a printing bill of \$1,098. Or, 100 copies for \$5.17 each, for a printing bill of \$517. Per-unit prices still depend on quantity and prices fluctuate with the current price of paper.

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# The New Book Model

This is not just another book on writing. It presents a completely new system that makes the writing, production and promotion faster, easier and less expensive. If I could give just one thing to my fellow writers, it would be this New Book Model.

Nonfiction book writing, production and promotion are changing due to the increasing demand for information and rapid advances in technology. Instead of investing money in long print runs and inventory space, books can be delivered electronically and/or printed one at a time as needed.

**“We have seen the future and it beeps. Welcome to digital smoke and mirrors.”**

This chapter is an overview of the book writing and publishing process according to the New Book Model. The chapters that follow provide more detail.

**Information @ the speed of thought.** The opportunities for authors are expanding so quickly that we are no longer sure what a “book” is. We do know that nonfiction authors are information providers, that the Web is facilitating the delivery of text and that there are new printing techniques.

To save money on book printing, many of the larger publishers have resorted to smaller type, reduced leading and narrower margins (resulting in a wider text block). The books are more difficult to read. The type size in an ebook, however, can be adjusted to suit the reader.

The electronic edition of your book will be far more useful to your reader. In addition to being searchable and less expensive, all the referenced Web sites will be hyper linked. Readers of the electronic edition can just click on the reference and go to the linked Web site.

The only ink-on-paper (“dead tree”) books in the future will be coffee table books—books as an art form. These books will be used to decorate homes and offices. Information will be disseminated electronically without sacrificing trees.

**“Publishing ink on paper is going to become a mere service to readers. The real product we’re going to sell is the digital product.” —Bruno de Sa Moreira, *Zeroheure* magazine**

**Fast and cheap.** People need more information to make critical decisions, and they want their information fast. As an author, you have the information some of them need, and you can get it to them faster electronically than through traditional hand or Postal delivery.

We are not just in the information age; we are in the electronic information age or, better yet, the communication age. Fortunately, authors deal in products that can be communicated. The knowledge world is going from a paper culture to an electronic culture. It is only a question of how we want to package our information.

**“If book publishers can’t see the writing on the wall, it’s because the writing is not on the wall. It’s on a computer screen.”**

**Costs.** The costs of electronic delivery of information are decreasing, while the costs of physical storage and delivery are increasing. That is why the fax has become an everyday machine. We have learned it does not pay to give someone a letter and 33¢ to hand carry the message across the country. Fax will do it faster and cheaper.

We used to recommend a budget of \$10,000 to \$12,000 to produce and launch a 300-page book. Today, that book can be published and promoted for \$1,000 to \$3,000.

**“Books are going electronic. Some bound books will soon be as dead as the trees they are printed on.”**

**Disintermediation.** A new marketing buzzword is “disintermediation.” It means cutting out the intermediaries such as publishers, distributors, wholesalers, bookstores and printers so customers can deal directly with manufacturers. In our case, readers can buy directly from the author.

Customers for many products are dealing directly with manufacturers. Dell does not assemble a computer until after it is sold and they receive the money. In fact, Dell gets paid before they have to pay for the parts going into the computer. Compare that model with Detroit. The automobile manufacturers make cars and put them on lots. They often sit on 60 days of inventory. It would make more sense to allow people to order a car online, pay for it and get it built and delivered in two to three weeks—custom configured. The new buzzword for this process is “mass customization.”

In our case, readers are buying directly from the author. By cutting out the middleperson, we can sell the written product for less and still make more money. With this new approach, authors can spend more time writing and less in production and fulfillment.

**“The breakthroughs are leading authors to bypass publishers, retailers to become publishers and publishers to become bookstores.” —Don Clark in the *Wall Street Journal*.**

**Release 1.1.** Now you do not even have to finish writing the nonfiction book to sell it. You can post a chapter or two on your Web site and/or at a site such as Fatbrain.com and invite feedback. Then as you add to the “book,” you can post new versions as 2.0, 3.0 and so on, and sell to the same customers again.

