

# Golden Rules for Writing Non-Fiction

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*There are some things that you just have to know, before you start to write. These golden rules will make your journey smoother, the outcomes better and the book you write much more valued to your intended readers. When writing your first book, you simply don't know what you don't know yet - but these are some of the basic stumbling blocks that are easily avoided.*

## Decide on your topic

Develop your book topic into its main points - expand each into 3-4 main sections and write approximately 3-4 chapters for each section. Each chapter should be approximately 2-3,000 words. This will make your book approximately 18,000 - 48,000 words long (ie, from 100 - 200 pages depending on formatting). Use a folder to gather together and separately hold each section and collected information that you can take anywhere and work on at any time.

## Get your manuscript professionally edited

Don't rely on your own judgement or that of your 'cousin's sister's son who's just finished high school and can spell really well'. Invest in the services of a professional editor so that your book is groomed and refined, and targeted to your specific market. Add the Acknowledgements, introduction, foreword, about the author and additional marketing pages. Then get it edited again. Make any required changes and then have it properly proofed.

## Have your book professionally designed

Don't use a standard graphic designer who thinks they can create a book for you - use a professional experienced book designer who knows the rules of typesetting, cover design (front and back) and has experience as a book designer, including someone who uses appropriate software such as InDesign, or Quark.

## Apply the finishing touches

Send review copies out before printing so that you can have endorsements and quotes added to the front/back covers to help saleability of the book.

## Decide how you will print your book

Hard cover, paperback, colour or b/w, 50 copies or 50,000. These will have a bearing on whether you elect to digitally print, POD, or offset print, locally or offshore. A book packaging specialist will help you with this if you need it. Don't just go to any printer - select one who is a book specialist.

## Extra Tips:

- You don't have to be a writer to be an author - ghost writers are a commonly used option for many professional experts.

- Decide on self publishing or whether you wish to work with a traditional publisher, or a combination of both. Talk to other authors about their experiences before deciding on this, and ask for recommendations and referrals about editors, printers, designers and mentors.
- Learn as much as you can about the process of writing, publishing and marketing and distribution before you start so that you'll have realistic expectations on your success and progress.
- If you have more than 200 pages then consider turning this into two books - a series and/or second book will make your overall position as an expert much stronger.
- Expect your book to be an investment in marketing of yourself as a speaker and consultant, not as a means of gaining extra revenue. Chances are your book will open doors for you but it will take a very long time to make you any money, if it does at all.
- Don't print a huge quantity in your first print run - no matter how well it's been edited and proofed, you'll still find errors or things you wish to change after it's been printed. A second edition is good for PR too.
- Give copies away to anyone who will tell someone else about it/you. Aim to get it into the hands of as many people as possible from the start. Consider it a marketing tool for establishing your expertise.
- Find sponsors to help with costs of production if you can. A company who has similar messages or brand values to your book, with whom you can forge an alliance with.