

PUBLISHED!

*The No-Nonsense Girl's Guide™ to
Self-Publishing*

Part 1
Complimentary issue

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ICTX Enterprises

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First paperback edition: August 2021

ISBN-13: 978-1-7330918-6-2 (e-book)
ISBN-13: 978-1-7330918-7-9 (paperback)

Cover design by Steve, GFX-1

PREFACE

Welcome to the world of self-publishing! I assume you are here because you have a book in mind. And because this is a no-nonsense guide, let's go directly to the gist of the matter.

The goal of this guide is to help you write a book, publish it on Amazon, and present it to as many readers as possible.

Maybe you always wanted to write a book but haven't gotten around to it; or you started a few times, but something got in the way. Or maybe you are a published author already and now want to go at it on your own.

Whatever your situation, if you are serious about self-publishing a book now, fiction or nonfiction, you are in the right place.

No prior knowledge is required. We will cover the whole territory, from conquering the dreaded blank page to tips on making the coveted Amazon Best Sellers list (which is by no means guaranteed, but easier than you might think). In addition, you'll get a few gentle nudges along the way to get the work done.

Let's face it; although this guide is a quick read, publishing a book takes time—lots of it, sometimes.

It's not for nothing that eighty to ninety percent of Americans want to write a book, but only about five percent of them finish the first draft, and just two percent will actually *try* to get it published. It's a daunting task. If you follow the traditional route, breaking through the nearly impenetrable wall of rejections to secure an agent and publisher is no picnic, and publishing on your own may seem like climbing a giant, intimidating mountain.

Still, you *can* do it—one step at a time.

Before we get into the thick of it, let's talk about why self-publishing is such an exciting option for writers.

Self-publishing is often perceived as a relatively new phenomenon, but did you know that it has a long tradition? Its history began when Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1439.

Gutenberg's press revolutionized the industry and made books widely available to ordinary people. However, self-publishers didn't fare so well because they were largely outmaneuvered by distribution outlets.

It took more than five and half centuries until Amazon triggered another revolution, which allowed authors to publish their work and distribute it to readers without having to engage with agents, publishers, and wholesalers.

This dramatically changed the status of self-published authors, who used to be looked down upon as “not good enough” to be published traditionally, but now present a formidable challenge to the publishing establishment. Traditional houses have been forced to reinvent themselves, as they are losing readers while self-publishers are gaining them.

Thanks to Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), almost anyone can publish a book. All you need is a computer, an Internet connection and a healthy dose of perseverance, and you are in business. It’s not a magic bullet; a great deal of work is required. But it’s manageable, and you can do it your way and in your own tempo.

It’s the freedom of the process that attracted me to it. Writing is my third career. I was first a business consultant, then a director of a knowledge center for forensic psychiatry (talk about researching villains!), but I was always an avid reader and dreamed about being a writer as far back as I remember.

Then one day, I decided it’s now or never, and I seriously committed to writing a novel. It took me several years to write and publish my first book, but I became faster and have now published three best-selling thrillers.

My slow writing wasn’t the only reason why it took me so long to publish the first book. The publishing process required a lot of time, too. The tasks aren’t that difficult, but there are many of them. It demands hundreds of decisions regarding stuff most of us never heard about before, and the necessary information isn’t always readily available.

That’s why I decided to write this guide: to clarify the path and put in enough signposts so that you don’t get stranded and can take every step confidently, knowing that you are going in the right direction.

The guide has three parts, *Pen*, *Publish*, and *Promote*, which will take you through the tasks step by step. A number of the publishing and promoting jobs must be done on the sites of the service providers (e.g. KDP). In these cases, I provided links to the particular instructions of each service.

The links, together with additional tips and resources, are located on a [dedicated webpage](#). Because the publishing world is in constant flux, it’s more practical to

update information on a website than to republish a book every time something has changed.

Moreover, if you click on the title of a chapter, it will take you directly to the links and resources for that particular chapter.