Traditionally, books are published as one-shot, one-season (four-month) projects. If the book sells well, it is reprinted. If it does not, it is pulled from the shelves. This model makes sense for fiction (entertainment) that will not be

updated. It does not make sense for nonfiction (information). Savvy publishers have been updating their nonfiction and publishing new editions for years.

Electronic editions can even contain a pop-up message inviting the reader to click on a hyperlink to the author's Web site to see if there is a new edition. Now you can remind the reader over and over again—even if a friend loaned the “book”.

**New book model** is easier, faster, less expensive and will bring authors a greater return. You *can* do it yourself. You can make more money, get to press sooner and keep control of your work. You can repurpose or multipurpose your content, publish it in several different ways and wring maximum value out of your literary effort. Here are the steps.

**Writing.** Write your books in book layout format; make your manuscript page look like a book page. Do not use Courier typeface and double spacing. The advantages are that the text looks like a book, you always know approximately how many pages you have and the book is nearly typeset.

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## *Chapter Three*

### **What to Write Selecting Your Subject**

You may write anything you wish. The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression. In the United States, you do not have to register, get a license, or ask permission to be an author.

**Fiction v. nonfiction.** In selecting a subject, we must first make a distinction between fiction and nonfiction. Fiction is entertainment and as such, it must compete for peoples' time. Other books, seeing a movie and taking the kids to the zoo are just a small part of the competition.

People are very short of time today. You can see them on the freeway trying to save time by driving, eating and talking on the carphone—all at the same time.

Nonfiction, on the other hand is valuable information that people buy in order to save time or money. One nonfiction book does not compete with any other book. Each nonfiction book is unique. Worldwide, nonfiction outsells fiction by \$55 billion to \$25 billion.

Fiction writers tend to be creative, interesting people who are fun at parties.

But nonfiction writers drive better cars.

**“It is better to have a permanent income than to be fascinating.” —Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), Irish-born writer and wit.**

Most publishers will urge you to work on your nonfiction first and to save your fiction until you can afford it. This book concentrates on writing nonfiction: valuable information on how to do things.

**Making the decision.** Selecting your subject with the Six Musts. Use the following criteria to qualify your project. If you have already written the manuscript, go back and make sure it meets all six of them. Unfortunately, many authors write before considering the six musts and then they discover there aren't any potential buyers for their book.

I never know what book I will write next; I do not plan ahead. An article, a few words from a friend or an activity may trigger an idea. I visualize the book (and its market) and make a decision.

**“The best time for planning a book is while you're doing the dishes.” —Agatha Christie, English mystery writer.**

**1. The subject must be interesting to you.** Write what you know. Think about what you plan to be doing in three years. What are your interests? Plan your future and your book now.

**“I write to find out.” —William Manchester, author, historian.**

Do not write a book on “last year's subject,” one that you are no longer interested in and do not want to pursue. For example, let's say you have been selling cars for the past ten years but your hobby is golf and you are pretty good at the game. Do not write on buying cars; write it on some aspect of golf. Once your book is published, people may request interviews, articles, seminars and consulting. Plan now to make sure they approach you on a subject you are passionate about.

**“My object in living is to unite my avocation and my vocation.” —Robert Frost (1874-1963), American poet, *Tramps in Mudtime*.**

Ask yourself: Is this really the subject I want to focus on?

**2. You must have expertise or experience.** You do not have to have an advanced degree; you do not need a Ph.D. But you do need personal experience, dedication to do research and a deep desire to spread the word. The most important question is “Have you been there?”

**“You must have experience to write a good nonfiction book, so please do not write a book on *how to get rich* unless you are already rich.” —Patricia Clay, actress.**

According to *Bottom Line Personal* (November 1, 1999), people who write about their traumatic life experiences sometimes gain relief from chronic asthma,

rheumatoid arthritis and other diseases. Those who spent just 20 minutes per day, three days in a row, writing about the most stressful event in their life were in better health four months later than those who did not. Apparently, writing had a therapeutic affect, helping them make sense of their bad experiences.

