

PublishMe

How to plan your
non-fiction book

www.publishme.co.nz





Introduction

Let's start by dispelling a major myth – that you have to be a talented writer to write a book. It just isn't so.

You don't need any major writing skill to write a book. If you can write a letter, then you can write a book. And the more you practise your writing, the better you will get at it.

This book, helps you with its clear techniques and processes that allow you to go through the stages that can make writing a book a lot easier than you might think.

It is difficult to describe the stages of writing that perfectly represents everyone's experience of writing a non-fiction book. The numbered items in each section represent a new idea. At the end of each numbered section is a tick box. If you can't find immediate use for a section at the time it is presented, leave it on hold for the moment and come back later. Gradually you will tick each section and the shape your book will take.

At this stage, we are ready to start the planning process, so it is time to learn about **PANIC**.

No, it's not as bad as all that. This is just a handy reminder of the stages to be passed through as we prepare for writing.

PANIC stands for:

Prepare,
Arrange,
Narrow,
Investigate,
Commence.

So let's begin.

Prepare

Obviously, the first stage of writing a book is to prepare thoroughly. It can save you a lot of work later to have clearly thought through the whole book before you start the actual writing of the text.

Think of an apple tree. The fruit it bears is but the evidence of the growth that has taken place for many months beforehand. Without sufficient nourishment and attention in the months beforehand, the fruit the tree bears will possibly be withered and poor picking. Even if the fruit still looks rosy and attractive, without the right nutrients it will have a disappointing texture and flavour.

A good book is going to be the evidence of the good work you have put in beforehand. So let's highlight some sensible stages you may wish to engage in as you pass through the preparation process.

1. Decide:

The first major step, is just making the decision to write a book. If you'd like to, **YOU CAN**, and you can guarantee to have it published now – so why not? Just make the decision!

Completed

2. Time to write:

Next, you need to make sure you can find time to write. Think about when you are at your best mentally (are you a morning person or a night owl?), and when you are least likely to get interruptions. You only need an hour or so a day, as long as it is a good, clear hour when you can concentrate. Writing can be quite tiring anyway as it does exercise your brain and, after a good writing session, you may well feel like you've just done an exercise workout, so an hour or so isn't a bad amount of time to start with. Start with a manageable workload and build the time up later if you can.

Completed

3. Tell everyone:

The next stage might sound a bit odd, but it is to tell everyone. There's nothing better than telling everyone you know that you are writing a book, to keep you on task. People will ask how the book's going, and that will act as a gentle spur when you may find excuses not to write, to help keep you at your task. Writing is stimulating, but it can also at times be hard work, so you can use all the motivation you can get.

Completed

4. Find a reason to write:

Why are you writing? Define for yourself why you are going to write this particular book.

Completed

5. Plan rewards:

Think of some rewards you could give yourself (like having a nice café lunch out with friends, or buying yourself a facial or a short holiday) as you complete certain milestones along the way.

Write these down and pin them up where you are going to work. Cross them off as you reach each milestone, and give yourself the reward. Take the time to savour it, and give yourself a hearty pat on the back. Be your own cheerleader while you are writing – after the release, others will join in supporting you and your book!

Completed

6. Comfort Zone:

Now, assuming you haven't already got a topic burning away in your head, we'll need to go through the process to create one.

First, think about staying within your comfort zone to a large extent, especially if this is your first book. Take time now to write a list of all the things that you are really interested in, that you have experienced that others may benefit from knowing about, or that you would really like to learn about as you write. These are things within your comfort zone.

Completed

7. Brainstorm:

The most successful means of finding a great title/topic for a book is to take the time to brainstorm for ideas. There are many ways to brainstorm. One way, if you are looking for a good topic, is to gather a group of friends together and give each a pen and a pile of small slips of paper. Tell them a topic from your list of comfort zone items and get them to write down anything they think of that relates to that topic, each on a separate slip of paper. Ask them to throw each slip of paper with a single idea on it into the middle of the table and, as they do, call out what they wrote.