If you want to be informed about changes and updates, [please sign up here](#).

As you'll discover, self-publishing isn't a neat process that proceeds in a linear succession of tasks. Some jobs must be started before others have been finished. For instance, promotion (Part 3) starts *before* you have finished your manuscript (Part 1). Please download this [spreadsheet to manage the timeline](#).

And now, let's get started. I wish you a successful self-publishing journey filled with all kinds of gratifying discoveries. Enjoy!

Part 1

Pen

Getting started

Getting started is the first hurdle on the publishing journey, and for many of us, it's the most difficult one. It took me years to *allow* myself to write anything that wasn't related to my work. I had (co-)authored numerous nonfiction articles and book chapters, but *fiction*?

How could I possibly justify spending so much time on something with such uncertain outcomes? I stymied myself. What if nobody reads it?

Anytime I mustered the courage to give it a try, my internal critic would block the way and shout, "What makes you think you could write a book if you haven't studied literature or creative writing?"

I bet you have your own battery of nagging questions or discouragements that hamper your writing.

Yet, untold stories have a way of following us around. As Maya Angelou said, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

So, I was carrying my stories inside me while working on "responsible" things and dreaming about writing a novel "one day." In the meantime, I spent most of my free time reading books written by others, including books on writing: plot and structure, dialogue, characters, tips from famous authors, you name it. I completed the recommended drills, hoping that mastering the craft would bring me closer to the magical "one day" when I'd sit down and write my own novel.

It didn't.

Doing writing exercises, although helpful, isn't the same as writing the real thing. Still, it's tempting to immerse ourselves in the secrets of sizzling dialogue or the latest tricks on writing a best-selling book.

It starts innocently. You pick one book, feel good about learning new techniques, then get another one, and another one. Before you know it, you are spending all your time reading *about* writing rather than writing, conveniently postponing facing questions like *What if nobody will buy my book?*

By the way, procrastination and doubts aren't only related to writing fiction. They could hinder you if you want to publish a nonfiction book, too.

Anyhow, the remedy for all these slowdowns is simple: You have to bite the bullet and start writing. You can always return to reference books or take writing courses later when, based on your own experience, you'll *know* what you need or want to learn. That said . . .

Start writing—now!

I mean it. Here is your first assignment, and it isn't a general exercise; it gets you started on *your* book.

Assignment 1

- Put this guide down, open a new Word or Scrivener file (or whichever app you are using), and write down everything you can think of regarding the book you want to write.
- Don't worry about perfect sentences or being concise, and certainly not about spelling and grammar. Just feel free to write down your ideas. The message you want to get across, solutions to problems, and, if you write fiction, genre, plot, characters . . . anything that comes to mind, without any particular order. See it as a brainstorming session where anything goes and everything is welcome without being criticized.

You'll need the outcome of your brainstorm for the next chapter, in which we'll discuss different types of books and the production strategies that go with them.

Selecting a writing strategy that fits your book

There are zillions of publications on writing and probably just as many opinions regarding effective writing strategies. The key is to select a strategy that fits your type of book.

For the purpose of this guide, I defined six book types, which are by no means the official industry categories (we'll address these later). It's just a quick, rough classification based on how and why various books are produced.

1. Nonfiction factory
2. Fiction factory
3. Nonfiction business support
4. Nonfiction solution sharing
5. Fiction as storytelling
6. Fiction as art

These book types aren't sharply defined classes. Some of them overlap, and it's more a continuum starting with commercial products and moving toward those focused on creativity and passion. Let me explain each type in more detail, beginning with nonfiction.

The **nonfiction factory** class comprises "how to" books produced for profit. We are talking about books titled as *How to Make Your Orchids Bloom in Any Season* or *How to Make Your Dog Stop Barking*.

The defining characteristic of these publications is that their authors aren't experts in any particular field. They search the market for niches that guarantee (quick) gains, and then delegate the book research and writing to hired guns skilled at attractively repackaging known information.