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## *Chapter Four*

### **Researching Your Topic and Checking for Competition**

Before you begin your writing journey, you must do some research. You want to know how much information is available on the subject and if this book has been written before. Once you see what is out there, your approach, angle, hook, direction or niche may change. This research has a stimulating effect. Your book will take shape in your mind as you find where you fit in.

**Online bookstore databases** such as <http://www.amazon.com> list all the books that are currently available or “in print” as well as “out-of-print” books. Make a *subject* search and print out the results. Try several alternative words. For example, for a book on skydiving, try these words: skydive, skydiving, skydiver, parachute, parachuting, parachutist, and freefall. To be thorough, make a similar search for *titles* beginning with the same key words. Try several book databases.

**“The greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading, in order to write; a man will turn over half a library to make one book.”** —Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), English lexicographer and author of the *Dictionary of the English Language*.

After you do this, make a search on your proposed or *working title*. Make sure it has not been used recently.

Next, see how much information is available on your subject. You want to gather information on every book, magazine article, database and resource. Visit the Web sites listed in the Appendix and use the search engines such as *WebCrawler*, *Excite* and *Yahoo*. Check sites such as <http://www.refdesk.com>. Also see <http://www.excite.com/info/newstracker/quickstart/>. Type in key words and the site will collect articles for you.

**“On the Web, a journey of a thousand leagues begins with the first keystroke.”** —Scott Gross, *Positively Outrageous Service*

This detective work can be great fun. One scrap of information will lead to another as you spend hours on the Internet, *the world's largest library*.

Donna Rae discovered the Scandinavian personal-care practice of *body brushing*. A search of Web databases, such as Amazon.com, quickly revealed there has never been a book on the subject. Encouraged, she conducted more research, sat down and wrote the book, *Reveal your GLOW! Brush Your Body Beautiful*. Next, she packaged the brushes and oils described in the book. Her discovery became a business.

**Libraries.** For most book research, you will go to the Reference Desk at your public library. The reference section is where you will find the directories and other resources that are not loaned out. For technical subjects, you may find more useful information at a university library. Specific subjects may require a visit to a law or medical library. There are many different types of libraries.

Call the library and ask how you may access the “card file” online. Then you will have access to the listings of all the books in the library system, usually statewide, without leaving home.

When you go to the public library, make sure it is a downtown library in the largest, nearest city. Do not visit a branch or small-town library. It will not have a sufficient budget to stock all the references you want.

I was researching a new book idea a few years back. I visited the Santa Barbara Library, quite a good one for a town of 80,000. Of the three directories I wanted, they had but one and it was three years old. I have not been back since and now do all my research online.

Always stop by the bank for a roll of coins for the photocopy machine. When you are at the library, you will discover a wealth of material. You do not have time to write down bits of information on paper. Make a photocopy and move on. One reference will lead to another; this is detective work. Bring the photocopies home and add them to your growing file.

Do not try to find anything in the library in 20 minutes. Each visit will require half a day or an entire evening. There is too much information and too many references to be discovered.

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## ***Chapter Five***

### **Your Book's Title and Subtitle**

Selecting the title and subtitle will be the single-most important piece of copy writing you will do for your book. A great title will not sell a bad book but a poor title will hide a good book from potential customers. Both your title and subtitle must be a selling tool. They are the *hook* that help sales.

**“If I had titled my book *How to Defuse Conflicts* or even *Avoiding Verbal Combat*, how many publishers (and later customers) would look at it? Tongue Fu! got me a publisher, buying readers and later lots of media attention.” —Sam Horn, author and speaker.**

Select a *working title* now so that you can improve on it as you develop your book. Start with a short, catchy and descriptive title, and add a lengthy, explanatory subtitle.

