7 Steps to Write Your Non-Fiction Book in 2025

reedsylive



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www.TheCreativePenn.com

Images by Joanna Penn with Midjourney

45+ books across multiple genres as J.F. Penn & Joanna Penn

Award-winning, New York Times & USA Today bestseller

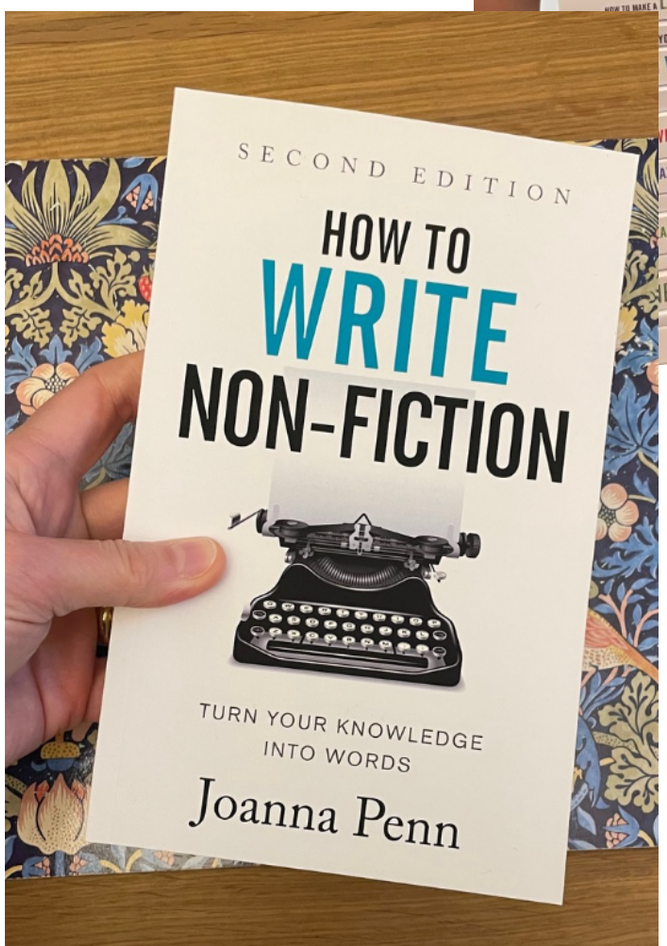
Full time author entrepreneur since 2011

Award-winning podcaster









1. Clarify Your ‘Why’

Why do you want to write this book?

- Share expertise
- Build a personal brand/business
- Inspire or transform lives.

Define your personal and professional goals.

- Do you want to boost credibility, earn income, or create impact?

Identify your definition of success for this book.
How will you know when you reach it?



2. Understand Your Reader

Identify your target audience.

- Who will benefit from your book?
- What problems are you solving for them?

- Consider demographics (age, country, gender) and psychographics (preferences, hobbies, world view)

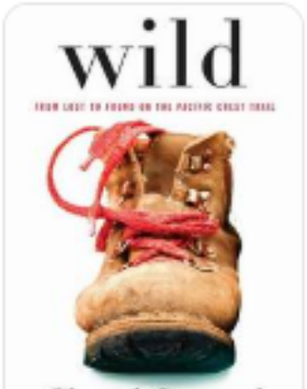
- Study similar books in your niche (comps, or comparison titles) — use ChatGPT to help



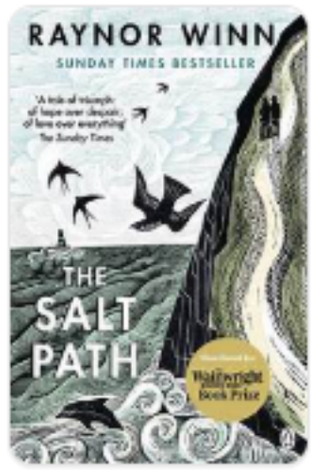
ChatGPT

I'm writing a book that's about solo walking and pilgrimage and midlife and it's probably a memoir but might also have aspects of self-help and practical tips. Can you please give me 20 books that are similar to this?

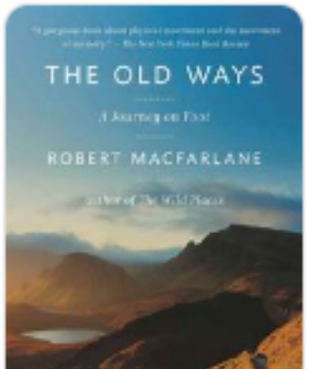
Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail
By Cheryl Strayed. A memoir detailing the author's solo hike along the Pacific Crest Trail as a journey of self-discovery.



The Salt Path
By Raynor Winn. A couple's transformative walk along the South West Coast Path after becoming homeless.



The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot
By Robert Macfarlane. Explores ancient paths and their connections to landscapes and histories.



