

# SO YOU WANT TO WRITE A BOOK?

By Jo Parfitt, Jane Dean  
and Jack Scott

**TEN TOP TIPS  
TO HELP YOU  
WRITE IT WELL,  
WRITE IT FAST  
AND WRITE IT**

*now*



Summertime Publishing   
by your side from inspiration to publication

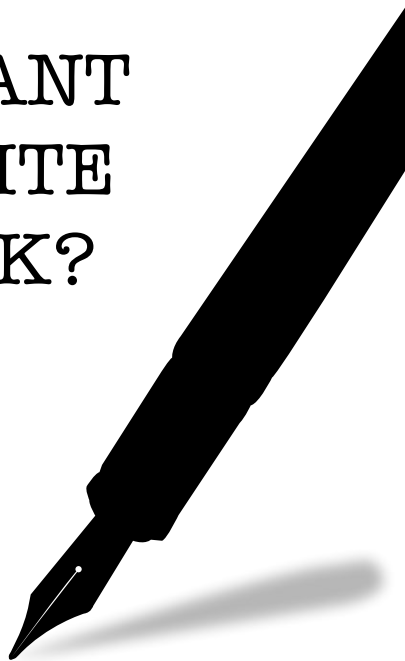
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We specialise in books by and for people living abroad.

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## WHY WRITE A BOOK ANYWAY?

Why do you want to write a book? Are you an expert in your field and know that you have something new and exciting to share? Or are you not an expert, exactly, but know that if you had written a book, you would start to look like one?

People write books for many reasons. Some hope to make money, others hope for fame or paper proof of their reputation. So, if you are among the hundreds of thousands who publish books each year, you may need to ask yourself a few important questions, just to check that you have a winner on your hands:

- 1 Do you have a great idea or a new angle on an existing idea?
- 2 Can you identify and reach your perfect target market?
- 3 Do you speak regularly to people who may be tempted to buy your book at the 'back of the room'?
- 4 Do you have a sizeable client base already?
- 5 Do people tell you that you have a way with words?
- 6 Do you already have a good reputation in your field?
- 7 Are you prepared to research your market before you start and know your competition and what makes your idea different?
- 8 Do you have a passion for your subject?
- 9 Are you prepared to listen to feedback?
- 10 Do you already have an online presence, or are you prepared to get one before you finish your book? Are you well connected on social media and exploit social networking to get your message out?

Are you ready to write?

Then let's go.

### ➡ Just saying...

Did you know that Summertime and Springtime specialise in non-fiction, particularly books written by or for people living abroad?

Of the hundreds of clients we have worked with over the last 12 years, 90 percent of them have been working on how-to books or memoir. As a result, much of the content of this booklet pertains to authors of non-fiction books rather than novels or children's books. However, fiction writers will still have plenty to learn from these pages. Jo, Jane and Jack and the team have all lived abroad at one time or another. Most of them still do and have written extensively in blogs, articles and books about issues such as transition, culture shock, unresolved grief, multilingual families, Third Culture Kids and so on. They are networkers and know most of the world's thought leaders on these issues too. Just saying.

## A writer is also a reader.

- Read online content on the subject you write about.
- Read other books that share your target market.
- Read books that inspire you and analyse them so you might do the same to your readers.
- Read books that do not impress you – so you might avoid the same mistakes.
- Read surveys and reports on the subject covered in your book.
- Read books on writing.

*“Being a newcomer to the world of publishing, Summertime Publishing has been the perfect partner in working towards making a dream a reality. They are true professionals with a wealth of experience and astounding expertise who give constant thoughtful and constructive feedback and encouragement. I would strongly recommend anyone hoping to contribute to TCK and expat literature to submit their ideas to Summertime Publishing.”*

Valérie Besanceney, author of *B at Home*, published May 2014, and *My Moving Booklet*, published February 2015.



Tip two

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**WRITE**

**A writer doesn't just think  
they will write some day,  
they already do.**

- A writer writes a diary, journal or blog.
- A writer writes whenever he or she is inspired.
- A writer writes because he has no choice.
- A writer writes longhand and keeps a notebook beside the bed.
- A writer writes emails using complete sentences.
- A writer writes letters.
- A writer writes for fun.