**“Choose a title for your book at least as carefully as you would select a given name for your first-born child.” —Nat Bodian, author, *How to Choose a Winning Title*.**

Here are some bestsellers or classics that underwent a title change prior to publication. The original titles are in parenthesis.

- *All The President’s Men* (At This Point in Time)
- *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask*. (The Birds and the Bees)
- *Valley of the Dolls* (They Don’t Build Statues to Businessmen)
- *Pride and Prejudice* (First Impressions)
- *Roots* (Before This Anger)

Comedian Mort Saul tells this story on the importance of titles: One method of bolstering sagging sales is to republish a book with a new, more provocative title and an eye-catching cover design. To illustrate, he told of a new paperback he had seen in a drug store. On the cover was a dramatic picture of a Cossack sweeping a half-clad maiden onto his horse. In large red letters was the title: *This is my Flesh*. And underneath, in small letters, was the statement, “Formerly published under the title *Introduction to Accounting*.”

**Key word.** The first word of the title should be the same as the subject whenever possible to make the book easy to find. The book will be listed in Bowker’s *Books In Print* by title, author and subject. If the title and subject are the same, you have doubled your exposure. Most other directories list only titles in alphabetical order.

I wrote the first book on the new aviation sport of hang gliding back in 1973. I called the book *Hang Gliding, the Basic Handbook of Skysurfing*. The new sport was called *hang gliding* on the West Coast and *skysurfing* on the East Coast. No one knew which name would ultimately take over. I covered myself by using both key words in the title and subtitle. Years later, *hang gliding* won out over *skysurfing* and pilots were mounting motors on their gliders. I

changed the title of the tenth edition to *Hang Gliding, The Basic Handbook of Motorized Flight*.

On the other hand, if you come up with a fantastic title and it does not begin with the key word, it is possible that you may sell so many more copies of the book due to the title that the directory listings become unimportant.

*What Color is Your Parachute?* is a very successful book on job finding; it is not about skydiving. *Golden Parachute* is a common buzzword to personnel people but it means little to the general public.

**“Every year hundreds of book authors begin their book title with *Introduction to*, thereby sentencing them to burial among their fellow introductions in card catalogs and reference books.” —Nat Bodian, author, *How to Choose a Winning Title*.**

Most book listings do not describe the contents, so your subtitle should explain clearly what the book is about. For example, *Computer Selection Guide; Choosing the Right Hardware & Software: Business-Professional-Personal* is listed under the heading, “computers,” while the rest of the title and subtitle clearly explain what the book is about.

The title for *Is There a Book Inside You?* came before the book was written. Mindy Bingham came up with the title and then she and I wrote a book around it. Based on just the title and cover art, the book club rights were sold to *Writer’s Digest*. The text had not even been completed.

Review *Books In Print*, an online bookstore such as Amazon.com, a dictionary and a thesaurus when searching for a title.

If your title is not clear, potential buyers may not find your book because it has been mis-shelved; they may be too embarrassed to ask for it, or they may not recognize it as being an important subject to them.

**Make your title specific, familiar and short.** The title should be easy to remember and easy to say. The words should relate well to each other. Ollie North’s book was titled *Under Fire*. Alan Dershowitz wrote *Chutzpah*. And Derek Humphrey penned *Final Exit*. Keep your title short and snappy. A shorter title is easier to remember.

**“Your title should be five words or less or people have to use their brains to repeat it.” —Jeff Herman, literary agent**

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# Your Book's Covers

Draft your covers before you write your book. To focus on whom your customers are and what you plan to share with them, draft your book-cover sales copy first. Everyone judges a book by its cover. Like it or not, no one reads the book before they make a buying decision. Consumers only browse it in the store. Sales reps only carry book covers and jackets to show store buyers; wholesalers and distributors say, “just send us the cover copy.” All buying decisions are made on the illustration, design and the sales copy on the outside of the book. Yes, packaging is everything.

Each year, U.S. industry spends more than \$50 billion on package design. Packages prompt buyers to reach for the product whether it is panty hose, corn flakes, hair spray or books.