Authors of these books usually operate in several different niches (often under different pen names), which they dominate thanks to their aggressive marketing.

Nonfiction business support books can inspire readers and deliver a good story—but typically not the whole story. They'll tell you the *what* but not the *how*.

These books are written to whet your appetite for the specific solutions an enterprise has to offer, which you'll have to purchase separately.

A variant on these books is written by professionals (journalists, scientists, academics, etc.) who aren't necessarily promoting a business but bring specific topics to the public's attention and boost their professional standing in the process.

Nonfiction solution sharing. These books provide complete solutions—what and how—to particular problems or situations and are written by experts or people who share their own experiences.

A subcategory could be memoirs and autobiographies. Although they don't offer step-by-step, repeatable solutions, they do share meaningful life events or lessons learned.

Books falling into the **fiction factory** category are produced for quick consumption. They are written in accordance with tried-and-true formulas designed to satisfy readers' voracious appetite for a certain type of story. These books seduce readers to move on to the next title in the series as soon as they've read the last word of the previous one.

The last two classes, **fiction as storytelling** and **fiction as art**, overlap considerably. The major difference is that the former is more *reader centered* while the latter is more *writer centered*. Thus, the storyteller keeps the genre in mind (thrillers, romance, etc.), whereas the artist focuses on the writing itself. Which is not to say that a thriller writer can't be an artist . . .

This guide is meant mainly for authors who write **fiction as storytelling** and **nonfiction to share solutions**. It could be also helpful for those who want to publish **artful fiction** or a **book to support their business** (although they will need additional resources regarding the art of writing and business marketing, respectively).

Books in the factory classes are more about creating and marketing a product than about writing and, therefore, require specific skills that aren't covered in this guide.

Assignment 2

- Based on your brainstorming session from the previous chapter, identify the type of book you're writing.
- Remember, there is some overlap between the book types I described, so your book could fall into two of them. For instance, you could write a book that offers a complete solution for a specific business problem (nonfiction solution sharing) and still use it to promote your business (nonfiction business support).

Get ready! In the next chapter, we'll conquer the dreaded blank page.

How to conquer a blank page

Have you ever had a story that lived in your mind for days, weeks, years even, but when you finally sat down to write it, the words just didn't come out? Or what came out wasn't the story you had in mind? It has happened to me more often than I am willing to admit.

Blank pages can be intimidating, no two ways about it. So, what can we do? How do you get those first words on the page?

Sun Tzu, author of *The Art of War*, proposed that the way to defeat a formidable enemy isn't head on but indirectly, by pounding their flanks and undermining their strength little by little.

Thus, rather than staring at the blank page and hoping that a Pulitzer-winning text will write itself on the first try, I suggest you switch gears and write down the purpose of your book.

Namely, *what are you selling?* Because unless you write for the sheer fun of writing, you are selling something.

If you are writing **nonfiction**, you are selling knowledge, solutions, or real-life experience. You are taking your readers on a transformative journey in which they'll transition from not knowing to knowing, from a vexing problem to a freeing solution.

That's what makes nonfiction rather straightforward; it's a journey taken from A to B one step at a time. You don't have to worry about pesky characters or unnerving subplots. What you have to do is to take your readers by their hands and guide them from start to finish in crisp, logical steps they can follow without falling into the abyss you almost fell into (which goes without saying).

A proven way to achieve this is to start with a sharp outline. Once you have that, it's much easier to fill the blank pages with content.

Assignment 3 (nonfiction)

- Write down all the steps your readers must take to successfully complete the journey you are taking them on. If you are writing a memoir or autobiography, write down the events and lessons you want to share. Don't go into the

content, only the essence of the steps, as in: break eggs, whisk them with milk, melt butter in a pan, pour egg mixture into the pan . . . you get the picture.