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*"If you want your book to ride the most important trend rolling through expat oceans, catch the Summertime wave."*

Douglas W. Ota, author of *Safe Passage: How Mobility Affects People and what International Schools Should do About it*, published 2014.

[www.safepassage.nl](http://www.safepassage.nl)



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**FIND YOUR  
WRITER'S VOICE**

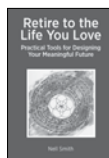
Feel comfortable about your writing style. Write words that you would also speak. Be yourself on paper. Your natural writing style will flow easily. Your natural style will feel real, not forced or contrived.

**Tips to help you find  
your writer's voice:**

- Keep a diary and write in it for ten minutes every day either before you go to sleep or when you wake up, or at least, when you are on holiday.
- Learn to speedwrite - read *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg and it will show you how.
- Find your artist inside - read *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron and it will teach you how.
- Write longhand about things you are passionate about.
- Allow yourself to write down your emotions and be vulnerable. If you don't feel it while you write it, your reader won't feel it when he reads it.
- Try writing a poem.
- Join a writers' circle and meet other writers regularly.

*"Knowing that Summertime Publishing would be publishing my book gave me the confidence to finish writing the manuscript I had started. Jo and her team of editors and designers worked very collaboratively and respectfully with me. They worked hard at meeting my timelines to launch it in time for Christmas sales, and have since been great at processing all my book orders quickly and efficiently. If you'd like a partner to collaborate with you in the lonely writing process, look at Summertime Publishing to be that partner!"*

Nell Smith, author of *Retire to the Life You Love*, published  
December 2014.  
[www.retiretothelifeyoulove.com](http://www.retiretothelifeyoulove.com)



#### Tip four

## UNDERSTAND THE PUBLISHING OPTIONS

Here are a few of the options:

### **Find a publisher**

A publisher will fund everything for you and handle some of your publicity. However, you will still be expected to actively promote your book.

If you have written non-fiction you can approach a publisher directly with a cover letter offering to send a synopsis and three sample chapters. If you have written fiction, again, send a cover letter offering to send a complete manuscript.

If you succeed you will be expected to sign a contract and receive an advance on your royalties. Royalties may be 7-10% of the net receipts taken by the publisher – a percentage of the eventual income.



## **Find an agent**

An agent will look for a publisher on your behalf and will also need you to send a synopsis and writing sample before deciding whether to take you on. An agent will negotiate for you and will usually take a 15% commission. If you succeed you will also sign a contract.

## **Find lists**

Find lists of agents and publishers in *The Writer's Handbook* or *The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook*.

## **Self-publish**

Organise and pay for everything yourself: editing; design; layout; covers; purchase of ISBN; printing and warehousing or print on demand; distribution and marketing.

All the profit from this method will go into your pocket, but don't forget that bookstores, even online ones, take a commission of typically 35-55%.

Today, print on demand options mean you only pay for the books you sell and no longer need to have a garage full of unsold copies. Online bookstores typically take individual copies and post them too, so you no longer have to pack and post yourself. E-publishing is outselling print and self-publishers are expected to produce these versions too.

## Partner publishing

This is what we do at Summertime and Springtime. While you, the author, retains control of your book and up to a 60% royalty too, we handle everything for you and stay right by your side every step of the way. We do as much or as little as you require and you pay us for our services.

Springtime Books  
Summertime Publishing

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*"Encouraging me, challenging me, supporting me in many ways – Springtime Books was a wonderful bunch of people to work with!"*

Madeleine Lenagh, author of *Passage of the Stork*,  
published April 2015  
[www.lenagh.nl](http://www.lenagh.nl)



PREPARE  
TO WRITE

## Find out if there is a market for your book before you put pen to paper.

- Engage with your target audience on social media, online forums and blogs. Find out what interests them and what gaps there are in the market.
- Buy *The Writer's Handbook*, as mentioned in Tip four, or *The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook* for UK publishers and *The Writer's Market* for US based publishers.
- Contact the publishers who seem most likely to be interested in your work and ask to see their Full List Catalogue (these days many catalogues are available online), so you can find out what they have published and what is coming soon.
- Know your competition. Research the online bookshops and find more books like yours.
- Buy some books to see what other authors are doing right and how you can be different and better. Analyse them to work out their 'recipe' and 'ingredients'.
- Talk to authors, agents and publishers, meet as many people who know about the world of books as you can. Referrals are more powerful than a cold call.

