



How to Write Non-Fiction Second Edition — List of questions

You can buy the workbook and write your answers in the print or PDF edition at:

www.TheCreativePenn.com/nonfictionworkbook

Part 1: Before You Write

1.1 Why write a non-fiction book?

- Why are you writing a non-fiction book? What are the reasons that will carry you through the tough times? What is your why?
- What is your definition of success?
- How will you know when you have achieved success? How will you measure it?

1.2 Types of non-fiction books

- What kind of book do you want to write?
- Can you identify at least five books that your book might be similar to?
- Which categories do they sit in? Where do they fit into the publishing ecosystem?
- Is your topic likely to result in a book that is evergreen, or one that needs to be updated frequently?

1.3 What if you don't know what kind of book you want to write?

- What are some books that resonate with you, that you feel could be models for your book?
- Examine how the books are structured. What is the transformation for the reader across the book? How are the chapters ordered? What is the mix of factual versus emotional content?

- How might your ideas fit into such a structure? How can you use elements of these books to help you with yours?

1.4 Can I write a book if I'm not an expert?

- What's stopping you from writing your book?
- If you think you "need to be an expert," then how do you define an expert? How can you become one so you satisfy your own definition?
- Is it possible that other people might call you an expert if you share your journey?
- What do you know or understand or feel about your topic that no one else does?

1.5 Who are you? Personal stories, originality, and the importance of voice

- Brainstorm aspects of your life that might be more interesting to other people than they are to you.
- What's interesting about your background that will help you stand out?
- What part of your story will help you illustrate the topic you want to talk about?
- How will you set boundaries for privacy but also share authentically?
- What are some of the top books in your genre, or top authors, that you can look at modelling?
- What can you learn from them and expand on to include in your own book?
- What kind of voice do you want to cultivate as an author? Describe it in a list of adjectives.

1.6 Who is your reader? Identify your target market

- Why will someone want to read your book? What problems does it help solve? What topic is your book on, or does it intersect with different topics?
- Do you have an audience already? What do they want from you?

- Do you have particular demographics or psychographics in mind as a target audience?
- How are you like your readers? How are you not like your readers?
- Examine five to ten books in your niche. What can you find out about this market by how books are packaged? What do the titles and covers have in common? What language is used in the sales description? In what way will your book be similar to those other books? In what way will it be different?
- If you used AI tools to help you, what did they identify as some of your possible target market niches?

1.7 Decide on your book title and subtitle

- What are the top-selling titles in your niche from the last few years? What do they have in common?
- Look at your bookshelf, physical or digital. What are some of the book titles you have bought because the title itself attracted you?
- Research keywords and keyword phrases in your niche. What words and phrases are the best for your target market?
- How could you use copywriting tips to improve your title?
- What are some possible book titles and subtitles? How could you test these?

1.8 Your author name

- Can you get the website name and the Amazon author profile for your name? If not, what are your options?
- What are the pros and cons of using a pseudonym?
- What are the pros and cons of using multiple author names?

1.9 Your publishing options

- Which of the publishing models attract you the most? Why is that?
- What are the pros and cons of this approach?
- What are the next steps you need to take in that direction?

1.10 Writing a book proposal

- However you choose to publish, have you considered the various aspects of a proposal for your book?
- What research or other steps do you need to complete before you are ready to write your proposal?

1.11 Fear and self-doubt

- What are some of your fears and doubts?
- What can you put in place to help you manage when the rollercoaster feels like too much?
- What is your 'why' that will help you through difficult times?

Part 2: Writing and Editing

2.1 Gather existing material

- What existing material do you have already that could be used in the writing process?
- Do you want to use this existing material, or would you prefer to start from scratch on this topic? Why do you feel that way?

2.2 Research, interviews, surveys, and social listening

- How can you expand on your initial thoughts and material with these research methods?
- Have you asked for appropriate permissions and consent for using survey information or quotes in your book?
- How can you prevent yourself from being lost in analysis paralysis?

2.3 Structure and organise your book

- Do you find structure easy to impose or is it something that emerges from your writing?
- How will you structure your book? What are the top-level parts and how can you break those down to lead the reader through a coherent journey?
- What are the extra sections that you might consider as you write?

2.4 The particular challenge of writing memoir

- What are some of the particular challenges you might face if you're writing memoir or including aspects of memoir in another kind of non-fiction book?
- How can you prevent yourself from rushing to commit to a shape or structure for the book before you are ready?

2.5 How to write the first draft

- Have you scheduled time blocks for writing in your calendar, not just in your head?
- Have you found a location where you can write without being disturbed?
- Have you found ways to stop yourself from being distracted when you write?
- Are you going to use timed writing sessions? How will you break these up?
- How will you track your progress through the book? How will you structure your time so you finish this book? How will you keep yourself focused and on track?
- Where is your line when it comes to using generative AI tools?
- How much do you want this? What will you say to yourself if you struggle with writing?

2.6 Writer's block

- If you're struggling with your writing, can you identify the reason behind the block?
- How can you deal with this and still achieve your goal of writing a book?
- What practical steps will you take to move your project forward and still look after yourself?

2.7 How to dictate your book

- Why might you consider dictation? How might it help your writing?
- What's stopping you from dictating? How can you work through those issues in order to try it?

- What method of dictation might work for you? What tools do you need to get started?