Without spoiling the fun that this exercise can cause, make sure no-one makes judgement on anything that is called out. This is not the time for narrowing your focus – that comes later – but the time for letting minds have free rein.

As words are called out, others should be able to name associated ideas by mentally hitchhiking on the words being called out, so that by the time everyone runs dry of ideas, there is a good pile in the middle of the table.

These can then be sorted out and grouped in the process of searching for writing topics.

Completed

8. Sort:

Take a pile of brainstormed ideas, and firstly sort them into groups of like ideas. Once you begin sorting, groups will appear. Let your group of friends be involved in the process too. The discussion and arguing that comes with this process will help you to clarify your thinking. Depending on the number of slips of paper, you might need to first sort them into one set of groups, then go back and sort each of those groups into further sets. Just spend the time – don't rush. This is an important stage, and if other ideas or missing pieces occur to you as you sort, as they almost invariably do, then add those extra items.

Once you have all the pieces of paper in groups and arranged properly, these can be glued to a large piece of paper – ideally with a gum of the Post-it note variety, so that you can move them around as you play with ideas.

Completed



9. Choose:

Work this way through all your comfort zones until you find a topic you like, then grab it with both hands. Feel excited about it. Hold tight to it. It is going to be with you for quite a while and you are going to grow quite attached to it.

Is your topic one that is still going to be of interest in two or three or more years' time or is it a 'hot' or current topic that may be of no real interest in six months or a year's time? There is absolutely nothing wrong with this sort of topic, but if you want to take advantage of potential sales then you may need to complete it quickly in order to do so. If you knew for example, that Prince Charles was to be crowned king of England in three months time, you may need to work around the clock to have your book written and published and about in the marketplace to coincide with the coronation. (And plan your marketing at the same time.) It's bound to be a huge seller! But who will want to buy it in three year's time? It may still make a few sales, but chances are you will have missed the biggest selling opportunity. So choose your topic carefully and think about what timeframe you can realistically work to and make sure they are compatible. However, for some of us, working under pressure may just be what we need in order to achieve our best work.

Consider what interest your topic will have for others and at the same time as doing this research, think about what type of topic you have. There are so many types of non-fiction – from planting edible gardens to star gazing to medical textbooks – so once you've decided on your topic do some research on other published works of the same or similar topics. Take a look at how they present their content, and of the actual content itself. Is it the type of work that will need elements such as an index at the back, a glossary, a bibliography or reference list? Will it need photos or illustrations to support the text? In looking at other published works of a similar topic you will, if you haven't already, begin to form an understanding of the structure your topic will need. Once you have that understanding you will also become aware of some of the things that your actual writing will involve.

Completed

10. Extent:

Though not every author does this, it is wise to also think at this stage about the extent of the book – the approximate number of pages you expect the final product to fill. The reasons for doing this are:

- a. Once you know how many words or pages, you can reward yourself with milestones along these lines. Thinking in the number of words may be hard, and it's fine if you would rather calculate how many pages. Be aware, however, that if you type up 150 pages on an A4-sized document in your computer and then it is published in a book of either smaller or larger dimensions, the number of pages will change – so your initial extent is only approximate.
- b. You can set a completion date and divide up the task more easily.
- c. You won't have to edit out a lot of extraneous content later on if you produce a reader-friendly book of a sensible length. What is meant by sensible? Sometimes the topic you choose will itself be a good indicator of the typical sort of length for its type.

Completed

11. Depth:

Knowing the size of the book you are writing helps to define the audience – a shorter non-fiction book is usually for quick reference, casual interest, a rough working knowledge. Long books tend to be for the experts or those who seek to be; those who can see the point of wading through a major tome to capture the full detail. And there are all the shades in between. You may sell a lot more of a shorter book as the market is wider, but the price will be lower. You may sell a lot fewer of a longer book, but you may command an excellent price as those who seek the last word on a topic are usually prepared to pay for it.

Completed

12. Style:

Arising from this, think through exactly what type of book you will write. Is it going to be:

- a. Written in the first person or in the third person?
- b. Will it be guiding, historical, helpful, theoretical, analytical, cataloguish?