- Now that your page is no longer blank but filled with steps (or events), you can relax and group the steps into chapters. How you do it depends on the number and complexity of your steps. Perhaps each step forms one chapter. Or each leg of your journey is a chapter comprising several steps.
- Please keep in mind that this is a work in progress. You can add or delete steps as you go on. However, the sharper your outline, the less rewriting you'll have to do later on. Take your time and make sure that your steps follow logically and gradually bring your readers to the finish line.

Writing an outline can be quite intense, so if you need a break, go through the next chapter and start working on the blurb. Going back and forth between the outline and the blurb could sharpen both.

Fiction writers, we must ask ourselves the same question: *What are we selling?* On the face of it, we are selling a novel for \$3.99 or \$5.99 or whatever. But that's not *it*. We are in the business of selling several hours of immersion in our story and the world of our characters.

Realizing this could be scary and (temporarily) make the blank page even more intimidating. *What if nobody likes my characters or their world?*

But that's the very reason why we have to go through this; knowing what kind of story you are selling will help you match your work with readers' expectations. So let's leave the worries behind and focus on writing.

Which brings us to the age-old discussion about *plotters* and *pantsers*.

Plotters are writers who don't put a word of their story on paper unless they have nailed the plot down to the smallest scene. Pantsers, who fly by the seat of their pants, start writing and follow where the story takes them.

Strictly speaking, many of us, myself included, are neither plotters nor pantsers, and trying to force ourselves into one of these two categories could result in the blank page remaining blank.

The pragmatic way to handle this is to acknowledge to ourselves that our process isn't neat and straightforward (as that of plotters) or super-inspired (as pantsers), but circular (which, in my case, is a euphemism for downright messy). We plot some, write

some (not always from the beginning), then plot some more, and so on. Which is OK as long as we keep writing and streamlining along the way. And that's what the next assignment is about.

Assignment 4 (fiction)

- If you are a pure plotter, start plotting. Generate ideas, develop a story premise or a theme, identify a central conflict, decide in how many acts your story will be told (structure), lay out a story line, develop subplots, move on to a detailed outline, and don't forget to develop your characters. Daunting? Yes. Besides, maybe you are not a pure plotter after all. If that's the case, jump to the third bullet under this assignment.
- If you are a pantsier, go to a scene and write down who's in it, what are they up to, the general mood of the place or situation, and so forth. If you can't get started, do the ten-minute exercise described below and try again. Do your best, and if you decide that you aren't a pure pantsier, go to the following bullet.
- If you are neither plotter nor pantsier, go back to assignment 1, review what you have written (you've conquered the blank page there already!), and organize your ideas (premise, story line, characters, conflict, scenes, etc.). Select one of these elements and work on it for an hour or two. Go further, deeper, wider—just keep adding to your story.

If you get stuck anytime when writing, stop and do this exercise (it's a variant on an exercise Natalie Goldberg described in her book, *Writing Down the Bones*): Set a timer to ten minutes and write down whatever comes to mind, whether it makes sense or not. Write nonstop, don't look back and reread, don't correct mistakes, just write. That's all. Some people do their best writing this way. When your ten minutes are up, stop. It's up to you what you do with the text.

Another option is to work on your blurb, which is described in the next chapter. This will help you clarify the gist of the transformation or story you are selling and give you numerous pointers for what to work on.

The blurb

The blurb, or book description, is the first thing people see after your book's cover attracted them to click and assess whether your book is for them.

The blurb could be also found on the back cover of the paperback edition, but some authors prefer to use quotes from reviews.

Any which way, the blurb is important because it must seamlessly take over the cover's seductive power and direct readers to the "Buy" button. The best way to do that is by painting an emotionally compelling picture of what your story offers.

Many authors would rather write a whole book than a blurb because it's painfully challenging to explain the essence of a book in a couple of paragraphs (around two hundred words). The blurb needs time to emerge (especially if you write fiction), and that's another reason why we are starting with it early. The last thing you want is to have your book ready for publication but still must pen the blurb.

