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Tips for Self Publishing



From an author who went
from 0 readers to Bestseller
in less than a year.

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How to Write a Book

How to write and publish a book often seems like an overwhelming task, particularly if you've never written a book before. Or maybe you're just finishing your first novel and have no idea how to publish the book on Amazon or what options to take.

This feeling is similar to walking down a railroad track. You can see a little ways ahead, but you don't necessarily know what's around the next corner.



Some writers plot more than I do, but whether you make charts ahead of time and organize your book, or simply start writing and clean it up later, there are the main essentials every writer needs to know in order for readers to connect with a book.

One of my friends had a great way of viewing the gigantic, ever-scary task of sitting down to write 300+ pages:

Draft #1: It's like walking through a tall corn maze. The large, leafy plants are several feet higher than your head. You don't know where to turn or how to even get to the end of the maze.



Draft #2: It's like sitting on a big rock. You can see some things with much more clarity, but you still can't see everything yet.

Draft #3: It's like being in a tall tree, getting a bird's eye view. This is where you can gain the most perspective, but you have to push through the procrastination and difficulty to get to that final point.

More info on time management, productivity apps, and more coming soon!

Get More Readers Using Twitter - 5 Tips

Twitter and Facebook have been two of the top social media performers for finding customers, like-minded hobbyists, and, for authors—finding readers. But how do we use these channels without coming off like a used car salesman? Or worse, chanting “Buy my book!” over and over on Twitter? Which, by the way, does not work and has the opposite effect. Potential readers run away screaming.

So how did I find readers on Twitter?

1. **Make a Connection**. When someone follows you, take the time to read their bio and tweet them a question. Most bios have at least one interesting factoid you can ask about, even if it's the person's location. Reach out, make a connection and have a conversation.
Tip: Do NOT do what many inexperienced people do and just thank them for the follow, and in the same breath, ask them to check out your new book. Don't do it. You may be tempted to, but don't. It's tacky.
2. **Test the Waters**. After you succeed with several conversations on #1, you can try to test the waters. Restrain yourself from playing the greasy salesman card! Simply mention that you're an author and you write about XYZ, if they ever want to check out your books, here is the link. Then provide the URL. Do not harass, continue to send reminders, or anything else. If they are interested, they will check out your book. If not, just enjoy the social connection. Maybe they might engage later. Twitter is about networking relationships.

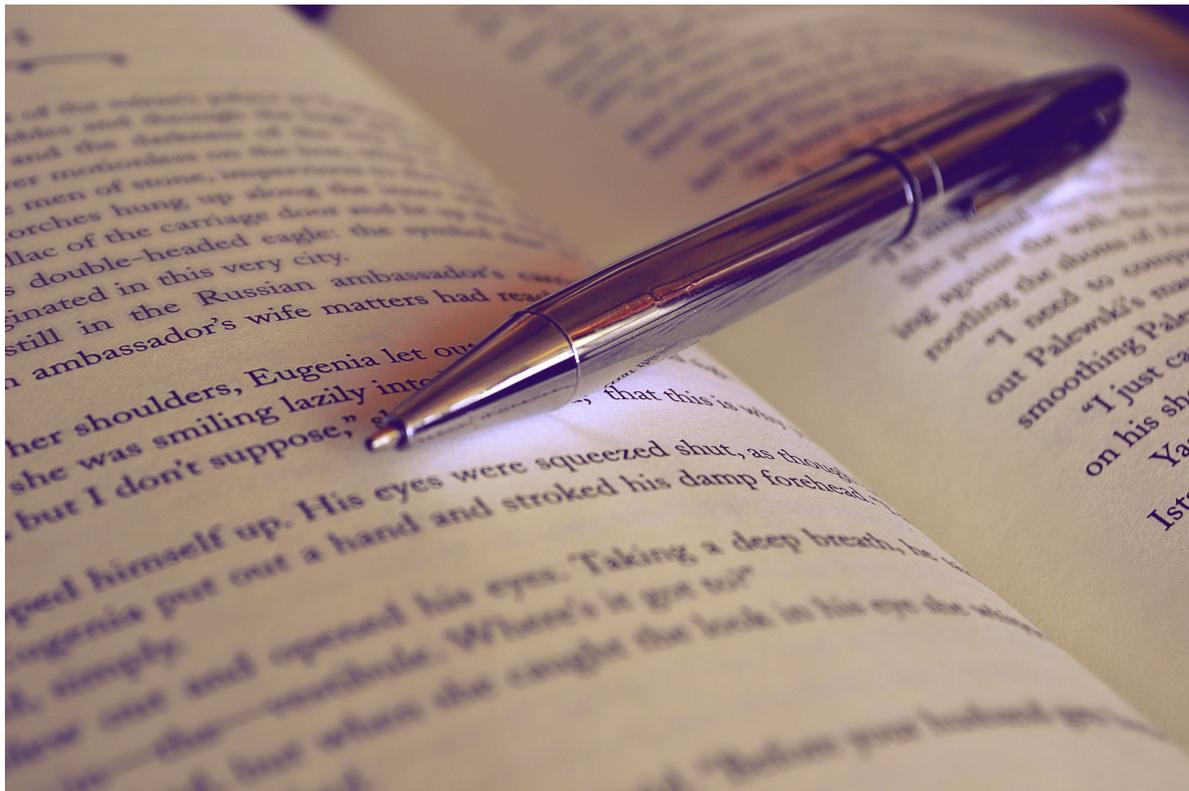
3. **Use Hashtags.** These will gain more exposure on your tweets that involve a book release or good news about your writing. These hashtags often have people that retweet to their audiences, and you get more exposure in the process. Some of these hashtags to include in your tweets are:
 - #ASMSG
 - #bookplugs
 - #readers
 - #fridayreads
 - You can also include these handles in your tweets for RTs: @tw4rw, @IndBk, and @IARTG.