**“A book’s cover is absolutely the single most important thing about the physical object that is a book.” —Betsy Groban, Little, Brown and Company, inc.**

Stores display tens-of-thousands of books with the spine-out. With all this congestion, it is hard to get attention.

**“Books sell five times faster when displayed face-out.” —Michael Larsen, literary agent.**

The package outside sells the product inside. The bookstore browser spends just 8 seconds on front cover and 15 seconds on back cover and this is assuming the spine was good enough to get him or her to pull it from the shelf.

Your book cover designer will lay out the package, incorporate the illustration, put it all on disk and send it to your printer but you must draft the sales copy. The book cover worksheet in this chapter will take you step-by-step through the sales-copy drafting process. Use your computer so you will be able to easily move the copy around once entered.

## Spine

In the store, your book will be displayed spine-out only. There just is not enough room on the shelves for face-out stocking. Initially, all the potential buyer will see is the spine.

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# Getting Organized.

## Setting up Your Binder

Set up your manuscript in a binder. Find a three-ring binder with pockets inside. Get a 2" (thick) model and add dividers corresponding to the chapters you have preliminarily selected.

Write your name and address in the front of the binder with a note that this is a valuable manuscript and should be returned if found. You do not want to misplace and lose your future book.

**Trim size.** Try to use 5½ x 8½ and 8½ x 11 as a final size for your book whenever possible. The best size for most books is 5½ x 8½ but you may have to go larger for workbooks and other books that must open and lay flat as well as for lengthy books. If you have just a few large charts, consider foldout pages.

**Make your manuscript look like a page out of a book.** Set your margins so that the text block will be about 4.2" wide and about 7" tall.

To set your margins in Microsoft *Word* click on *File\Page Setup* and change *top* to 1.8", *bottom* to 2.3", *left* to 2.5", *right* to 1.9", and *header* to 1.3".

To make a header, with the book title and page number at the top of the page, click on *View\Header and Footer*. Type in the tentative title for your book then click on the *insert page number* icon that is in the header and footer box. Underline both your header and your page number. Then set them in *Arial*, bold, 12 point type.

For your text, select a nice typeface such as *Bookman*, *Book Antiqua* or *New Century Schoolbook*. Click on *Format\Paragraph* and set the line spacing for *Single*.

Traditionally, manuscripts consisted of double-spaced *Courier* type. Today that format makes your manuscript look dated.

When you write your book in book-layout format, you always know how many pages have and you are typesetting as you write. Now you are *building* your book; writing is just part of the assembly.

**Parts of a book.** Most books are divided into three main parts: preliminary pages or *front matter*, the *text* and the *back matter*. We will discuss each of them in order, so you can add a sheet for each to the binder with as much information as you have so far. It is not necessary to have all the pages mentioned or even to place them in any given order, but it is recommended that convention be followed unless you have a good, specific reason to stray. Set up these sections as best you can, so the book will begin to take shape. You will make additions and revisions to the binder later.

There are two pages to each sheet or leaf of paper. The *verso* pages are on the left-hand side and are even numbered while the *recto* pages are on the right-hand side with odd numbers.

Setting up the binder will further encourage you. Soon you will have a partial manuscript; the book will be taking shape and you will have something tangible to carry around. This will make you feel proud and give you the flexibility to write and rewrite and to improve your manuscript while away from home.

Set up your binder in the order that follows and refer to this book for examples of each part.

### **Front matter**

The front matter is that material placed at the beginning of the book. It includes everything up to the beginning of Chapter One.

**End papers** may be plain or printed, are usually of heavier paper, and are glued to the inside front and back covers of hardbound (casebound) books. End papers dress up the book and hold it together. End papers are usually not printed but occasionally have appropriate maps.

**Testimonials**, endorsements and excerpts from reviews are being seen more and more on the first page of softcover books. This is important sales space.