A fiction blurb should revolve around the story's pivotal conflict or event. For instance: *Alex would kill to protect her babies. Vivien would kill for the fabulous payout she'd get if she kidnapped them.* The rest should amplify the intrigue in order to hook the reader.

A nonfiction blurb is easier in that it should convey all the benefits readers will reap by finishing the journey you are offering. The tough part is that we are not looking for a cold, technical description. So don't just describe the size of the flowers people would grow when following your gardening manual. Engage the senses. Let readers imagine their brilliant colors, mesmerizing aromas, the bees and hummingbirds buzzing around.

A very practical way of developing your blurb-sense is to read *a lot* of book descriptions in your book's Amazon category, recording ideas and adopting them for your blurb as you go along.

If you are not familiar with Amazon's categories, here is how to find them (we'll address categories in much more detail in Part 2).

- Click on any book in the Kindle Store.
- Scroll down to Product details.
- You'll see Best Sellers Rank in the Kindle Store and three other categories.
- Click one of the categories and you'll land on the category's Best Sellers list.

- Click the categories listed on the left side of the screen, study them, and determine which ones are a good fit for your book.
- Please note that Amazon's Books section has different categories than the Kindle Store.

Assignment 5

- Write a raw summary of your book.
- Study blurbs in your book's genre and collect ideas.
- Fiction: Shape and streamline your blurb so that it involves only the crucial parts of the plot, mentions only two or three characters (if you need more, don't use their names), and invokes emotions when describing the protagonists.
- Nonfiction: Go back and forth between your blurb and outline to ensure that what you promise in the blurb is delivered in your book. Make the benefits emotionally evocative, but not cheesy.
- The goal of this chapter is to complete a rough version of the blurb. Continue refining it as you work on your book.

Now stretch, take a little break, and keep going.

How to keep the show on the road

Congratulations! You've scaled one of the biggest hurdles on your book publishing journey: conquering the blank page and starting serious writing. Pat yourself on the back and . . . go on.

Of course, that's easier said than done. So, what could help you along?

The classic go-to tools for making things happen are *clear-cut goals* and *deadlines*. In our case, the goal is clear: to publish your book. To get there, the book must be written sooner rather than later. That's when deadlines enter the scene.

Not much can move a project as effectively as a good deadline. However, a lot of us tend to postpone the work until the last minute and then get going as if our lives depended on it. That works nicely for tasks we are familiar with, or when writing shorter pieces on subjects we know a lot about. But deadlines can be stifling when we are creating something out of nothing.

Just like learning languages, creativity needs time. You can cram in hundreds of words overnight to pass a multiple-choice exam, but to become fluent in conversation takes weeks, if not months, of practice. The same is true about writing.

A first draft can be written very quickly, especially for nonfiction books. But to shape the material so that it speaks to readers, we must digest it, play with it, and polish, polish, polish. That does *not* happen when sprinting to meet an imposing deadline.

On the other hand, if you are willing to give your manuscript enough time, it will start working with you. Sentences that didn't flow will come back to you in a refreshed, streamlined form when you are washing dishes or walking through a parking lot. Plot solutions will pop up unexpectedly. Snippets of dialogue and sometimes whole paragraphs will "write themselves."

This is my favorite part of writing. Please don't rob yourself of it by rushing too much or pushing yourself to write five thousand words per day (unless they write themselves!). Allow yourself to give your writing the time it needs, but not a second more. You have to keep the show on the road and make progress.

As controversial as this sounds, it's merely a question of finding the right balance between producing enough text and giving it sufficient space to shape itself. If you rush it, you cut creativity off. If you go too slow, you will not gain enough

momentum, or your brain will not be sufficiently saturated with the text (to put it unscientifically) to deliver the breakthroughs you are looking for.

By the way, the breakthroughs will happen even if you write nonfiction. You could get a deeper understanding of your business, or a glimpse of how things could be done more effectively, or even insights and ideas you never thought about before. (Writing can do this to you.)