4. **Twitter Chats.** Participate in weekly discussions geared toward writers and bloggers. There is a #SundayBlogShare that ranks in the top conversations every Sunday. Type up a blog with some interesting info that relates to your book, and share with Twitter using that hashtag. You'll gain a bigger audience. Do not write a blog to *sell your book*, but ***use an indirect method*** to interest potential readers. For example, several of my books are set in New Orleans (my hometown). I wrote blogs recommending lesser-known eateries and pubs in the area; tips from a local. Travelers appreciate the info, and I mention my books are set there and provide buy links within the blog post.
5. **Find Key People to Follow.** I use Manage Flitter, which is a Twitter service that allows you to search for potential people to follow by their bio, activity, etc. Use the search parameters to find potential readers and then follow them. The two hashtags below can be in a bio or a person's latest tweet. This way, you're finding readers to follow.
 - #amreading
 - #bookworm

Book Signing Suggestions for Authors

The day has finally arrived.

You've been invited or have signed up to attend a book signing as an author! You smile bigger, walk easier, and can't wait for the event.



But wait...other than bringing your books, what else can you expect?

Here's some tips and tricks to ensure a great signing:

- Bring Swag. This can include pens, buttons, postcards, bookmarks, any type of book related stuff.
- Postcard Recommendation: GotPrint or VistaPrint. You can put the cover of the book on 1 side, the blurb and a place to sign on the other.

- Bring Candy! It helps you appear more approachable and everyone loves candy!
- Bring a gift/giveaway that you can hold a raffle for at the signing. Get readers to enter their name/email on a piece of paper (this helps build your email list too!) and then the winner will get notified by email. Try and make the gift/prize relate to your book.
- Dress and act professional. Some signings go better than others, but always be professional and don't complain.
- If the book signing is scheduled for longer than 2 hours, plan ahead and bring protein-rich snacks in a bag. I've attended 8 hour signings before and without granola bars, yogurt, water, etc., my equilibrium would have been shot. Prepare and you'll be good.
- Do yourself a favor and buy one of those mini-suitcases with wheels from Wal-Mart or Target. You can fit about 30-35 books in the main and side pockets, and it's easy to bring your books to another room in a hotel or a bookstore.

Le Resistance!

No, don't worry. This isn't going to be about French military tactics or some political movement. The Resistance I'm referring to is that creature that stunts our personal growth, delays our dreams due to fear, wraps its scale-like body around us so we lose sight of our goals—whatever those goals might be.

One of my favorite books is Steven Pressfield's "The War of Art." While the book is geared toward those pursuing artistic ventures, his suggestions and observations can easily be applied to anything in our daily lives.

Pressfield says we live two lives: the life we live, and the unlived life inside us. Between the 2 stands Resistance. Resistance is that voice inside your head that tells you that you don't have to get those pages written, or practice piano, or exercise. Resistance says "don't worry about that today." It might even go one step further and attempt to get you to do something else, just so you feel productive.

Ever notice that when writer's block strikes, doing the laundry becomes something we look forward to doing and we're super efficient at getting it all done? Nothing wrong with doing laundry, but if you're spending all the time with laundry and not spending any time moving toward your goal, that's when Resistance takes a stranglehold.

Even simple tasks like researching the Internet for book plots can become all-time-consuming and soon the writer hasn't written one word...but he/she successfully knows about the migratory patterns of mice in another country. (Hey, that info can eventually come in handy at a dinner party, right?)

This is Resistance, according to Pressfield. We get restless, bored, and out of sorts. He suggests that we view the pursuit of our goal in the same way a warrior views his mission. Every day, the battle must be fought with diligence, or else Resistance wins.

