

WRITING NONFICTION CHECKLIST

These are questions you need to think about before getting started with your book.

1. WHAT'S YOUR BOOK ABOUT?

You know what your book is about, but can you explain it to someone? And how well can you explain it? Can you tell it the way a reader will understand it? And, better yet, can you describe it in a simple sentence or two?

If it isn't clear, concise, and *interesting*, you need to work this one out before you move on to the next step. Otherwise, you'll have huge problems later—both in how you communicate what you're writing about, and how you structure and present your material.

2. WHO IS GOING TO READ THIS BOOK?

Is it marketable?

It's great to have a solid idea, but you need to know that it will sell. This usually goes back to what the book's about. Ask yourself: does my book solve a problem that someone is aware they have? And is it a problem that a person wants to solve?

If it solves a legitimate challenge that someone beyond just you and your friend/partner/neighbor share, you should be fine. If it doesn't, go back to Question 1, and see if you can tweak your topic, so it is addressing something specific that someone cares about.

3. HAS IT ALL BEEN SAID BEFORE?

Whatever your topic, even if it's new and trending, there is (almost) always other material on the same subject. The most common plea I hear from people who want to write a book is this: But I have nothing new to say!

And yes, you will need something different to stand out from the crowd. That could easily be your personal story or your expert perspective on the topic—perhaps you have a controversial, or a different take on the topic to the mainstream?

4. ARE YOU THE BEST PERSON TO WRITE THIS BOOK?

That sounds like a crazy question; it's your idea, so why shouldn't you be? But writing a book will take time, and it's an asset you want to use in your business for years to come.

Ask yourself: *is this my sweet spot, and do I really want to commit to this topic?* If the answer is 'yes,' ask a follow-up question: *why am I the best person to write this? What's my story?*

The answer to this question is the background you need to hook a potential reader and help you get more publicity when you're promoting your published book. Being the 'best' writer, or the 'biggest' expert in your area doesn't always mean that you will be the best person to write the book. Often the author has a unique perspective on an issue or has lived through a particular life experience that makes a book worth reading.

5. WHAT IS *YOUR* PURPOSE IN WRITING A BOOK?

Working out exactly *why* you are writing a book is key to its success, both because it allows you to know what you are working towards (and get there!), and so you can be realistic in your expectations.

If you answered, to make lots of money! Then you probably need to rethink this whole book thing. The chances of you getting rich from publishing one book are extremely slim. If your aim is something smaller and more measurable, like taking your business or life in a new direction, getting onto some podcasts to share your message, or attracting a handful of well-qualified clients, then you're on the right track.

6. DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH CONTENT?

Often the problem is too much content rather than too little. Nonfiction writers are not nearly as restricted by the rules surrounding the length of your book as fiction writers are, but that doesn't mean you need not think about it.

The one true rule of your nonfiction book is that it has to be long enough to teach your reader everything they need to know, but short enough to retain their attention.

7. HOW WILL YOU PUBLISH YOUR BOOK?

This question might seem like one to decide later, but it helps you plan the writing if you know what the book will look like at the end of the process. The format you choose and the content you have will determine how you want to publish, the length of each chapter, and the price and presentation of your book.

The differences don't stop there. If you are planning to seek a traditional publisher, you need to take the time to find an agent (perhaps), write a book proposal, and be prepared to send out query letters and attend meetings before you write more than the first chapter or two.

8. DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO WRITE A BOOK?

When you've answered all these questions, and ticked all the boxes, it might feel like that's all there is to it. But there's one important question you must answer before you take the plunge:

Am I committed to the everyday work of writing a book, getting it published, and making sure it sells? For most people I meet and talk to about their book, this isn't a simple 'yes' or 'no,' it's more a question of '*is now the right time for my book?*'

9. LAST THING...

When you've answered these eight questions, when you've done the soul-searching about whether now the time is and whether you are ready for your book, then you will be clear about your goals, your expectations, and the purpose behind writing your nonfiction book.

This means you will write faster, you will finish strong, and you will be ready to market your book to a waiting audience. When you actually write, you'll find you have many more than these eight questions, but, for now, it's time to get started.