- Go to writers' conferences, subscribe to writing magazines and sign up for online writing newsletters. There is a lot of information out there and lots of it is free.
- Act like a writer and write every day, even if only for a few minutes.
- Be clear on why you are writing this and what the purpose of the book will be.

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*“Working with the team at Summertime helped me to see my work from a new perspective, allowing me to refine and improve it in ways I simply wouldn’t have been able to see on my own.”*

Christopher O’Shaughnessy, author of *Arrivals, Departures and the Adventures In-Between*, published 2014.

[www.chris-o.com](http://www.chris-o.com)



Tip six

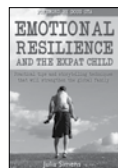
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**HAVE  
AUTHORITY**

It may not be enough to be passionate about your subject. You need to be an authority on it too. If you want your readers to believe what you write then your ideas need to be substantiated with evidence, experience, case studies or quotations from experts.

- Know your subject.
- Write about what you know.
- Consider creating a bibliography if you are writing non-fiction.
- Consider providing a resources or further reading section if you are writing non-fiction.
- Prove to a publisher that you are an authority on your subject.
- Fill in any gaps in your knowledge before you start.
- Ensure your online presence proves you know a lot about your chosen subject.
- If you are writing non-fiction include URLs so the reader can learn more about the topics and people you reference.

*"During the entire publishing process, it was professional, friendly, accommodating and great, a solid model for success."*

Julia Simens, author of *Emotional Resilience and the Expat Child*, published 2011.



Tip seven

BE  
ACCESSIBLE

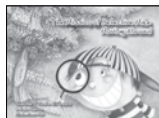
Make your writing easy to read. Remember your book may be read by someone for whom English is not their mother tongue.

- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- Cut superfluous words.
- Short is best.
- Avoid foreign phrases unless they add necessary atmosphere and you are sure the reader will understand what they mean. You don't want to exclude your reader.
- Avoid clichés.
- Help the reader to absorb what you are teaching (in a how-to book) by adding personal anecdotes and case studies that illustrate your point.

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*"Summertime offered the support I needed to let go of my insecurities as an author, and to trust my story. In the process of writing my second book, this time alone, I knew I could fully count on their honest and constructive feedback. My second book will be published by Springtime."*

Simone Torres Costa, *The Mission of Detective Mike*, published 2010 and *Deconstructing Brazil*, published 2015.



Tip eight

BE  
AUTHENTIC

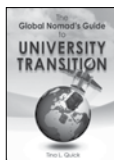
You are the author of your book. Your readers will want to feel they are learning a bit about you as well as your subject. If you don't care about your subject it will be hard to write about it with passion.

- Be yourself.
- Include your own stories.
- Allow yourself to be vulnerable.
- If what you write really happened, it will be obvious to the reader. Include emotion and detail so that your stories leap off the page.

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*"Besides doing a fabulous job at promoting and publicizing my book, Summer-time Publishing has gone above and beyond to provide tools, resources, suggestions and ideas to help me do it as well."*

Tina L. Quick, author of *The Global Nomad's Guide to University Transition*, published 2010.



Tip nine

**BE AN  
AUTHOR**

**Show your readers that you are  
a real author.**

- Write an introduction after you have written the book so you don't end up telling the whole story.
- Write a contents list, follow it and be prepared to adjust it if necessary.
- Write in chapters.
- Use headings and subheadings if appropriate and make them bold.
- Put foreign words in italic.
- Number your pages.
- Remember you may need an index.
- Consider having a resources section.
- Consider having an appendix.
- Prepare a synopsis and proposal if you want to approach publishers and agents.
- Find people to review it.
- Ask for feedback at every stage.
- Check your spelling.
- Hire an editor. You will benefit from third party objectivity from an expert.
- Know that the way you present your manuscript will give the reader a good idea of the quality of the content. People *do* judge a book by its cover.



