



Free Advice for Nonfiction Authors

from Nina Shoroplova, author & book editor

Welcome. I have combed through *Trust the Mystery* to find this free advice for nonfiction authors. If you are thinking of becoming an author, you may find these suggestions helpful.

Dedicate a special place to accomplish your writing, a place where you won't be disturbed.

Spend some time mind mapping your topic, finding chapter subtopics, and so on. If you aren't familiar with mind mapping, there's an image on my website. Or just get a sheet of paper, some coloured pens, and go to town with your ideas, keeping everything on one page.

Decide who your audience is. Will you address them as "you" and tell them what to do? Or will you tell them about your experience and let them draw their own conclusions?

Decide on the tools you will use: pen and paper, laptop, computer, tablet. I believe that we connect with our deepest selves more authentically when we hold a pen or pencil in our hands. Find a pen with ink that flows. Or use a soft pencil.

When we use a keyboard, it can seem as though our writing is one step removed from that deep place. Some of us can just fly along on a keyboard though, keeping up with our thoughts much faster than we can with handwriting.

So, if you decide to use a keyboard, decide on the computer program you will use: MS Word is the industry standard. While you're at it, you will find it helpful to take the time to learn how to use MS Word's Track Changes features. This is how someone—a friend, a colleague, an editor—can provide you with feedback on your book.

- Review -> Tracking; and
- Review -> Changes.

Even if you decide to write something within the nonfiction genre, you still have many choices of genres. Here are a couple:

1. a straightforward presentation of the facts (academic nonfiction, technical nonfiction, or journalism), rather like this document, or
2. facts presented in more of a narrative style (creative nonfiction, which is also known as literary nonfiction).

You might find that most of your writing ideas come encased in their own form. A poem idea feels poetic, a book idea feels expansive, a flash fiction piece feels like an emotion caught in an image.

Have some way to record the ideas that will come to you at odd hours of the day and night—paper and pencil, a notation app on your cellphone, a napkin. Really! They can be some of the best.

Find a regular time each day (or several times a week) to devote your attention to your writing.

Inspire yourself by knowing that you too can be an author. It takes 5 percent inspiration and 95 perspiration. Yes, writing is hard work.

Be flexible with your writing. Your muse may amuse you, wake you up in the middle of the night, and even bite you in the butt. Be ready to bend to its will.

Be sure to realize that we write with one side of our brain and we edit (even self-edit) with the other. Don't let your critical left brain dampen your creative right brain.

Forget the movie cliché of the author who writes two words, pulls the sheet out of the typewriter, crumples up the page, throws it in the wastepaper basket, only to repeat the process a minute later! With computers and great software programs, those days are far behind us.

Once you've written something, print it up and put it away for a while—a day, a week, two weeks. Get on with your next piece of writing. When you pick the first piece up again, read it aloud, as though you're reading something written by someone else. You'll quickly know where the writing is good, where you lose the thread, where you are repetitive, and what you need to expand on.

Realize that whatever you've written, if you've been truly and personally authentic, that is your truth. If someone else disagrees with your opinion, they're entitled to. It doesn't mean what you've written is necessarily wrong.

Writing can be a solitary pursuit. Enjoy the quiet time to create. And then consider teaming up with another writer, joining a writing circle, or becoming part of a community of writers, in person or online to share your ideas, support other writers, and learn more about the business of being a writer.

Writing a book can be one of the most transformative activities you can undertake. Get ready, you're about to go on a very fulfilling journey.

Finally, once you've completed your masterpiece, if you are ready to send it into the big wide world, I would be delighted to work with you first. My passion is providing structural, substantive, stylistic, and copy editing for nonfiction books.

Be in touch!

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