



# The Author Guide Course for non-fiction authors

## Insight 5 – Prepare to succeed

<https://youtu.be/zBAxRnmkYys>

### Planning

As the Cheshire Cat said in Alice in Wonderland:

*“If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there.”*

As you’re writing a non-fiction book, you need to worry less about the narrative arc and how everything will take you to the ending you had in mind. However, that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t put in the time in planning – it will make writing ten times easier.

There are two key elements to plan:

1. The subjects for all the chapters
2. The structure that you will use to build each chapter

### Chapter planning

You don’t need to start with all the detail, just the main headings for your chapters.

You can make a list either on paper or digitally.

You can use mind mapping.

You can use sticky notes.

They all have advantages.

If you have a bit of a butterfly brain and things don’t always come to you in the right order, mind-mapping allows you the flexibility to add things between others already on your list.

Using sticky notes allows you to brainstorm the subjects and then arrange them in an order later.

### Chapter structure

Before you start adding content to your chapter headings you will need to create your structure that you build each chapter around.

Your reader likes familiarity – so a consistent chapter structure will ensure they don't get subconsciously dislodged by having a new format to get their head around each time.

You can choose the format, but then stick to it and apply it to each chapter. For example, if you start Chapter 1 with a quotation, then ensure that all the subsequent chapters also start with a quotation.

Consider:

- Stories: personal anecdotes or real-life experiences of people you know.
- Case studies: the problem, the solution, the outcome
- Quotations: but make sure they are relevant and add something, not just for the sake of having a quotation. If you don't have good quotations to start or end each chapter, then you can include them where relevant in the main text. If they're not already in the public domain, you may need permission to use them.
- Models: there are many models that exist, created by others – such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs or the Competence framework. If there are models relevant to your subject, these can be included. If graphics are involved, you'll need a good quality image as a jpg or png file that will be inserted and supplied to whoever lays out your book separately. Avoid colour unless you want the cost of printing to double!
- Theories: If you're exploring a specific subject, it may add weight to include previous findings and research, translated into your own language. But always credit whoever did the original work.
- Chapter outlines or summaries: You can include an 'in this chapter' at the beginning of a chapter, or a couple of paragraphs summarising the content at the end.
- Key points or Action points
- Tips boxes
- Templates

You may have other things you want to include. What you're aiming at is a 'recipe' with a list of ingredients that every chapter will include.

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## This week's assignment

Decide what each chapter will cover as a main subject (and any subheadings you want to add) using the **Chapter Plan worksheet**.

Then work on your chapter structure, until you have a list of elements that you'll apply to every chapter. Use the **Chapter Structure worksheet** for this.