- c. Will it be more like a commentary, an essay, a description or will it conform to another style?
- d. Will it be popular or targeted? Free-flowing or academic?

You get the idea.

Completed

13. Format:

Think also of the format of the book you will print in. What will the dimensions of the book be? Will the book be all black and white inside or contain some colour? Will it contain any pictures, diagrams, photographs, footnotes, an index or any addition other than words alone, that will need some additional thinking? While you're looking at other books and considering size and structure also look at the style of how the inside pages are done, the types of paper and the general presentation of the book. While no decisions are needed now, it is worth taking a look at how other books create a final impression. Books are often judged, at least initially, by their covers (and inside presentation).

Completed

14. Assembly:

Think about how you will collect your information.

a. Reporting

There is a wide range of popular non-fiction material on the market that is based on good reporting skills. To be a good reporter, you need the essential elements of good observation, interviewing and researching skills. Personal experiences, unsolved murders and mysteries, shipwrecks and other disasters, shock/horror probes into anything from the conditions in which meat is raised to the state of GE contamination of food – if it is topical, contentious, interesting, amusing, important ... it can make a successful book in the report style.

b. Researching

Research is ideal for collecting content for certain types of publication. Research on the Internet, for example, can throw up all sorts of information and assembling this into a new form of presentation is a useful and valid means of writing a book. Books have been published containing collections of recipes, manufacturing instructions for commercial products, sayings, site names ... all sorts of things. Just take note of copyright law. For more modern topics, researching from books is rarely ideal due to the rapidity of change (researching from research journals being a notable exception), but for more historical content (that which is unlikely to change with time), researching at your local library or museum can also provide the content for some very successful publications.

c. Logging

Diaries or logbooks often create an interesting, gradually unfolding look at an aspect of life and some famous tales have been told in this form – Anne Frank's diary and Thor Heyerdahl's journeys are two that spring to mind. There are many situations that lend themselves to this sort of treatment. You might, for example, advertise for diaries of people's travels, adventures, exploits, love lives or hardships and suffering. Such very personal observations can often make for compelling reading.

d. Collecting

Books can be produced as collections and email makes this process easier than ever. There have already been popular books produced by assembling the emails of two or more people into chronological order, as well as collections of humorous emails that pass around on the Net to name but two, but the scope for this sort of approach is huge. You could, for example, publish the emails sent between a couple who met, fell in love and married through the Internet, or send out an email to all your friends, and ask them to send it on to all their friends and so on, seeking anecdotes on a certain topic. What fun.

e. Editing

You can create an interesting book by either collecting a range of existing writings on a theme (be aware of copyright law and that you may need to get permission from the original authors to do this) and presenting them as an edited anthology, or by asking a group of people to write on a related topic or theme and editing the collection.



For example, you might ask a group of ex-professional sports people to write (or you may write or have someone else write for them) about their transition to normal life at the end of their playing career. A collection from a range of well-known names may make a fine product to sell.

f. Assembling

Similar to editing, but different, is to collect all the various items in a range of written materials on the theme that you have chosen. For a shipwreck, for example, you might collect everything from the ship's loading list and the weather forecasts of the time, the logbook, the letters of the mate, newspaper articles recording the event, photographs, and an interview with a rescuer and shipping experts who may hold views on the tragedy.

For brief histories of schools, churches, sports clubs or associations for example, such collections are quite common and well enjoyed by those with an interest in that topic. Well researched to incorporate a wide range of materials, collections can provide an amazing depth of understanding about aspects of interest related to a single entity, time, place or event.

g. Photographing

Some very popular books have been produced in New Zealand by photographing men in their tool sheds and displaying these black and white photographs with a paragraph of information. On a larger scale, the M.I.L.K. project collected (via the Internet) photographs from across the world for a collection of books and associated items on topics such as 'friendship' and 'kindness'. Many opportunities still exist in this area for those with more visual skills.

h. Drawing

For those who are artistic, books of drawings offer opportunities. How about a book of photos of historical Maori pa sites of your region, with a matching drawing showing what the site was like in its pre-European times. There are many books to be conceived that primarily use graphics for communication.

i. Internet research

The Internet can be used as a research tool for seeking answers to specific questions, but it can also be used as a collection point for gathering information on a wide range of topics suitable for publication. There are many ways to research on the Internet and many wonderful tools, such as Wikipedia – an actively updated online encyclopedia. There is a near limitless range of possibilities.