Accommodating these new insights may require reshuffling or even modifying the steps you had so carefully planned for your readers' journey. Go for it, provided you've tested the new stuff and it works. It could make the difference between your book being just one of many or a real winner.

Anyhow, when your text "communicates" with you, be ready. Scribble it down or use a voice recording app on your phone and process it later. These unexpected flashes of insight are precious, so don't let them get lost in the everyday hustle and bustle.

It goes without saying that you must find your own writing rhythm and develop a strategy that helps you move full speed ahead. Nonetheless, in the next chapter, I'll share a simple system I developed to accommodate the creative process *and* keep the writing on schedule at the same time.

Tell me how you measure me . . .

Tell me how you measure me, and I'll tell you how I'll behave. This maxim drives control theory (and practice). Reward people when they produce large volumes of something, and they'll deliver quantity—forget quality. On the other hand, rewarding quality would most likely result in diminished quantity.

To make a long story short, the most effective reward systems typically measure more than one parameter—quality *and* quantity, for instance. And that's what keeps writers on their toes, for we need to produce a respectable amount of good quality words.

Nonetheless, writing isn't a production line that runs exactly the same day in, day out. That's why I split the process into **three phases: hours, words, and chapters**. In each phase, progress is measured by what's crucial for keeping the “production” on track.

Phase 1: Hours

When I start writing a book, I typically know how it begins and ends, understand a thing or two about the characters, and have snippets of dialogues and scenes that keep replaying themselves in my mind like movies.

At this point, I don't have enough going to seriously count the words I write. I could count them, but it's pointless because most of them aren't good enough to make it into the book. So I commit to a certain number of **hours per day** to work on the plot, develop characters, research, or write scenes I am excited about.

I allow myself to work on whatever comes easy to me at the moment, but the rule is that all my activities during the designated hours must be directly related to my book (quality control!).

Thus, research must deliver concrete information that helps me deepen characters or breathe life into scenes. It isn't hopping from one Google page to another, accidentally landing on the hottest Caribbean resort, and spending my writing time dreaming about escaping there for the weekend. That wouldn't count even if my character is lucky enough to visit the Caribbean.

Anyhow, the first phase is not a linear process for me. Most of the time, I don't start with the first chapter because I would be wasting time staring at a blank page. I write scenes that are already active in my mind and take it from there.

It works like a snowball. Writing one scene gives me ideas for writing another one and so on. When I have enough material to make me feel like I am losing control of it, I make a [flowchart to get a helicopter view](#) of the terrain and see what I've missed. I use Scapple, but there are other programs that assist with plotting in this way.

When my first flowchart is drafted, I get serious and switch to phase 2.

At this point, you should determine the structure of your book. Traditionally, the three-act structure is recommended. I tried to press my writing into it without much happiness, until I discovered Larry Brooks's four-act model, which works much better for me. So please experiment with what works for you.

The **nonfiction** process is similar, but instead of scenes, describe the steps your readers have to take to get from A to B. Start with the steps you know the most about and don't worry about the missing pieces. You'll tighten it up in the next phase. Besides, the outline you've created in assignment 3 should give you a sufficient foothold.

Having a business background, it took me a while to relax enough and let the creative process emerge. Give it a try even if it makes you uncomfortable; you'll regain control in phase 3 when you'll cut, cut, and cut.

You may start with the first chapter and make this phase more linear, if you are so inclined, as long as you put in enough hours to jumpstart your book and make progress every day.

Assignment 6

- Decide how many hours per day you can dedicate to your book.
- Start today, even if you put in only half an hour (it's OK on the first day).
- Write down your hours every day.
- You could also commit to a certain number of hours per week, but the danger is that come Sunday afternoon, you still have twenty hours of writing ahead of you.

Phase 2: Words

By this time, I know enough about the story to start writing from the beginning, committing to a certain number of **words per day**. For me, it's at least a thousand words, but you ought to find out what's doable for you. The most important thing is that you keep writing.