*“Working with Summertime helped me to see my existing book in a new way. Together we worked on how to update it in a way that gave it a deeper dimension.”*

Ruth Van Reken, author of *Letters Never Sent*, published in 3rd edition 2012.

[www.crossculturalkid.org](http://www.crossculturalkid.org)



#### Tip ten

## GET CRITICISM

Your work will benefit from an expert, objective opinion. Avoid asking anyone who is likely to comment ‘that’s nice, dear’ or those who might actually want you to fail.

- Hire an editor to proofread your work.
- Enter competitions to get an idea of how good your writing really is.
- Try getting articles placed on your chosen topic before or while you write your book. This will both establish you as an authority and indicate your strengths and weaknesses.
- Ask the following kinds of people to look at your work:

Someone who knows your topic

Someone who does not know your topic

Someone who is already published

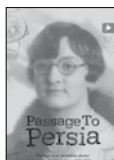
Someone who has the power to refer you to a publisher (if you are lucky)

- Listen to the feedback you receive and consider it seriously.
- Be prepared to make changes.
- Join a writers' circle and/ or online writer's forum where the members give constructive feedback. If you can't find one to join then start your own. You can download our free *How to Run a Writers' Circle* document if you would like some ideas, download our free guide.

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*"As a first time author I did not know what was involved in publishing a book, but Summertime Publishing was responsive to my questions and personalized the process, so I felt that my work was important to them."*

Margaret A. Frame, author of *Passage to Persia*, published 2014



## PREPARING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

The following is taken from our authors' guidelines and will help anyone to ensure their work gets off to the best possible start:

- 1 Create entire manuscript in **Times Roman** font, in one single Word document.
- 2 Include your name, book title and page numbers in a footer on every page.
- 3 Start new book sections and chapters on a new page.
- 4 Use bold for chapter titles and subheadings only.
- 5 Use italics for foreign words, book and film titles and emphasised words.
- 6 Avoid capitals and bold within body text.
- 7 We like double inverted commas for dialogue and single for emphasis.
- 8 Do not justify text.
- 9 Use 'en dash' - for hyphen and 'em dash' – for dash.
- 10 If your text is memoir or fiction, text should be continuous with new paragraphs beginning with a tab. New chapters and where text follows a 'time break' begin at the left margin.
- 11 If your text is non-fiction or factual, paragraphs are not indented and are separated by line spaces.
- 12 Caption your illustrations.
- 13 Only one space after a full stop (or period) please.
- 14 Consistent use of either British or American spelling throughout the book.
- 15 Be consistent in how you write words such as website, web-site or web site.
- 16 No dots with acronyms – so USA and Mr instead of U.S.A. and Mr. But please use e.g. and i.e.
- 17 DVDs, 1950s not DVD's, 1950's.
- 18 Use exclamation points/ marks sparingly!
- 19 Qualifiers – avoid that, very, really, quite, just, so, then, and so on. They do not add meaning or value, and often reduce the impact of what you are trying to say.
- 20 Leaders have 3 dots. We like a space after not before or between the dots  
... is acceptable  
..... is not.

**WANT TO WORK WITH US?**

Every client and book are different, which is why we like to quote for every project individually. You can hire us for as little as an hour's editing or a Skype brainstorm to a complete planning, writing, editing, polishing, design, publish and promotion program.

First, we will assess your idea and drop you an email with our findings. If you think you might like to take this further then we will schedule a Skype call to discuss your options.

**WANT TO FIND OUT IF YOUR IDEA HAS LEGS?**

Please send Jo a one-page synopsis and the first draft chapter by email as an attachment to [jo@summertimepublishing.com](mailto:jo@summertimepublishing.com)