Can you please give me a list of 10 different target markets for this kind of book? what kinds of people would like it?

Here's a list of 10 potential target markets for a book about solo walking, pilgrimage, midlife, memoir, and practical tips:

1. Midlife Readers Seeking Transformation

- Individuals in their 40s–60s navigating life transitions, searching for deeper meaning, or reevaluating their priorities.
- Themes like menopause, empty nesting, or midlife career changes may resonate.

2. Solo Travelers and Pilgrims

- People interested in spiritual or reflective journeys, including walking pilgrimages like the Camino de Santiago or other long-distance trails.

3. Outdoor Enthusiasts and Hikers

- Readers who enjoy hiking, nature, and the personal growth that comes with exploring the outdoors.

4. Self-Help and Personal Development Seekers

3. Define Your Book Idea

Choose your type of non-fiction book — this is easier if you have comparison titles as a model for the structure

- How-to, memoir, big idea, narrative non-fiction, etc.

Use tools to refine your idea:

- AI for market analysis
- Keyword research for titles



Can you please give me 10 different titles and sub-titles for a book like this focusing on the different target markets?

For Midlife Readers Seeking Transformation

1. **Title:** *Steps to the Self*

   Subtitle: *Walking Through Midlife's Challenges to Find Clarity and Purpose*

2. **Title:** *Walking into the Second Act*

   Subtitle: *How Pilgrimage Can Redefine Midlife and Beyond*

For Outdoor Enthusiasts and Hikers

5. **Title:** *Miles and Meaning*

   Subtitle: *The Transformative Power of Long Walks in Nature*

6. **Title:** *Trail of the Heart*

   Subtitle: *Discovering Life's Lessons One Step at a Time*

For Self-Help and Personal Development Seekers

7. **Title:** *Walk Your Way Free*

   Subtitle: *Overcoming Life's Obstacles Through the Art of Pilgrimage*

8. **Title:** *Stride into Change*

   Subtitle: *Practical Lessons for Personal Growth Through Solo Walking*

4. Structure and Organise Your Book

Use existing assets — talks, slide decks, notes — dictation & transcription

Plot / discovery write
Create a draft table of contents.

Break your book into manageable sections. Use sub-headings to maintain focus.

Consider the **transformational journey for your readers**:

- What knowledge or perspective will they gain by the end?



Thanks, I like Walk Your Way Free: Overcoming Life's Obstacles Through the Art of Pilgrimage — can you please give me a structure of 20 chapters?

Here's a suggested structure for **"Walk Your Way Free: Overcoming Life's Obstacles Through the Art of Pilgrimage"** with 20 chapters that combine personal memoir, practical advice, and inspirational insights:

Part 1: The Call to Walk

1. **Hearing the Call**
    - The initial pull toward pilgrimage: Why walk? Why now?
2. **Preparing for the Journey**
    - Mental, physical, and logistical preparation for solo walking.
3. **Leaving the Familiar**
    - Stepping away from comfort zones, routines, and societal expectations.
4. **Walking into the Unknown**
    - Embracing uncertainty and the challenges of starting a journey.

Part 2: The Physical Path

5. **The First Steps**
    - Overcoming initial fears and resistance.
6. **Finding Your Rhythm**
    - Adjusting to the pace of walking and aligning mind and body.

5. Write and Edit

Commit to a writing schedule:

- Block time in your calendar — actually book appointments with yourself
- Use timed writing sessions or sprints.

Draft (without perfectionism):

- Aim for completion, not polish, in your first draft.

Self-edit with tools like ProWritingAid or **hire professionals** for a polished manuscript (Reedsy has lots of tools & professionals to help!)



6. Consider how you will get your book into the world and reach readers

Decide on your publishing model
— how much control do you want?
Time to market?
Selective rights licensing
What else do you want to do with the book?

How will you reach readers
(however you publish)?
Options for building an author platform — or using others (e.g. guesting on podcasts is a great tactic for non-fiction — use ChatGPT to research and draft pitch emails)



Thanks, can you please give me 10 podcasts I can pitch for topics around this book? (don't include famous ones, and they must have released an episode in the last 3 months, and just give me a list with no podcast art or pictures)

Certainly! Here are 10 niche podcasts that have released episodes in the past three months, aligning with the themes of your book, **"Walk Your Way Free: Overcoming Life's Obstacles Through the Art of Pilgrimage"**:

1. **The Midlife Happiness Project**
   Hosted by Dr. Amy O'Hana, this podcast explores pathways to joy and fulfillment during midlife transitions. Recent episodes discuss personal growth and transformative journeys. MIDLIFE HAPPINESS PROJECT
2. **Grace & Grit Podcast**
   Hosted by Courtney Townley, focusing on women's health and personal development in midlife. Recent episodes include discussions on solo travel and self-discovery. GRACE AND GRIT
3. **Midlife Fulfillment Podcast**
   Hosted by Bernie Borges, delving into thriving in midlife across various aspects of life, including health, career, and personal growth. Recent episodes feature insights on overcoming obstacles and finding purpose.
   MIDLIFEFULFILLED PODCAST
4. **Pilgrimage with Tia**
   Hosted by Tia, exploring personal transformation and spiritual journeys, aligning with themes of pilgrimage and self-discovery. Recent episodes

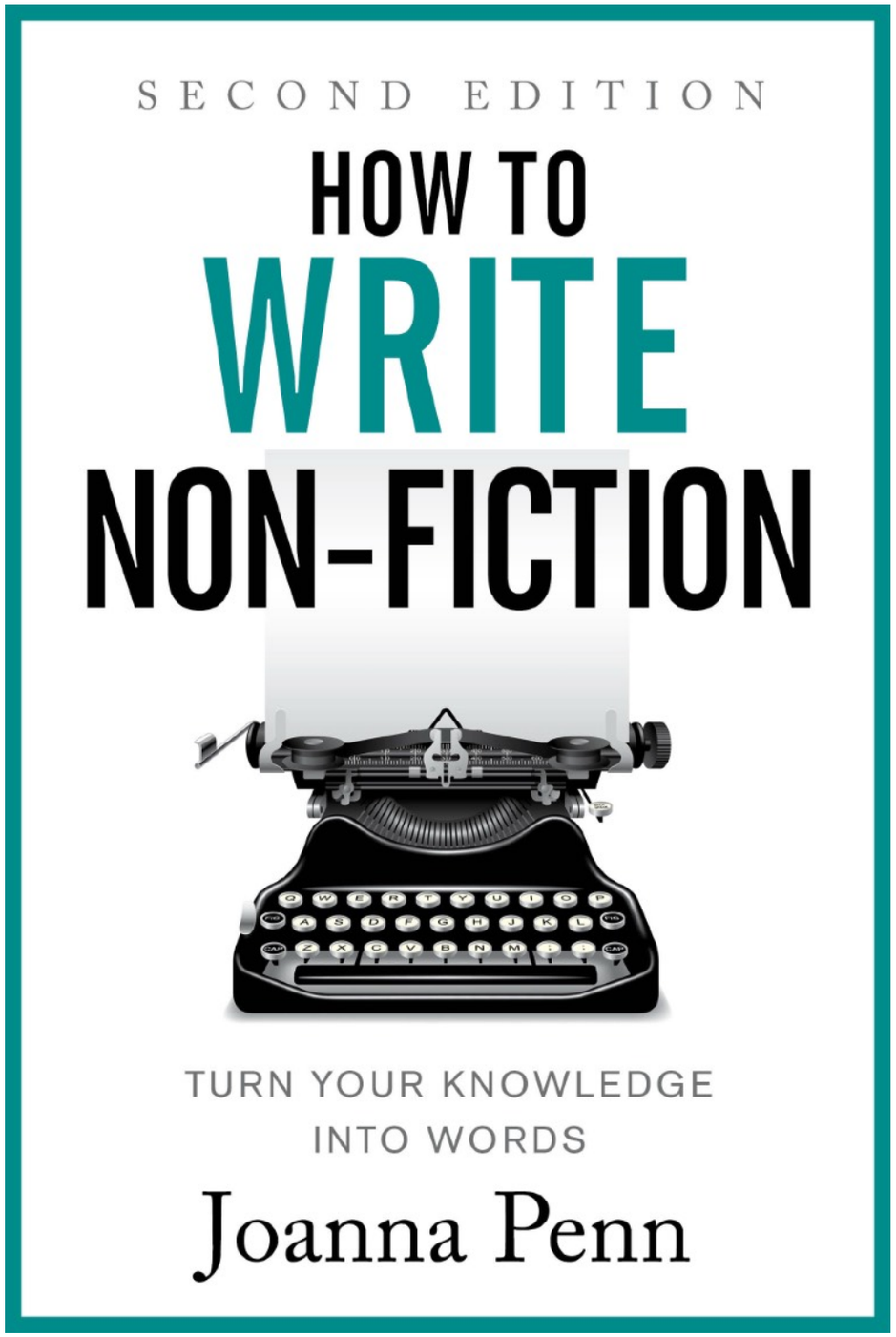
(7) Build a business ecosystem around the book

Multiple streams of income — formats — audiobook and hardbacks do well in print as well as standard ebook & paperback, languages, countries

Take it off the page

- Professional speaking
- Podcasting
- Courses
- Live events / webinars
- Community/ subscriptions
- Services/ consulting/ coaching





Any questions?

Get the slides at:
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How to Write Non-Fiction, Second Edition
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