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## ***Chapter Eight***

### **Your Writing *System***

In the New Book Model, we no longer just write our book, we build our book. New technology combined with revolutionary changes in the book industry provide the author with the tools, ability and authority to design the entire arrangement. Building books today is more like a PowerPoint presentation than writing a manuscript.

**“Willie, why do you use a gun when robbing banks?”**

**“I find the best way to get my point across is to use a few well-chosen words and—visual aids” —Willie Sutton, infamous bank robber.**

Now, authors not only craft the words to convey their message, we insert photographs, drawings, hyperlinks and other enhancements as we build our book. We are

continually thinking about helping our reader to understand and are adding visual aids as we write.

**“The best book is a collaboration between author and reader.” —Barbara Tuchman, historian**

There are many good writing systems. The more mechanical-type approach described here is very effective for busy people. This system allows you to combine your book project with other activities so you can write while maintaining your busy schedule.

**Break down the writing project** into easy-to-attack chunks. Your book project may appear to be overwhelming, requiring more time and work than you can invest. So separate the project into parts. Think of these parts as 8 or 10 or 12 speeches, or articles or term papers. If you can write ten term papers, you can write a book.

**Pilot system.** To approach book writing more mechanically, break it into parts using the *pilot system* of organization. Gather all your research materials such as magazine articles, parts of books, charts and photos from your own files and anything you have written so far. Photocopy pieces from other publications. Cut them apart and place them in piles on the floor. Create one pile for each chapter. Review the piles. Move the pieces around. Add reminders to yourself. See the Research chapter and get the needed additional information. Add to the piles.

**“Sometimes I turn ink into magic. Other times I just murder trees.” —Randall Williams, Black Belt Press**

It would be nice to employ the pilot system on an elevated surface such as a table or long counter but in most homes, the elevated surfaces are already covered with important things. I make my piles on the carpet.

By now, you have lots of growing piles. Your book is taking shape, but notice that you have not had to write anything yet. As you survey the piles on the floor, you probably discover why we call this the *pilot pile-it) system* of book organization.

**Do not start writing at the beginning.** The most difficult part of writing a nonfiction book is getting started and the easiest mistake is starting with chapter one. Approached from page one, writing a book appears to be a long, steep, hard climb. That makes it hard to get started.

Nonfiction books have several parts—we call them “chapters.” They are related but they do not have to be in any particular order. There is not much *flow* to be concerned about. Start with the chapter that is the shortest, easiest or the most fun. You will probably draft the first chapter last—and that is OK. The first chapter usually is an introduction to the rest of the book and how can you know where you are going until you have been there? So do not begin writing from chapter one.

**There are four major drafts** for a nonfiction book: the rough draft, content edit, peer review and copy edit. Later, we have typesetting, proofreading and printing. Each of these drafts may have several revisions. *Is There a Book Inside You?* went through eight second-drafts.

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## Chapter Nine

### If You Can Speak It, You Just Wrote It.

If you can't type, dictate. Just capture your words and get them down; they can be manipulated later. You may dictate to tape and then have your work transcribed to disk or you can use speech-recognition software to dictate directly to disk.

**Dictating to tape** is the traditional way and is an extra step.

Jim Comiskey sold his string of pet stores when he was 42 and soon became bored with retirement. He decided to write a book and began with a dictating machine. A local word processing service transcribed his words to disk and provided him with a hardcopy to edit. He contacted the Writers' Connection in Cupertino, California, for editing help and found an artist for the cover. *How to Start, Expand and Sell a Business* became a reality.

Dianna Booher has mastered the "Interstate Book"; she has written a couple of books while driving. For example, she dictated the first draft of the 173-page *Clean up Your Act* (Warner) driving from city to city in Florida. Typically, she plans her book with idea wheels (in sequence and subordination) and then dictates from her outline. When she returns home, an assistant transcribes the dictation.

**Dictating to your computer.** Now you can bypass the keyboarding and dictate directly into your computer with speech-recognition software. Just speak into the microphone, giving punctuation and formatting commands as you go. While speech-recognition software used to be very expensive, today it doesn't cost much more than a fancy keyboard.

