



# How to Write a Book - by Ruben Gonzalez

## How People Buy Books

When people are considering whether to buy a book they typically do this:

- 1 - They look at the **cover** for about 5 seconds. If the title and a testimonial on the cover grabs their interest...
- 2 - They'll look at the **back cover** for about 5 seconds. If the sentence up top and the testimonials make them think the book might help them (it's all about what's in it for THEM)...
- 3 - They look at the **table of contents** for about 10 seconds to get a feel about the book.

If they still think the book might help them they MIGHT buy it.

You might want to go to Barnes & Nobles and look at books similar to your book to see how other authors do those three things. Cherry pick from the best sellers.

**Titles and Subtitles** are not copyrighted so you can actually have the same title like another book and you wouldn't get in trouble. But it wouldn't be smart.

What's smart is to do some research on Amazon and write down the titles and subtitles that jump out at you. You might even do that for chapter titles you like. You might find something you like and change a word or two to make it yours. Believe me, like in advertising, a lot of research and testing has gone on before they found a winning title.

There's a famous book called "The Inner Game of Tennis." I always liked that title so I named one of my books, "The Inner Game of Success."

There's a famous book called "The Success Principles." The subtitle is "How to Get from Where You are to Where You want to Be."

I always liked that subtitle so one of my books is called, "How to Get Where You Want to Be." Almost the same but shorter.

Shorter is always better. Think about billboards or movie titles. Few words. Rarely more than 7-10 words in the title. You don't want people to have to work too hard to read it and decide.

**Chapter Titles:** I'm in the personal development and self help arena. What works really well in self help is titles like this:

How to This, How to That, etc. Simple, to the point, and instantly lets the prospect know what's in it for them. I'm not sure what would work with your book. Probably something similar but do some research to be sure.

## How I Write Articles (or Chapters)

By the way, don't think of it as writing a book. That's too big. Rather, think of it as writing a series of articles that will become your book. After all, the best way to eat a salami is one slice at a time (I'd rather eat a salami than an elephant).

This is how I write articles (or book chapters if you will).

I use a legal pad (especially for the creative phase). If I try to write on a computer, the spellcheck kills my creativity.

### Step 1 - Creative Phase

When I'm facing that terrifying blank page, I have a general idea about what I want to write about, and two to three short stories I might use as illustrations. Then I start writing like mad on a legal pad. I write as fast as I can. I write examples, illustrations, stories, etc. I don't care about grammar. This is not the time for that. I just want to get into a creative state of mind.

I'm just trying to get thoughts and ideas across. It's a total mess with arrows, lists, single words, etc. It's brainstorming on paper like I only have thirty minutes to impart life-changing knowledge to a friend and the clock is ticking away.

Then, I put it away for a day or two. I want my subconscious mind to stew on it. Sometimes I'll wake up in the middle of the night with a great idea for it. There's a notepad and a pen on my nightstand for that reason. So I jot down the middle of the night jewels.

## **Step 2 - Analytical Editing Phase**

Finally I sit down to rewrite. I now use the analytical side of my brain to rearrange thoughts, polish ideas and edit. But if I had't written with wild abandon in the first place, I wouldn't have anything to edit.

You're not after perfection. It simply has to read well, story-point like a good sermon, and simple English. Fifth to seventh grade level English. Like the way you'd write a letter to a friend. If people have to work too hard to read your stuff, they won't read it.

Just write. Set a goal to write a chapter a week. An imperfect chapter a week.

## **Step 3 - Help from Your Friends**

In a few months when you're done, you can make some copies and ask people like read it and to write ideas and comments all over it. Tell your "editor" friends that you'll only have hurt feelings if they **don't** write anything.

Iron sharpens iron and you're after a really sharp product.

You don't have to use any of their ideas but I promise you that you'll get some great ideas if you choose your editors wisely.

Make sure you include someone who's good at grammar. Let them know you want it to read like a letter to your best friend so they don't try to turn it into a PhD English essay (boring). But they will catch typos, run-ons, wrong verb tenses, etc. and they may have some ideas ways to say things better.

