



The Author Guide Course for non-fiction authors

Insight 7 – Writing

[Your tutorial is here](#)

Put meat on the bones

Now you should be ready to start writing. And your assignment for this week is to take one of the chapter outlines you've developed and turn it into a written form.

Create a new document and set up your style sheet first, then import your chapter outline and start filling in the gaps.

Apply the style sheet as you write – so your chapter heading will be Heading 1, then Heading 2 will be used for each section and, Headings 3 and 4 for subheadings within a section.

Chapter headings

Your chapter heading is not the chapter number, but its title.

Chapter 1 doesn't tell your reader anything, other than how far they have progressed through the book. You need a proper title that gives the reader an insight into what they'll be exploring. There are a number of ways to do this:

1: Why [your subject] is important

Chapter 1: Why [your subject] is important

Why [your subject] is important

I would recommend including a chapter number, because it reassures the reader. But avoid a double heading like:

Chapter 1

Why [your subject] is important

As this will be picked up as two separate items in your contents menu and then it will look very cluttered.

You can be creative with your chapter titles, but they do need to give your reader an idea of what the chapter will cover. I know people who have used a question for each chapter, or a challenge that their ideal reader faces. To some extent it depends on the

type of book you are writing. A handbook will need clear subjects for each chapter, so the reader can dip into the subject they want to easily. A book that educates people around a subject can be more creative and, perhaps, intriguing with chapter titles.

Writing your chapter

With all your headings in place, all you have to do is to flesh out your skeleton.

My advice is to pick the chapter you are most excited about and start with that. However, if you're a process freak (like me) you'll probably start with chapter 1 – but there's no rule that says you have to!

At this stage don't worry too much about punctuation, grammar, spelling, writing style, etc. Just get your ideas out of your head and onto the page. This is your first draft.

You should find this part reasonably easy as you already have the outline to follow. Import the content you've gathered where needed.

How long should a chapter be?

If you've got 12 chapters and you're aiming at a book that is 40,000 words, then you're looking at around 3-4,000 words per chapter.

Some chapters may need more, some a little less, but, if you're working with a chapter structure, most chapters will end up within a similar range.

At this stage you're focused on the main content. Don't worry about the introduction – that will be done after you've finished the main content. If you try to write it beforehand, you'll end up doing it twice!

The introduction

Most non-fiction books have an introduction. This is not your life story, but lays out

- Why this book is important
- Why you decided to write it
- What your aim is – what you're hoping the reader will get from it
- Maybe some advice to the reader about how to use the book – so, for instance, if you've added action points, exercises, templates, etc. encouragement to do these, rather than just whisk over them – and what they'll gain from action.

The Foreword

Some non-fiction books have a foreword. There are no rules about whether you should or shouldn't. But there are some guidelines about who should write it and what they should cover.

Forewords are usually written by someone who has high status in the field you are writing about. If they're a known name, then that's even better, but their track record is most important.

They should not be written by a partner (business or life), colleague, customer, supplier, or your best friend!

The Foreword usually covers:

- How the writer knows you
- Their opinion of you and your work
- Why they recommend the book to the reader

Some people are happy to put their name to a Foreword, but may ask you to provide a draft for them to review.

If you aren't sure where to start with this, write a comprehensive brief and ask one of the AI tools to give you some help. I prefer Claude.ai, as I like the style and output, but Chat GPT, Perplexity, or one of other options should produce something to edit into shape.

Index, Bibliography, Notes

You don't need to include these, but you may decide they will add value to your book.

An index is simply a list of references to specific words or phrases. You can use the 'Find' option in Word for this, or use an AI bot – but if you do that, double check every reference for accuracy. The challenge is that, in your draft you're working with an A4 format, while your finished book layout will probably be A5 or similar. That means that all the page numbers will change!

A discussion with your publisher or layout designer will help you to get this right.

A bibliography references any documents, papers, research, books, etc. that you have referred to or used for information in the process of writing your book.

If there are just a few, you probably don't need a bibliography, but if you've done a lot of research, you may wish to list these in a separate bibliography section at the back of the book.

Notes are a form of references. You may decide to use footnotes within the text, which simply adds a superscript number in the text, with a short explanation or reference at the foot of the page on which it appears.

Some authors prefer the notes to be listed at the end of the chapter or at the end of the book as a reference section. If there aren't too many, I'd stick to having them appear on the relevant page as this provides 'instant gratification' for the reader.

Footnotes can be done automatically in Word (References – Insert Footnote).

Endnotes can also be done automatically, (References – Insert Endnote).

Author biography

The author bio is usually at the back, immediately after the main content ends. A very few books put it at the front, but, in my opinion, that's placing a hurdle for your reader to

get past before they get to the good stuff! It works better at the end when they want to know more about who created the book they've just enjoyed.

Some authors like to include a headshot or a picture of themselves with something they refer to in their bio. If you decide to do this, you'll need a picture that is in monochrome or reproduces well in monochrome – as colour doesn't reproduce well on normal book paper and you don't want to add to the cost of production by introducing glossy (more expensive) paper, just for your mugshot.

A word about AI

Personally, I love AI – but I wouldn't use it to write my books for me. Quite apart from anything else, if you use AI to write your book – or even a part of it – Amazon requires that you make a statement to that effect on your listing.

However, AI can be very useful to tidy things up at first draft stage.

I know people who have given their book to AI to edit and all the life and energy is eaten up with additional fluff and misguided additions. To avoid AI ruining your hard work, the secret is to get the brief right.

Provide it with your chapter template – that list you produced in week 5.

Ask it to edit grammar, punctuation, spelling. And be specific about what you want. For instance, I use inverted commas for words I want to highlight and double quotation marks for speech – AI may reverse that, so state your style requirements.

Ask it to review the content – and suggest how you might improve it. You can instruct it not to change headings and subheadings, or to make suggestions for improving them, rather than actually changing them.

Then review the suggestions – and remember, it's your book, so you don't have to follow everything AI has outlined.

I recommend giving AI one chapter at a time, rather than the whole book.

AI is not a replacement for a professional editor.

OK – time to start writing!