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SELF-PUBLISHING

BASIC TRAINING

Setting you up for self-publishing success.



SHANNON O'NEIL

Self-Published Author



TONI TESORI

Design Geek

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INTRODUCTION

DON'T WORRY — WE'LL GO EASY ON YOU.

Whether you're new to the self-publishing process or a veteran looking for a refresher course, we've created this eBook to give you an overview of the self-publishing process from start to finish.

Along the way, we've put together resources to share as well as a couple of interactive sections where you can start brainstorming your way to self-publishing success.

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM SELF-PUBLISHING BASIC TRAINING?

Although geared mainly toward authors completely new to the process, this step-by-step walkthrough offers authors at any stage in the self-publishing process an easy way to see where they are and where to go from that spot.

While we don't dive very deep into any one topic, we provide enough information on the basics to help your self-publishing process move forward smoothly — without overwhelming you with tons of information at once.

If possible, read through the entire book before starting your personal self-publishing journey. You'll find the information builds upon itself and, when you're finished, you'll have a great idea of all that's involved to get your book published and sold!

OVERVIEW OF SELF-PUBLISHING BASIC TRAINING

Each chapter will be devoted to one portion of the self-publishing process — here's how it'll shape up:

CHAPTER 01: DECISIONS, PART I —PRE-PLANNING

1 Covering the initial concept, target market research and planning/outlining of your book. We'll give you questions to ask yourself before you even put fingers to keys — while taking note of the fact that many authors will likely, at this point, still be eying traditional publication.

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CHAPTER 02: THE WRITING PROCESS

2 **How can you make the writing process go more smoothly?** Is it necessary to keep to a schedule? Is there one “perfect” writing process? How do other authors do it? Shannon shares her insight and some DO’s and DO NOT’s of the writing process.

CHAPTER 03: PROOFREADING & EDITING

3 **Good editing sets many traditionally-published books apart from their self-published counterparts.** Shannon discusses both content and copy editing, and shares the importance of securing professional sources for both. Don’t skimp in this area!

CHAPTER 04 DECISIONS, PART II – BIG DECISIONS

4 **Your book is complete — now what?** We discuss a bit about the reasons to choose self-publishing over traditional publishing as well as tips for choosing the self-publishing service that’s right for you.

CHAPTER 05: DECISIONS, PART III – SELF-PUB DETAILS

5 **In the self-publishing process, many little details exist that can trip you up if you’re not aware of them ahead of time.** From ISBNs to return options, from price-setting to eBooks, we will take you through 6 details to watch out for.

CHAPTER 06: THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN

6 **Effective design goes a long way toward putting you in the leagues of traditionally-published books.** Toni will discuss the process of choosing a designer or design service that fits your needs (and budget) and how to get the most bang for your buck.

CHAPTER 07: PUBLICATION & MARKETING

7 **Your book is ready to be published, but the hard work is just beginning!** We’ll share nine marketing tips (including a few you can put to use BEFORE your book is published) to get those presses turning.

Put on your boots, recruit! It’s time for Self-Publishing Basic Training. If we ask you to drop and give us twenty, we’re probably asking for twenty traits of your target market instead of twenty push-ups. So sharpen your minds and your pencils and let’s get to work!

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DECISIONS, PART 1:

PRE-PLANNING



Decisions, decisions.

Whether or not you know from the beginning that you're going to self-publish, there are a number of decisions you should make before you even begin writing your book. From the basic planning elements to essential marketing needs, ironing out these details before you start writing will give you a good head start and provide your project with a clear direction.

WHAT THIS SECTION COVERS

By the end of this section, you'll understand:

- What questions to ask yourself to make sure your writing project starts off on the right foot.
- Why having a specific, measurable goal for your book is so important.
- That having a target market in mind before you begin writing is of utmost importance.
- How knowing where your book will stand out and fit in will help you sell more copies — before even writing a word.
- Why it's important to set writing goals and objectives to stay on track.

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In order to make the process of answering these important questions less overwhelming, we've created a list of questions to ask yourself before you put fingers to keys to begin writing your book.

Note: We've included space here for you to work out your answers. If you'd like a separate worksheet, however, take a trip to the bonus material page (35) for information on how to download a PDF version. We've also included a planning sheet that's already filled out to give you an idea of how to answer the questions if you're stuck.