Speech-recognition software speeds the hardest part of writing your nonfiction book—the first draft. Dictating is quick and easy if you use the organizational plan outlined in this book; you only need a plan, an outline. Now you can get the bulk of your materials onto the hard disk with your voice.

Any new writing/recording system takes some getting used to but this one won't take long to learn, and it will greatly speed your work. Some people are self-conscious and suddenly suffer from *mic-fright* when a microphone is placed in front of them.

I had to get used to thinking at the typewriter. In law school, I took my exams with a typewriter because, while my typing was not great, my handwriting was worse—and it deteriorated in daylong exams. When I first entered the business world, I had a secretary who liked taking shorthand to keep her skills sharp. I had to learn to think and talk to another person. The next place I worked they had dictating equipment. I had to learn to think

and talk into a microphone. When I went into my own business, I typed my own letters and manuscripts, first on a typewriter and later on a computer. Next came speech-recognition software and it was back to the microphone again. Each system is a bit different, but skills are easily transferred and the new system can be mastered in a short time.

Earlier *discrete* voice recognition systems tried to understand each word. They required you to pause 1/10<sup>th</sup> to 2/10<sup>th</sup> of—a—second—between—each—word. *Continuous-speech-recognition* software allows you to speak without pauses; it derives its accuracy from the context of the words. For example the words “to”, “two” and “too” are used in different contexts. The software is not just interpreting the words, it is figuring out the sentences by the way the words are strung together.

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## *Chapter Ten*

### **Your Publishing Choices: Selling to a Publishers or Publishing Yourself**

Anyone can be a publisher. A publisher might be a large company in a tall glass building located in New York or it could be you because the definition of a “publisher” is the person who puts up the money—the one who takes the risk. He or she has the book printed and then distributes it hoping to make back more money than has been invested. Your right to publish is guaranteed to you by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. You do not have to get a license or register with any agency. As a practical matter, most book publishers do register by getting International Standard Book Numbers and sending books to the Library of Congress and the Copyright Office. Most publishers want to be easily located. So, whether the publisher is a big New York firm or a first-time author, the publisher is always the *investor*.

**“To write what is worth publishing, to find honest people to publish it, and get sensible people to read it, are the three great difficulties in being an author.” —Charles Caleb Colton, *Lacon*, 1825.**

The role of the publisher is to take the editorial material, reproduce it in book form, place it in bookstores and other appropriate outlets and then to promote the book to get potential customers into the stores. The publisher also inventories the books and fulfills the orders. The most challenging and time-consuming part of the process is promotion.

*To publish* means to prepare and issue material for public distribution or sale or to place before the public. The book doesn't have to be beautiful, it doesn't even have to sell, it needs only to be *issued*.

**Your publishing choices.** There are five ways to turn your manuscript into a book. You may sell your manuscript to a large (usually New York) publisher; sell it to a medium-sized usually specialized publisher; get an agent to find and negotiate with a publisher; pay a vanity press (bad choice), or publish yourself.

### **Conventional large publisher**

Big New York publishers are good at one thing: getting books into bookstores. They have the reps and a long-established pipeline. They are reasonably good at moving fiction, autobiographies and reference books such as dictionaries. Larger publishers are not as successful with nonfiction, valuable information that people buy to save time, money or otherwise improve their lives. If you write fiction, search for a publisher that is successful with your type of fiction. If you write nonfiction, there are better alternatives to a large publisher.

**“I see my role as helping the writer to realize his or her intention.” — Faith Sale, Senior Editor, G. P. Putnam.**

**Special sales departments** have been established by most of the larger publishers to sell to quantity buyers outside the book trade. While bookstores take a few of this title and a few of that title, a sporting goods store might buy a carton of a single title. The interests of the personnel limit the special-sales department's ability. No one wakes up at 3 a.m. to write down a great idea on a new way to reach the audience for a skydiving book. Consequently, they are just order takers. The publishers are not finding the customers; customers have to find the books on their own.

