



BUILDING YOUR STORY

Your Blueprint
to a Successful Book!

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It's All About Goals

- ◆ Why are you writing this book, poem, article, story, or essay?
- ◆ Who will read it?
- ◆ Why will they read it?
- ◆ Where will they read it?

What's It About?

- ◆ How to make and keep friends and get rid of toxic friends
- ◆ What men need to know to lose weight and keep it off
- ◆ How a man bucks the religious establishment at a church conference center and ends up with the girl, job, and home of his dreams
- ◆ How a plucky girl of twelve becomes a sailor in the French and Indian War and ultimately reunites her family
- ◆ How twelve everyday people helped me find my way back to the Catholic church after thirty-five years
- ◆ How having a sense of humor can help you as a parent of kids with disabilities

Your Editorial Vision

I'm writing this because:

- ◆ I want to fill a need I or the readers have
- ◆ I want to help people solve this problem
- ◆ I want to share knowledge
- ◆ I want to change the world
- ◆ I want to be a famous author
- ◆ I want to make a million dollars and retire

Modeling

Study the competition:

- ◆ Page count/word length
- ◆ Writing style/pacing
- ◆ Use of
charts/pullquotes/illustrations/photos
- ◆ Title words

To Outline, or Not to Outline...

- ◆ How long/how many chapters or words?
- ◆ What must each chapter or section accomplish?
- ◆ How should the information be communicated?
- ◆ What special issues must you consider for your genre?

Dramatic Arc

- ◆ You need a beginning, middle and end
 - This is the case whether it's nonfiction (setting up the problem, showing how to solve it, showing how happy everyone is once it's solved) or fiction
 - We don't do it like the Greeks anymore; figure 15-20 percent of your page/word count for the setup, 70-75 percent for the middle, and 10 percent for the conclusion/climax
- ◆ Something happens, somebody changes
 - They fall in love, they lose weight, they find God, they make friends, they save the planet before bedtime
- ◆ Every scene/exercise/example must move the book to its logical, satisfying conclusion

Some Specifics-Fiction

- ◆ Standard elements of storytelling: plot, characterization, theme, motivation
- ◆ Mainstream vs. Literary Novels: Generally around 80,000 words; mainstream is more plot-driven, literary more character-driven
- ◆ Romance Novels: Typically 50,000-60,000 words; plot and tone are determined by the couple's relationship
- ◆ Mysteries: Cozy is set in a small English or New England town with an amateur sleuth; think "Murder, She Wrote." Police procedural features a detective or officer. Hardboiled features a more seasoned, hardened detective.
- ◆ Science Fiction/Fantasy: SF involves science, fantasy relies on magic, mythological beings and devices, etc.
- ◆ Horror: Fear of the unknown
- ◆ Picture Book: 150-1,500 words
- ◆ Mid-Grade: For kids too old for picture books but younger than twelve
- ◆ Young Adult: Twelve until they move into the adult stacks, usually around 30,000 words

Some Specifics-Nonfiction

- ◆ Memoir, Biography, Autobiography
- ◆ Self-Help
- ◆ History
- ◆ Humor
- ◆ Travel
- ◆ How-to

Memorable Opening Paragraphs

- ◆ “Scarlett O’Hara was not beautiful, but men seldom realized it when caught by her charm as the Tarleton twins were.”
- ◆ “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.”
- ◆ “In more than 25 years of working with people in university, and marriage and family settings, I have come in contact with many individuals who have achieved an incredible degree of outward success, but have found themselves struggling with an inner hunger, a deep need for personal congruency and effectiveness and for healthy, growing relationships with other people.”
- ◆ “I wake to the drone of an airplane engine and the feeling of something warm dripping down my chin.”
- ◆ “My father and mother should have stayed in New York where they met and married and where I was born.”



Leave room for some magic!

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