Completed

Just be aware that note-taking in these early stages could prove to be invaluable later – whether it's a rush of inspired thoughts or some factual material that supports your idea, a mind map showing the direction or exploration of a possible topic, or recording a book's details such as its title and author (perhaps even which library you were in when you saw it, edition and reference number), or a website URL or an idea that a friend suggested. At the time you may think it's not worth bothering because you will remember these fascinating 'gems' in all their detail, but at some stage you may regret not having done so, especially when just the very thing you want so desperately to remember eludes you.

And there's no real excuse for not taking notes in one form or another – for there are some great options if handwriting all your notes or ideas into a notebook doesn't appeal to you. What about a digital voice recorder? This is one easy way to make notes, record thoughts and ideas, especially if you are thinking at such a speed that writing is slowing you down. The added advantage of this is that if you have compatible software on your computer you can transfer the voice recording to text and then you don't have to type it up. Some high-end cell phones also have really good memory capacities which you can use for recording notes. You can also take notes on a laptop, they are portable, easy to use, and it's easy to transfer files back to your main computer. A word of warning, if you are taking photographs for your book, or video footage as part of your research – show a sensitivity to the people and places you are in and make yourself aware of issues such as copyright, whether or not you need permission, or if it would be diplomatic to inform or talk to someone first etc. (Some archival material has to be handled with gloves, for instance, and/or can't be photocopied or subjected to light.)

Go on a spending spree – use a combination of ways and take yourself seriously.



Arrange

The next stages of the planning cycle involve developing the idea further by building up the foundation then the framework, just as if you were framing up a house. With writing, this is done through the processes of refining and focussing your idea by arranging and rearranging the sub-ideas you will incorporate in your book.

Let's work on:

1. Brainstorming:

Once again we use the technique of brainstorming to develop lists of all the aspects that might be covered in such a book. A simple and productive method at this point is to Net brainstorm.

Just surf the Internet on the topic, choosing different search strings and see what comes up. Write down all the keywords or headings that are related to the general area in which you have chosen to write your book, or that are related to the list of sub-topics you have collected as part of your initial brainstorming process. Don't worry initially about detail; we'll deal with that later. Just look for the broad scope of headings and subheadings that on the face of it, seem relevant to the topic of your book, letting your mind stay as open to possibility as you can – again, don't over-analyse at this point. The time for close analysis is later. For now, just collect. Just accept anything that may be relevant. Later there is a pruning process.

If you note the ideas down on an open page in a word processing program, keep it on the task bar on the bottom of the screen, popping it up as you find another idea. This will make the later processes a lot easier.

Completed

2. Arrange Headings:

Once you think you have exhausted your search for new headings, take your brainstormed list of ideas and once again sort them into groups of like ideas. As before, you might even need to first sort into one set of groups, then go back and sort each of those groups into further sets. Just spend the time – don't rush.

This is an important stage. Invariably other ideas or missing pieces occur to you as you sort – just add them to your sets.

You could also rearrange your groups in your word processing document, if you prefer to work on your computer. If you are using pieces of paper it may be simpler to chop up each idea onto a separate slip of paper and repeat the physical arranging process we used earlier when looking for a title. Once your sets have been formed, these can be glued to a large piece of paper – ideally with a gum of the Post-it note variety, so that you can move them around in later stages of analysis.

Completed

3. Title Development:

You are now beginning the process of really refining and focussing the content of your book, based on the headings and subheadings you have formed. So first, looking at the topic and the lists you have formed, write a working title for the book, and then a single sentence that you could use to tell a person what your book is about. Do that now and refine it until you have it in as few words as possible.