**“Put two authors in a room together and invariably they will begin trading tales of horror about how their publishers handled their books.” —Rebecca Jordan.**

**Life cycle.** Consider the life you want for your book. The big publishers have three selling seasons per year. They will put your book into the market for one season—then it's history! They will publish the book and throw it into the stores for a four-month selling season. If it sells well, they will reprint. But, they will usually not allow the author to make any corrections to the text. Smaller publishers and self-publishers update their books with each printing. They will spend the time and invest the money to make important changes.

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# Finding a Publisher

## Finding an Agent

We have all heard of the author who was rejected by 34 publishers before being “discovered.” He or she was turned down after sending the manuscript off, unsolicited. The big publishers get over a hundred unrequested manuscripts “over the transom” every day. Most publishers stamp them “Return to Sender”. It would be too expensive to open the packages to place the manuscripts into their return envelopes. These authors are being *rejected* without being *read*.

**“A good many young writers make the mistake of enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope, big enough for the manuscript to come back in. This is too much of a temptation to the editor.” —Ring Lardner (1885-1933), American humorist and writer.**

### **How to find (the right) publisher.**

Better publishers specialize in one or two niche markets. They know their subjects and do not have to send your manuscript to a reader for evaluation. They also know how to reach the potential buyer and can jump-start your sales by plugging your book into their existing distribution system, selling to specialty shops and non-book dealers.

**“The odds against an unknown writer getting a manuscript published by simply sending it directly to a publishing house are astronomical.” — Edwin McDowell, publishing correspondent, *The New York Times*.**

The secret to finding the right publisher is simple yet very few writers do it: match your manuscript to the publisher.

**“Authors do detailed research on the subject matter but seldom do any on which publishing house is appropriate for their work.” —Walter W. Powell, *Getting into Print*.**

To find these specialized publishers, check your own bookshelf and visit a couple of larger bookstores. Look for books similar to yours. Match potential buyers: Would the buyer of this book be interested in your book?

Then go to your public library and consult *Books In Print*, a multi-volumed reference listing all the books that are currently available for sale. Look up publisher addresses in the last volume. You may be able to get the email addresses without leaving home. Check the Publishers Marketing Association membership list at <http://www.pma-online.org/memdirct.html> and the membership list of the Association of American Publishers at <http://www.publishers.org/home/abouta/members.htm>.

When you call a specialized publisher, you will often get through to the top person. He or she will not only know what you are talking about, but will also be very helpful. You will be told instantly whether your proposed book will fit into that publisher’s line and serve their market.

To contact the right person at a larger publishing company, you will have to get by the *Call Prevention Department*; you are unlikely to get through without a name. See the listings of appropriate acquisition editors in *Literary Market Place*. Check the Acknowledgments in similar books; authors often reference their editor. Or locate the authors of the other books and ask for their editors' names and telephone numbers.

**“Few of the major trade publishers will take a chance on a manuscript from someone whose name is not known.” — Walter W. Powell, *Getting Into Print***

Call the editor (or the publisher in a smaller house), reference a similar title published and ask if he or she would like to see your manuscript. Then you will have someone to send your work to. Do not take “no” for an answer. If you are turned down, ask for a referral. These editors know other editors who specialize in their field. Call the second editor using the first as a reference.

**“It’s harder for a new writer to get an agent than a publisher.” —Roger Straus, president, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.**

### **How to find (the right) agent.**

Many (larger) publishers prefer to have manuscripts filtered through agents.

**“Eighty percent of the books published by major houses come through agents.” —Michael Larsen, literary agent.**

Some literary agents have a passion and a track record for certain kinds of books: cooking, travel, children’s, business, parenting and so on. In this case, you must match your manuscript to the agents because they specialize too. Do not approach just any agent; do your homework. Find out what types of manuscript they handle.

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## **Appendix Resources**

Specialized books on writing and publishing.

Magazines

Writers’ Conferences.

Professional organizations

Web sites for writers

Colophon