



The Author Guide Course for non-fiction authors

Insight 8 – Get the right help

[Your video tutorial is here](#)

Getting your book done

Now you have a plan for every chapter, you've gathered the information and you've already written one chapter to see how well it works. Now it's time to do the rest.

There's a secret to getting this done.

Scheduling

How long did it take you to write that first chapter? You probably had more than one writing session to get it all done, but that will give you an idea about:

How long it takes to write a chapter

How long your concentration typically lasts.

With those in mind it's time to make your diary work for you.

Choose a time of day for writing when you are at your best – not when you're tired and flagging.

Decide what length a writing session works best for you. That might be anything from 45 minutes to 2 hours. Most people struggle to maintain concentration for longer than that.

Shorter than 45 minutes will waste a lot of time as it can take a while (up to 20 minutes) to get back into the swing of things.

Now get your diary out and block out writing sessions for your chapters. These are appointments with your book!

Get your priorities right

Many people push their own work down the to do list when a client or a potential client asks for an appointment. I am not suggesting that clients aren't important and should be ignored, but, most of the time, someone who wants time with you won't throw a wobbly if you tell them "I'm afraid I already have an appointment at that time," and will accept an alternative. After all, they wouldn't want you to push a premade appointment with them to another time – and they won't know who the appointment is with, if you don't tell them!

If you have 12 chapters and each chapter takes 3 hours to write (although possibly less, this is just an example), you've completed one, so $3 \times 11 = 33$ hours. Or 2×90 minute sessions a week. And your book will be done in three months.

Remember that you have your Introduction to write when you're finished the main part of the book (see Insight 7). And your Author biography – and any other additions, that we covered in the last session.

The back cover

Now it's time to change gear from writing as an author, to writing as a marketer.

You'll need 'blurb' on the back cover tempting people to want to read the book. You'll also need a description for your Amazon listing and, maybe for your listing on your publisher's website.

This isn't meant to be a summary of the book, but an outline of the benefits the reader will get from reading the book.

The Amazon description can be a longer version of the back cover blurb. In fact, most people do better with creating longer content, so it may be easier to write the longer description first and then edit it down to a few succinct sentences for the back cover.

Ideally a short headline and about 150 words that tells the prospective reader who the book is for and what's in it for them.

If you're not confident in your commercial copywriting skills, write a comprehensive prompt and ask AI to help – or upload a pdf version of your book for the AI to review before it writes.

Some books also feature an author bio (a short version of the one inside the book), and maybe a picture of the author on the back cover.

The cover design

You don't have to wait for the final manuscript to be ready to start thinking about cover design.

You may have some ideas about this, some authors have their own photo on the front of the book, if they're an already known expert. Ideally you need to give your ideas to an expert in book cover design (not just any graphic designer).

Your publisher may offer this service, but if not, you will need to know the exact size of your finished book (in mm, not px) and how many pages it will have. Ideally, your publisher will be able to give you the dimensions of the spine too.

Now you'll need to create a brief for the cover designer. They will need to know the dimensions, your brand colour references (Hex and CMYK or RGB), any font preferences you have, plus any images you particularly want to feature, the book title, your name as you want it to appear, the back cover blurb you've written and anything else you want on

the cover. You will probably need to provide the ISBN bar code for integrating into the design too.

Look at other books and give them links to the sales pages of any you like the look of – and explain why.

A good book cover designer will give a few alternative options and you can make amendments.

Beta readers

Beta readers are not editors, but they provide feedback on what they like, what they didn't understand and what they'd like more information about. They may comment on your writing style or make suggestions to enhance your book.

You need to recruit your beta readers so they're ready to go when you have your manuscript finished. This might be after it's been through its first edit, or, if you're confident it's pretty much in shape, before your editor gets to work.

You'll need at least three, but keep it to single figures or you'll spend more time trawling through suggestions than you did writing it in the first place.

Choose people who are supportive, but objective. So probably not your Mum, as she will either say whatever she thinks you want to hear or be unnecessarily critical (depending on your relationship). But friends, close business colleagues or connections – and ideally people who would fall into your ideal reader category.

You'll also need to provide a brief, telling them what you want from them – and by when. Remind them a few days before the deadline and again the day before.

Reviewers

Reviewers are different from beta readers. They are not there to suggest improvements, but to review the book as it stands – hopefully positively. If you know people who are known names, ask them – they may say 'no', but they won't say anything if you don't ask. Some authors I know have been surprised at people who are famous and have responded very positively to a request for a review.

When they've agreed to be a reviewer, you'll need to send them a pdf copy of the final version of the manuscript and ask them to provide a short review prior to publication.

You may decide to integrate a 'name' review into your cover design and/or feature a page or two of reviews in the front of the book.

Again, you will need to give reviewers a deadline and remind them a week or so before that, again after a few days and finally the day before the deadline.

This week's assignment

Start thinking about your cover design – make notes on covers you like and what you like about them.

Start your lists of beta readers and reviewers. Use the **Beta Readers worksheet** and **Reviewers worksheet** to help you with this.