Completed

Narrow

Now it is time do some serious focus building, narrowing the ideas you have, shaping and re-shaping them to form the best platform on which to build.

1. Audience:

First really start to define your audience. Who exactly will want to read this book? Who (assuming you'd like to sell it) will pay for it? What age are they? What are their interests? Where are they found? How can they be contacted? What sort of bookstore would carry your book? Do you also want your book to be available on the web through online



bookstores? What are the general tastes of your audience? Are they normally interested in reading? Out of a long list of possible questions related to audience it will become clear that some are relevant to the type of book you want to write. Others aren't and as you discard them it will help confirm in your own mind whether or not the topic and audience are, indeed, a match. Look back to the extent, depth and style headings you dealt with in the first section. Are your choices still relevant? Do you know someone in your target group? Think of them as you plan. Imagine that you will write the book as if you were talking directly to them and seeking to keep them interested. What devices (anecdotes, jokes/cartoon strips, highlighted key points, illustrations or diagrams, photographs, chatty style etc) will you need to employ in your writing to keep this person interested?

And just a note; please don't say the book is for everyone. If it is, it is almost certain to be too broad and you will need to work really hard at the focussing activities that follow. If you are seeking to sell your book, it will almost certainly sell better the more focussed you make it.

Completed

2. Narrow Your Topic:

No matter what sort of book you are writing, it is important to keep it as focussed as possible – to keep it from wandering off-topic and becoming boring or exceptionally cumbersome and laborious to gain information from. Now is the time to tighten. First, cross out any of the listed topics or sub-topics that can be left out without damaging the outcome you want for the group upon whom you are focussing. Be a bit brutal. Ask yourself: is that section really appropriate to your working title?

Completed

3. Define, define and define again:

Now that you effectively have the core topic headings and subheadings for your book it is time to put these through the wringer too. Take each of the headings and ask the following questions;

- Is it an appropriate heading for a book on this topic?
- Is it in the appropriate order in relation to all the other headings?
- Is it going to be followed by about the same amount of content as each of the other headings? (If too big, look for another heading within it, if too small, look either for further subheadings that might be usefully added, or look to roll it in as a subheading within another section).
- Again, add, delete or edit headings and subheadings as you go through this process.

Good planning and refinement at this stage will save you a lot of editing later, as it is very hard to reshuffle large amounts of information on a grand scale.

Completed

4. Break up into saleable bites:

Once again, check to see that what you have is one book. You'll make more money with two or three books on a topic, each on a particular aspect, so be sure that you are still likely to stay within the planned extent, or divide the book into two or more. Before you get too serious about breaking your book into pieces just to make extra money, make sure that your topic has enough content and structure for more than one book, without the risk of being repetitive. Think of your target audience again – will they still buy? Or will you now also capture a wider audience?

Completed

5. Goals and framework:

Expand the single sentence you wrote earlier into a full framework. The framework should begin with the title and any subtitle followed by a half page or so covering the scope of the book (an expansion of your single sentence, incorporating who your audience will be, how they can be located and marketed to, and any evidence you have found that indicates that they will buy the book eg: find online sales figures for similar books, borrowing statistics from the local library etc).

Write a chapter outline (your headings) and expand each chapter with a paragraph or so explaining what will be covered as you work through your subheadings.



It is important to feel convinced by this framework and that the book you are writing is of value to others. If you are not convinced go back and look for the weak spots – it may be one particular chapter – whatever it is, don't just throw away your framework or the whole idea of writing because it now seems unachievable. Take a break and then review what it's going to take to make your book outline convincing. Rework it; mould it into the solid structure it needs to be. Look at it critically again. Then feel great about having completed a major portion of the preparation or pre-writing planning.

Completed

6. Blurb:

This is the selling piece for the back cover of the book and as such is usually written with sales in mind – how to get the person who picks the book up (first attracted by the cover and title) and flips it over to see whether it is for them, to actually buy the book. You can always come back at the end and re-edit these pieces, but by having written them now, you have helped to clearly define the boundaries that the book will work within and the focus that it will carry within those boundaries. If you are correct in your assessments of your audience, it should then sell. Make sure you write the blurb to appeal to your target audience, and edit it down to no more than 100 or so words.