PRE-PLANNING QUESTIONS TO ASK: OVERALL

WHAT IS MY GOAL?

This is perhaps the most important — and most often forgotten question of planning. Do you want to write a book that will sell millions? Or appeal to a specific group of people? Do you want to be literary or commercial? Do you want to attract a specific agent/publisher?

Remember: the best goal statements include steps for getting there. It answers, at the very least, the questions “what?” and “how?”

Here's an example of a good goal statement: “My goal is to write a bestselling novel by focusing on two of the hottest trends right now, YA lit and vampires.”

Here's an example of an excellent goal statement: “My goal is to write a YA novel in 26 weeks and sell at least 2,000 copies by focusing on one of that genre's hottest trends, vampires.”

The more specific and measurable your goal, the better!

My goal statement:

HOW WILL I GET THERE?

Now that you have your goal statement, it's time to **lay out the steps for how you'll get there.** This is really an extension of the “how” portion of your goal statement, just a little bit more fleshed out. Think of these as your daily/weekly/monthly reminders of what you should be doing to keep on track with regards to your goal.

I will achieve my goal by:

PRE-PLANNING QUESTIONS TO ASK: MARKETING

Before writing even a word, it's important to figure out who will buy your book. After all, we're assuming you're looking for a market beyond your family and friends. Taking the time to plan for this before writing will help you tailor your book more effectively to your audience, as you can keep them in mind WHILE you're writing.

WHO IS MY TARGET MARKET?

Who is going to buy your book? Be as specific as possible—knowing the demographics and traits of your readers will give you a better idea of how to effectively market your book (see the resources for a target market cheatsheet).

My target market is:

HOW WILL MY BOOK STAND OUT?

Go into your local bookstore and look around at the hundreds (if not thousands) of titles stacked on shelves and tables. If you'd rather stay at home, check out the best-seller lists on Amazon.

Ask yourself the following questions: What will make your book different? Why would someone want to read it? Cover not only the writing style, plot and characterization but also the aesthetic details and notes.

My book is different because:

WHERE WILL MY BOOK FIT IN?

Now that you know what makes your book different, you also need to know **what makes it similar to other titles**, even if it's something as general as a genre.

Knowing what your book shares in common with others, especially successful titles, can help you get some ideas of what's worked in the past for marketing other books.

My book is similar to:

WHAT'S YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH?

You should be able to **describe your book in 30 seconds or less**, with just enough detail to pique the listener's interest. Your pitch includes why your book is different, what other books/authors it can be compared to, and of course, what it's about!

My 30-second pitch:

Note: Answering these marketing questions now allows you not just to stay on track with your writing, but also enables you to do marketing WHILE writing your book. Start a Twitter account for a character, yourself or your book and build a following among your target audience. It'll make getting those initial sales that much easier!

PRE-PLANNING QUESTIONS TO ASK: WRITING

Taking the time to plan the details of how your book will be written will help immensely in the writing process — both by helping you keep your creative focus and continuing forward progress toward your goal.

WHEN/WHERE AM I GOING TO WRITE?

Create a spreadsheet of your weekly schedule and pencil in all your normal activities (eating, sleeping, working, watching *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, etc.) then figure out when you will be able to dedicate time to writing. If it seems like there's no possible time available, **make time**. Even if it's just 30 minutes a week, you deserve it.

Some people prefer to write at the same time every day, but for some people schedules don't allow such luxuries. Be realistic about how much time you can devote to writing, all of us get just 24 hours a day — no negotiations.

Note: Check out the resources for a blank spreadsheet for you to make a plan.

HOW LONG IS IT GOING TO TAKE?

Based on the daily number of hours you think you can realistically devote to your project, take out a calendar and schedule out rough milestones and word count goals.

If you set your objectives on a weekly basis, you'll keep to a stricter schedule than with monthly goals. Again, be reasonable with your goals in regard to the amount of time you have to spend on your writing.

Note: Again, check out the resources for a blank 2011 calendar on which you can keep track of your goals.

WHAT STYLE WILL I WRITE IN?

This question is tied back to your marketing question about your target market. Knowing who your target reader is will help you determine your writing style and vice-versa.

Do you aim to create a commercial piece (heavy on plot and action) or a literary piece (heavy on characters and descriptions)? Both have their own merits and drawbacks, so just make sure you pick the one that's right for you.