Believe me, every bestselling author does all this. It's a team effort. The main thing you bring to the table is your experiences (stories) and the lessons you learned. That's the meat and potatoes. The rest of your team helps out a bit with the seasoning.

**Final Steps** - Once you've it written up in a year or so, I can show you how to lay it out so it looks like a book you'd find at Barnes & Noble. You can do it yourself or I can hook you up with someone who can lay it out for you and not charge you an arm and a leg.

## Layout Tips (standard specs):

If you don't follow the tips below, your book will look cheap and fake. It will look wrong because it won't look like the books people are used to reading.

**Fonts** - Times New Roman 12pt font is what you use for the body of your book. The titles and subtitles are usually in a sans serif font like Helvetica or Arial. You don't want more than three different fonts in the whole book.

Chapters always begin on the right side page so invariably, you'll end up with some blank pages in your book.

**Filler for Blank Pages** - It's a good idea to include famous quotes or photographs in the blank pages. When people are leafing through your book to see if they may buy it, including pictures and quotes makes it easier to read.

**Photos** - If your photos go all the way to the edge of the page, it will cost you a lot more to print. So make sure to leave margin space around your photos.

**Margins** - 3/4" margin space on the left, right, top and bottom is standard.

**Book Size** - 8.5" x 5.5" is the standard size. When you write your 2nd, 3rd and 4th book, make sure you make them all the same size. It will save you money in shipping.

**Book Length** - Don't feel you have to put all of your life experiences in one huge book. Long books don't sell as well. And they cost more to ship. Believe it or not, 140 - 160 pages is the sweet spot. It's not intimidating. You can read it on a cross country flight. You'll make more money writing three short books than writing one fat book.

**Shipping** - Write "Book Rate" or "Media Rate" on the envelope or the box and you'll pay a very low postage rate at the post office whenever you ship in the US. Warning - Shipping abroad costs an arm and a leg so make sure you charge more for international shipping.

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You also will have a 1/8" bleed around the four edges of your cover.

**One Book, 2 PDFS** - After you've laid out the book and finished your cover, you'll have two PDFs. One for the inside of the book and another for the cover. You email those to a printer and they print them out for you.

Don't worry about that now. I change printers all the time because their prices fluctuate. You have to take into account how many books you want to print, and what the shipping will cost. You could find a printer in your hometown that's more expensive but you make it up in shipping.

**Getting a Quote from a Printer** - Whenever you call a printer for a quote, they'll want to know the size of the book, number of pages, whether there's any color inside (keep it all black and white inside), and the binding type. **Perfect Bound** is the binding type of a business or self help style paperback book. It's not hardback. You can get the cover glossy or matte. It usually doesn't affect price one way or another. Text stock is usually 60 pound. Cover stock 10pt C1S Glossy UV coated.

Ask them for at least three quotes - 500 books, 1000 books and 1500 books. Ask them how many books you need to get to get a big break on price per book.

**Print on Demand and Distribution for Books** - I usually get my books printed wherever I can get the best deal, but it's a good idea to upload your book to Ingram Spark regardless. It will cost you a couple of hundred dollars to get set up but you'll make it up. Ingram Spark has offices in Europe and in Australia. I've had a couple of big book orders from Australia in the past. Shipping the books from here would have killed the deal. But by getting them printed there and shipped from there, the deal was on. Also, Ingram Sparks can turn your books to eBooks and sell them on Amazon. Then you get a % of the sales every quarter. [IngramSpark.com](http://IngramSpark.com)

## Bestseller Lists

They are bogus. Don't waste your time trying to get on one. Even the New York Times bestseller list is bogus. Here's a 20 minute video that explains why.

<https://youtu.be/9NF8iOQICUw>

## **It's Definitely Worth It**

Writing a book is a big project but very fulfilling. Especially once you start getting emails from people who read your book and it changed their life.

A book is a great for marketing your services. It sets you up as the expert on the subject because you wrote the book on it. Plus, it's the business card people never throw away.

It also leaves a legacy of your thoughts and life lessons to your kids and grandkids.

Make it an Olympic day!

Ruben Gonzalez