Completed

7. Table of contents:

Let's return now to your major headings. These should form the basis of your table of contents, but so too may some or all of your subheadings. Tables of contents in non-fiction works quite often contain major section headings then chapters or at least headed or unheaded subsections (often marked by a space within the chapter) within those.

It is important to decide at this stage whether your major headings are to be section headings or chapter headings, and whether your subheadings are to be chapter headings, subsection headings or just guiding topics you will use to write each paragraph or set of paragraphs. You may like to go to a library or bookstore and browse through a number of books of the style you have chosen and see how their tables of contents are laid out – then return and divide your major headings and section headings up as you feel best, entering those that should be entered, into the table of contents. Again, if more subheadings reveal themselves as you work through this research phase, add them in.

Completed

8. Index:

You need also at this stage to consider whether the book needs an index. Again, you may wish to visit a library or bookstore and browse through a number of books of a similar style to assess how important an index will be. Just remember that if the book is ever likely to be used as a serious reference book for research, it will almost certainly need an index. Creating an index, if your book warrants it, is another satisfying challenge to tick off.

If your book is to have an index, then it is time to learn about using the indexing tool found on Microsoft Word under the 'Insert' dropdown header, then 'Reference'. By marking up sections /names / places / objects / abstractions that you decide should be referenced in the index as you write them, the index will automatically form and set correct page numbers into your index at the end, no matter where the reference shifts to as you add content, edit and lay out your work. This function can save you many hours of frustrating work and is well worth learning how to use it.

A great starting point for your index will be to capture the headings and subheadings you have already listed, which should probably be in your index. These can be linked straight away using the index tool to start your index list. Then, as you write the book, you can add any additional important ideas to your heading and subheading references in the index. By the end, you will have a well-referenced book.

Completed

9. Other elements in a non-fiction book:

What type of non-fiction book did you decide on? Some are more complex in their structure than others. As well as bibliographies and indexes there can also be illustration credits, a glossary and appendices, endnotes, end matter and so on. However there is no need to be overwhelmed by this seemingly endless list of possibilities. Once again just look at other books that are similar to your topic choice and pick the eyes out of them.

Completed



10. Front matter:

Whoa! you say - this is just too much!

No it's not – just be prepared and know that at the beginning of a book there are a number of other pieces of information that you need to give to the reader. And even though you may not have paid much attention to these pages in the past take a little time now to see what these are.

You may need to write a short piece about yourself (called About the Author), list any previous publications on another page, (give this time and it will happen) and bear in mind that when you have finished writing the main text of your book you are going to decide whether or not to include acknowledgements, a foreword and – yes– even a dedication.

Front matter also contains what is called an imprint page which includes publisher and copyright details. Turn the first title page of any book and there it is. Once again it looks technical, but it's not. When you're near to completion or you have finished writing you will obtain from our National Library a 13-digit number, which is your ISBN for this particular publication. This number is your unique international standard book number and is used worldwide. You can get it earlier if you like if it helps you to take yourself more seriously! (You can even get Cataloguing-in-Publication Data from the National Library to put on your copyright page, which gives cataloguers information on how to catalogue your book in their library.)

Completed

Investigate

While this stage is still part of the planning process, you are now much more focussed and beginning to move to the final planning before you write the text. In fact, some of the work in this section will so shape the text that the writing will be fairly straightforward.

1. Research:

Now you have the shape of the book well planned, it is time to get going on any remaining serious research. Today, the most important research tool is the Internet and most non-fiction writers will want to become proficient both in its use, and in the ability to discern the useful from the rest. Practice is certainly a great help in becoming a proficient searcher and being adventurous enough to learn how to search in more advanced ways to get much better quality information. A good Internet researcher may also become conversant with a range of search engines, as some can provide different search algorithms, and therefore search outcomes.