HOW WILL YOUR BOOK UNFOLD?

Some authors thrive on a detailed outline while others prefer to have the story come to them one day at a time. It can be advantageous to have an outline (even if it's a loose one) to keep yourself accountable, focused and to stave off that nasty writer's block.

An outline also helps if you prefer to write out of order, so you can pick and choose which sections you want to write based on your inspiration.

Take some time now to begin your outline. Make it as detailed as is comfortable for you — just be prepared to be flexible if your story changes as you craft it.

A FINAL NOTE

Don't skimp on spending time in the pre-planning process! Take at least a month to give your brain time to change its mind. The more time you take here, the less time the writing process will take — but that's for the next chapter!

RESOURCES

- **Personal Goal Setting** [mindtools.com] : Pay particular attention to the information under the “Goal Setting Tips” heading.
- **Six Steps to Finding Your Target Market** [selfpublishingteam.com]
- **How to Craft a Killer Elevator Pitch That Will Land You Big Business** [dumb-littleman.com]
- **Five Tips for Finding Writing Time** [copyblogger.com]
- **Outlining Your Novel: Why and How** [thecreativepenn.com]

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

In **Decisions Part 1: Pre-Planning**, we learned:

- Having a specific, measurable goal for your books and knowing the steps to get there will keep you on track in the publishing process.
- Taking the time to make marketing decisions before you write a word will allow you to tailor your writing to your target market.
- It's imperative to sit down and plan, even if it's very general, when you will write in order to reach your word count goals.
- Having an outline prepared can help keep you motivated and inspired — and may even stave off writer's block!

THE WRITING PROCESS



CALLING YOURSELF A WRITER IS EASY; THE ACTUAL WRITING PROCESS IS HARD.

I've been calling myself a writer since third grade when the greatest teacher I've ever had put a pen in my hand and told me to set free my imagination.

The result was my first “self-published” book entitled, “Neighbors from Outer Space” (which I suppose is the opposite of inner space) which featured a scintillating storyline along with magic marker illustrations and a glitter-coated cover. I thought it was pretty amazing, as did my target audience of classmates, teachers and friends.

But it wasn't until 2008 when I began scripting my first full-length novel that I felt the true pains of an author — and it all started with my process.

WHAT THIS SECTION COVERS

By the end of this section, you'll understand:

- How writers are like snowflakes — no two have the same process.
- Why resisting the urge to immediately read back through your work can result in stronger writing.
- That writing out-of-order isn't just a luxury; for some it's a must!
- How important it is to go with the flow when writing — don't be afraid of change!
- That resisting the urge to share your work too early can be a good thing.
- Why you can never save too often.

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PART OF THE STRUGGLE IS FINDING THE WRITING PROCESS THAT WORKS FOR YOU.

Many writers have a strict writing protocol they stick to, often writing at the same time every day no matter what their mood or motivation. I wrote my first novel in just about six weeks, often starting around ten o'clock at night and writing straight through 'til dawn (those are the kind of hours you can keep while unemployed and living at home with Mom and Dad). I'm a night owl by nature and so it is that I tend to do most of my writing after sundown.

I had the pleasure of meeting one of my favorite authors, Joshilyn Jackson, who passed through Books-A-Million in Jacksonville Beach, Fla. while promoting her title, *Backseat Saints*. In a recent interview for her new book on the blog *All Things Girl*, Joshilyn discussed her actual lack of a writing process:

Oh Lord, I wish I had a process. It would be so much more efficient.

I write on three different computers and mail the updated files to my g-mail account to download the latest every time I switch. I write at home in bed on my ancient craptoposaurus, at home in my office on my desktop, and I drag my little netbook everywhere to write in coffee shops and carpool lines and while waiting on a folding chair for my youngest to finish her ballet lesson.

I do not have set working hours, either. I write in seizures, disappearing to borrowed vacation homes, off season, to draft twenty thousand words in four days, and then I don't open a single file again for two weeks, then I'll be up at three am for nine days in a row, revising.

It's a ridiculous, stupid way to work, and I cannot recommend it. It's also the only way that works for me.

Would Joshilyn's writing process work for you? What about mine? In the last chapter, we talked about setting up a realistic schedule for getting your writing done. Will your process be dictated by your schedule or vice versa?