2.8 Turn your online content into a book

- How could you turn aspects of your online content into a book?
- How can you create a coherent journey through the material and differentiate it from the online version?
- If you want to go the other way, from book to content, how can you incorporate chapters in a way that will make them more shareable and bring the text alive?

2.9 Co-writing a non-fiction book

- Are you considering co-writing? Why would it be a good fit for your project?
- Have you identified a potential co-writing partner? Do you already have an existing relationship?
- What needs to go into your contract?
- How will you work together in a practical way? How will you communicate?
- How will you ensure your relationship is preserved in case of difficulty?

2.10 How to turn a boring book into an engaging read

- Is your book boring you? Will it bore the reader?
- Have you used academic writing, passive language, or too much jargon?
- What elements can you add to bring your book alive?

2.11 Elements of fiction in non-fiction

- What elements of fiction could you use to make your book more engaging?
- Where does your reader start? Where do you want them to end up? What is the transformation they will achieve through your book?

2.12 Does non-fiction or memoir have to be true?

- What are the important things that need to be true in your book and what might you adapt for the sake of story and impact?
- How will you ensure factual truth where important without getting caught in the trap of perfectionism?

2.13 Legalities: Copyright and licensing, quotes, lyrics, images, and more

- Do you understand copyright and selective rights licensing?
- Are you using quotes, lyrics, or images that you don't specifically own? Do you have the specific licenses or permissions to use them?
- Have you attributed quotes or ideas within your book? Have you cited your sources?
- How can you avoid plagiarism, both while researching and while writing?
- Are you writing about real people? Could there be any legal or personal ramifications of this? How can you protect yourself?
- If you choose to use generative AI tools, have you checked the terms of service? Where are the boundaries for your responsible use?

2.14 Self-editing your manuscript

- How can you shift your mindset from author to reader?
- Do you have enough emotional distance to edit effectively? Do you need to rest the manuscript for longer?
- Is the reader's journey through the book as clear as possible? Does the chapter flow take the reader logically through a journey of discovery and transformation?
- Can you cut down the text? Can you use sub-headings to make sections clearer? Can you involve the reader by asking more questions?
- Can you make the book more personal by telling your story and bringing in your experience?
- Have you checked your facts and cited sources? Have you listed references and a bibliography?
- Do you need to create any bonus material?

- Have you checked the draft using editing software or reading aloud?
- Have you done everything you can to improve the manuscript? Are you ready to work with a professional editor or proofreader?

2.15 Editing for audio

- How can you edit your manuscript for audio? What aspects do you need to check?
- Do you need to create additional resources, like shortened links or PDF downloads of visual elements, for audio listeners?

2.16 How to find and work with a professional editor or proofreader

- What type of editor do you need for your book?
- How will you find a professional editor and validate that they are the right one for you?
- How will you work with your editor so you are both happy with the process and the result?
- How can you prepare yourself mentally for receiving feedback and line edits? How can you reframe the experience as positive and learn for next time?

2.17 How many words does your book have to be?

- What word count are you aiming for and why?
- What length of book will readers expect or want on this topic?

2.18 How much time will it take to write the book?

- Why is time important to you? What is driving your desire to finish this book within a certain time frame?
- What elements will determine how much time your book will take to write and edit?
- Do you have an external deadline for the book, or have you set one yourself in order to make sure you finish?
- How can you avoid distractions and focus on one book?
- What are the different types of energy you need? Which are you struggling with and how will you change your energy?

2.19 When is the book finished?

- Have you followed an editorial process to make your book the best it can be within a specific time limit?
- If you're still struggling with the pursuit of perfection, what can you do to move past that?

Part 3: The Business of a Non-Fiction Book

3.1 Business models

- Do you want to make money from your book? Which business model or models are you interested in?
- Think of some of the non-fiction authors you consider a success. Go to their websites and note the different ways they make money. How can you model that business design?

3.2 Multiple streams of income from your book

- How will you use different book formats as part of your multiple streams of income?
- What other forms of income could you incorporate into your non-fiction business?

3.3 Book marketing basics and your author platform

- How can you reframe marketing so it becomes a positive part of your author business?
- What is an author platform? What do you have already and what might you need to build?
- How can you ensure your email list continues to grow and also remains legally compliant?

3.4 Book-centred marketing

- How can you leverage book-centred marketing for your book?
- What are your thoughts on paid advertising? How could you use it for your launch or ongoing marketing?

- What are the things to watch out for to ensure success, whatever that means to you?

3.5 Author-centred marketing

- Why is a personal brand important to you and the business you want to build?
- What key moments in your life stand out in your memory? What are your core human experiences that might resonate with others?
- What are some of your failures as well as your successes?
- What words would you use to define yourself? How would other people describe you?
- What do you enjoy? What are you attracted to?
- How well do you understand your personality? What can you do to further those insights?
- What are your values? How do they shape your life and your business?
- In terms of content and social media, what do you already enjoy? What do you make time for as a reader or consumer?
- How could you expand those interests into sustainable book marketing?
- What boundaries will you set around which aspects of your life you will share, and how will you maintain them long-term?

3.6 Updating your books over time

- Why might you need to update your book?
- How could you prepare for this so it's easier to change later on?
- What are some ways that you can keep your book alive for the long-term?