Specialist libraries and museums are perhaps the second most useful research tool, from the research rooms in your local library or museum, to specialist collections suited to historians, genealogists, business researchers or whatever. University libraries are often extremely useful in this way and are usually open to all, though not usually for borrowing. A great deal of good quality research can be done in a library, of course, and if you can't take a laptop computer in to record the research you find, then take photocopies or make notes and enter them later. Remember the copyright laws, however, and be very careful not to include long passages from anyone else's work in yours, and to reference any passages you do incorporate. Here again is where you show your efficiency and forward planning by remembering to write down all the details if you are intending to quote other people.

Other places that are good for research are film and television files, photograph files, old newspaper records, court reports, the minutes, diaries, financial and other records of a family, business, society or institution and then of course there are real live people you can gain your information from.

Work steadily through your headings and subheadings, collecting your information and storing it in a way that is useful and easily retrievable for you. Be methodical and you will save yourself a great deal of time later.

Completed

2. Capture everything:

As a writer it is always wise to carry a notebook, small portable recorder, or a laptop as a tool for your ongoing research. It is surprising when ideas will come to you – often at the most inconvenient moments, so having a notebook or recording device handy at all times leaves you able to capture those ideas in such a way that you can deal with them more fully later.

Completed



3. Bibliography or reference:

As you research, and if the style of your work needs one, you will want to build your bibliography. There is a range of tastes regarding how to arrange a bibliography, and especially with how to deal with research from new media such as the Internet. Again, visit a library or bookstore and browse through a number of books of the style you have chosen to select a style of arrangement that suits you.

Otherwise, the safe path is to list first the author surname, then first names, then the title of the work in italics, then the place of publication, the publisher's name, the edition if not a first edition and the year of publication. If yours is going to be a reference list because your main text contains quotes and footnotes/endnotes then you will also have to reference these using the appropriate tools on Microsoft Word. Make sure you collect these details carefully as you go along, as having to go back and find all these references once again at a later point is a time-consuming and frustrating task. Do it once and do it right.

Completed

4. Waves:

Now, returning once more to your headings and subheadings it is time to think about PARAGRAPHS – yes paragraphs! The better planned you are, the better you'll write. It is time to place a paragraph topic for each item that must be discussed under each subheading. Think of this like waves in the sea – each is complete in itself, and each wave should deal with a single idea. Yet taken together they form the surf we like to enjoy on a fine day. This process will also clarify any more research you may need to do before you start, to ensure that the book is a full and total unit – a well-balanced piece of work in its own right.

Completed

5. Signposting:

Signposting is the art of making enough clear explanatory sentences within the text so that the reader is very clear about where you are taking them in your word journey and why. To have them happily accompany you, they may need answers to such questions as, why is it necessary to go there? How does this will relate to what's gone before? How does it relate to what's to come? Why is it important? Frequently, signposting in non-fiction can effectively mean beginning, middle and end. To make the writing flow for the reader each larger idea or subheading needs to be introduced, discussed, then farewelled as you move onto the next thing. You must always remember that it's easy for you to know what you're thinking about, but the art of good writing is never to leave your reader stranded, wondering how they got to where they are and what they are doing there. This means that you will normally have at least 3 paragraphs under any subheading: a beginning, a middle and an end to that section.

Completed

6. Timeline and final apportionment:

Once you have done your research, you are very close to being ready to start your writing. Now is the time to create a timeline; a plan of what you wish to achieve each day – spread over the time you have available to commit – so that you can progress at a steady pace and regularly reward yourself for goals achieved.

Check at this time too, now that you have some idea of the volume of data you wish to incorporate in the book, that your work is likely to conform to the expected page allowance, and if it looks likely to blow out, you may like to rework some of the previous stages to tighten the scope of the work.

Completed

7. Become a reader/writer:

When you are a writer, it is a constant help to read other works – not necessarily on the same topic, but of the same style at least. As you do so, your evermore experienced eye will pick up on more and more detail which will help to hone your skills as a writer.

Completed



Commence

Now you are ready to write.

If you'd like to read about how to write fiction and non-fiction books, then go to the Downloads tab available to all members on www.publishme.co.nz