Let's fight the Resistance. Who's with me?

5 Things to Avoid in Self-Publishing

5 Mistakes to Avoid When Self-Publishing Your Book(s):

- **Copyright Infringement on Images.**
- **Don't Assume Anything with Your Graphic Artist.**
- **Not Thinking About Distribution Options.**
- **Avoiding Social Media.**
- **Not Planning Financially.**

People unknowingly infringe on copyright permissions and open themselves up to lawsuits all the time. This is the world of the Internet, of sharing posts, and pinning photos on Pinterest. Be ruthless in keeping your business practices legal.

The beautiful images on Pinterest and other art sharing sites are NOT in the public domain and free from copyright restrictions. Far from it. Be ruthless when searching for any images you use for book covers, Facebook posts, even blog posts. Authors have been sued for using images off the Web and not checking with the copyright owner.

Where does an author get images, then? Take your pick. Below are my favorites and the price for images is anywhere from \$12-\$18 each. If you go with Option C, **Canva**, you can find many good images for free or \$1.00.

Shutterstock.com, istockphoto.com, canva.com, dreamstime.com are just some examples.

This reiterates Point #1 above. Make sure your graphic artist has obtained the image(s) in their gallery legally.

I discovered this painful lesson when I first began self-publishing in 2013. Someone recommended the artistic site Deviant Art for finding a graphic artist to do book covers. I spent hours browsing through images that I fell in love with. Some were idyllic and I immediately sent messages to the artists to make arrangements to hire them to get the image for my cover.

To my disappointment, the artist had stolen the core image from Pinterest or somewhere else on the Web. There was no way to track down where it had come from, and therefore I couldn't use it for my book cover. Hours of browsing, hoping...all went down the tubes.

There's nothing wrong with creating art for art's sake. Just be careful when you browse sites like Deviant Art. Many artists don't have the legal right to those images. On a positive note, some do. That's how I found mine and she's been a wonderful resource.

Distribution is how you intend to sell your book. If you don't think ahead about what you want, you could end up losing valuable reviews attached to your book.

Below are three options for distribution:

- **Option A:** Distribute directly to each retailer. That means you go to the retailer's web site (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Apple, etc.) and you upload the manuscript and cover yourself. No middle man.
- **Option B:** Use an aggregator (middle man) for everything. Draft2Digital or Smashwords will accept uploads of your book and distribute it to all retailers for a small fee on your royalties. You're using a middle man for everything, but it's a one-stop shop for uploading, tracking sales, etc.
- **Option C:** Do a hybrid of A&B. This is what I recommend if you intend to write/publish 6 or more books. I go direct (Option A) for Amazon, Kobo, Apple and a few others. Then I use Option B (aggregator) to reach other retailers like Overdrive, Oyster, libraries, etc. Aggregators do publish to the bigger retailers but you can "opt out" of selling to any company where you've already gone direct.

Decide which option you want before you self-publish a lot of books. If you want a middle man at first and later decide to go direct, then the aggregator "takes down" their version of your book—and you LOSE all your reviews.

We live in a 24-hour news cycle world. Readers are going to be on social media, whether they prefer print books or eBooks. You cannot afford to underestimate the power of connecting online, particularly with Facebook and Twitter.

Authors tend to be an introverted bunch. After all, we write. We spend hours listening to the voices in our heads and we enjoy our solitude. But we have to break past that barrier and engage with readers...and readers are into social media.

Chat with your other author friends on Facebook and try to organize a Q&A or Facebook party/chat with them. Take advantage of a 30-minute slot where you can interact with other authors' readers. Hang out on Twitter on Fridays, when the hashtag #FridayReads is popular and readers are recommending books. You don't have to be part of every platform out there, but definitely brush up on Facebook and Twitter because those seem to be where readers hang out.

Self-publishing can be a great opportunity. It allows you to have more control over your books, your schedule, and more importantly it gives you a bigger piece of the financial pie than if you were to go through a traditional publisher.

That being said, publishing a book does have its costs. There's editing, book covers, any promo, business cards, and more. Below is a breakdown of some costs. Not all of these are needed (you may or may not want a publicist depending on your funds) but I believe that A and C are essential to delivering the best book possible.

Developmental Editing (plot points, character arcs, thorough) - \$800-\$1800 range

Copy Editing (grammar, sentence structure) - \$150-\$450 range

- Book Cover Design - \$75-\$500, depending on image(s) and designer fee
- Promo Opportunities - \$25-\$125 range
- Publicist - \$800-\$15,000 range

Save up a nest egg before you take the plunge into self-publishing. Spend that time writing and polishing as many books as you can.

On a final note, self-publishing can be a great option. Filled with freedom, more financial promise, and more control over how you want to market your books.