Besides writing, I am updating the flowchart and checking that each scene has an emotional shift (e.g., sadness to anger, positive to negative) and has enough "fuel" in it (mystery, questions readers want answered, or intrigue that'll seduce them to turn the page).

In **nonfiction**, make sure that every step builds on the previous steps, adds value to the transition your readers are undergoing, and brings them closer to the ultimate goal.

Every now and then, I critically review the flowchart, asking myself, *Is the flow logical? Do I need all the scenes? Am I missing something? Must something be revealed before something else happens?*

I write the first draft as fast as I can and don't worry about sentences that don't flow and stuff I still have to research. I just highlight what I have to return to and keep moving.

As I go along, I add each new chapter to a spreadsheet, record the number of its words, and list what still needs to be done.

Quality control: What you write and count as words should be fairly clean. If someone other than you read the first draft, they should be able to follow the story, even if it's a bumpy read.

A decent novel has eighty thousand to one hundred thousand words, so at my tempo, this phase takes me two to three months to complete.

Assignment 7

- Commit to X words per day. Be realistic about the number of words you can write daily and adjust it if needed. If it's too low, you will not build enough momentum. If it's too high, you'll get behind and possibly feel guilty and unhappy.
- If you miss a day, don't force yourself to catch up. (But don't stop yourself if you are on a roll!) Better to miss a day and keep going than to be chronically behind, lose your motivation, or stop altogether. Writing your book shouldn't be a chore!

- If you discover that you are a good storyteller, but writing isn't for you, consider different options. Try dictating your story using a transcription app. Or hire someone to write it up from your dictation. Rob Kosberg, author of *Publish. Promote. Profit.*, calls this approach hybrid ghostwriting.
- Working with a ghostwriter works better for nonfiction, but it's possible for fiction, too. Explore the options, be creative, and never give up!
- A very important step: Please back up your manuscript regularly. Also, save it to Dropbox (or a similar service) and an external drive.
- When your first draft is about 50 percent done, take a break, read the chapters on editing and cover design in Part 2, and start researching editors and graphic designers. It's better to begin early because some of them are booked months in advance.
- Take another break when your first draft is finished to study the Facebook pages and websites of your favorite authors. Then, build your own Facebook page (see resources and refer to two chapters in Part 3: Promote or perish and Facebook ads) and consider building your website (optional).

Phase 3: Chapters

While phase 2 was about writing words, phase 3 is about cutting them.

I reread the manuscript from the beginning, streamlining and cleaning up as much as I can. It's amazing how many paragraphs that looked OK to start with are muddled when you read them the second or third time around.

Because this phase is about deleting superfluous text and replacing fluff with more substance, it makes no sense to measure your progress with the total number of words, as you would most likely end up in minus (and feel demotivated as a result).

Instead, you can commit to cleaning up a certain number of **chapters per day**. Or reset the word count to zero and record how many words you've cleaned up per day.

Again, I want to keep the ball rolling, so if I get stuck on a sentence or paragraph, I highlight it, move on, and get back to this during the final revision before external editing.

Assignment 8

- Commit to X clean chapters per day (or words, if you've reset the counter).

- Be merciless. Cut any word/paragraph/chapter that's redundant. Replace dull text with something irresistible that keeps your readers at the edge of their seat.
- Keep cutting and streamlining. It will make you feel great—almost like a master of the universe.
- To bring you down to earth, read the part on reviews in Part 3, and think about who you could recruit for your street team—that is, a group of readers willing to give you a review in the first days of the book's publication.

This chapter concludes the most creative part of the publishing journey: writing your book. The next part—publishing—will call for quite another set of skills, some of them you have possibly never heard about before.

So, take a day or two off, celebrate your accomplishment, and get ready for the next leg. The rewards will be sweet; when you have finished Part 2, you'll be a published author!

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