

# The Essential Guide to Writing and Launching eBooks that Generate Leads



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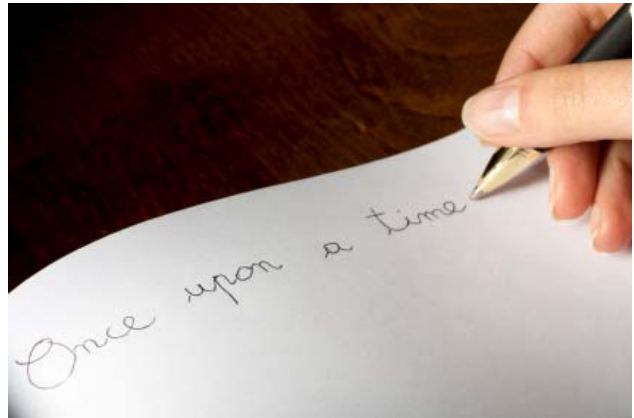
## Once Upon a Time

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Most storytellers will tell you the best place to start is at the beginning. Most storytellers would be wrong.

True, that's where you'll want your readers to begin, but for something as important and resource-intensive as an ebook, as the author and publisher, you'd better start at the end.

More specifically, what do you want your ebook to accomplish? Once you've established your goals – what the end game is—you can circle back around to the beginning and map your way from opening sentence to final call to action.



## Setting Goals

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You've established the fact that you want your ebook to generate leads, but what kind of leads, exactly? Who is the target audience for this book?

Are they already your customers and you want to entice them to come back and spend a bit more with you? Are they prospects you're hoping will download the book and then be prompted to give you a try with an order or call for an estimate or proposal?



What's in it for the reader? Are you going to educate them about your products and services specifically? Are you going to give them sound advice they can use in their own businesses to operate more effectively or efficiently, more profitably? Are you trying to position your company as experts in the field, filled with knowledge and experience that sets you apart and above your competition?

What problems is your ebook going to help them solve?

You've got a lot of questions to answer before you sit down at the keyboard to write a single word. Essentially, what do you want this book to accomplish for you and what will it provide readers?

Why should readers care enough about your ebook to hand over their precious information and then give something even more valuable—their time—to read what you have to say?

## What's It All About?

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You already know the world, the Web, is brimming with content. So, before you invest hours, days, weeks even, penning your ebook, you'd be wise to see what is published on the topic you have in mind. How will your ebook be different? What is your ebook going to offer that's new, different, better than anything out there already? Understand the competitive landscape so you can produce an ebook that fills a void in the marketplace.



To write a successful ebook, one that will get read from start to finish, you need a clear, overarching topic, one that's compelling enough to get people to complete your conversion form—which is much harder than it seems.

You'll know you have a clear topic when you can explain it succinctly—ideally in one sentence.

The topic for this ebook, for example, is, as you already know, “how to write an ebook that generates leads.” Whether it's “How to Play the Piano,” “How to Tweet Like a Hollywood Superstar” or “How to Facebook Your Way to Fame and Fortune,” the topic is why you're writing the book and why you hope people will read it.

If you can't encapsulate your book's topic in one or two sentences, you most likely don't have a solid foundation on which you're going to build your entire story; you just have a series of loosely connected ideas which may interest some readers or no readers because the purpose of the book is itself vague.

Okay, so your topic has to be razor-sharp. But, how do you decide which topic to write about? That's easy. And hard.

The easy part is: What do your customers and prospects want to know that you are especially qualified to write about authoritatively? In your business, do people often approach you with the same question or set of questions they're looking to you to provide answers for? Do your customers and prospects have a common problem or set of problems that prompt them to seek you out, whether by Google search or through referrals? If you blog

(and, by now, you know you should), are there certain hot-button topics that seem to generate more comments and forwards via Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn than others? If so, there's your topic. Your audience has already shown you what interests them most.

The hard part: There's a lot of content on the Web, on virtually every topic you can imagine. Can you bring something unique to bear on this topic? Do you have more insight than others? Can you deliver the information on this topic in a new way, in a way that's more accessible or useful than previous eBooks or even hard-copy books? Your eBook, even if it has a compelling topic, will be competing against other publications, if not before you sit down to write, then surely after you've published. You better be certain that your take on the topic at hand is worthy of a reader's time and can stand the test of time to fend off competitor's attempts to steal your thunder (and your business!).

The other hard part: Choosing a topic that's sustainable for 20, 30, or 40 pages. "5 Tips for Better Blogging," for example, makes for a great, 500-word blog post, but it will be impossible to effectively carry that topic along for 5,000 words (a typical, mid-range length eBook). To determine whether or not your topic will go the distance, your next step is to develop an outline.

Finally, choose a topic that has some staying power. Compared to a blog post, publishing an eBook is a marathon, so you'll want to get as much mileage out of it as possible. Choose topics that have long plagued your customers or are likely to be of concern to them for at least the coming year so you can continue to promote the book until it's time for the "New, Updated" version and you can start all over again.

## The Road Map

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Writing a book, even a relatively short book (we're talking 5,000 words here, not *War and Peace*) can be a daunting proposition.

But, as the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Chinese philosopher, Lao-tzu famously said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." And every 1,000 mile journey requires a really good map.



In book writing, your outline or table of contents is your map. Unlike a geographic map, however, your outline or table of contents may change along the way, but having a concise set of bullet points that identifies the sub-topics you will cover in your book and in what order, helps you determine whether or not you have enough material for an ebook before you start writing and will serve as your guide during the writing process.

Begin by jotting down the main points you want to cover, one concept at a time. Think of each of these points as the foundation for a book chapter. Think of these chapters as mini-topics and again, make sure they are concise and can be clearly explained in a sentence or two.

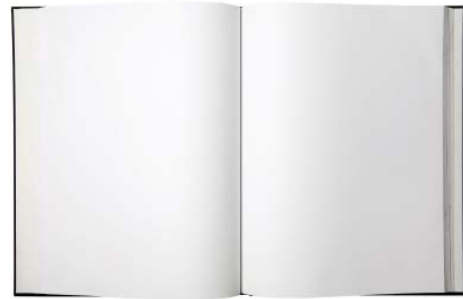
Build your ebook, one chapter at a time, fleshing out each sub-topic with a sentence or two to help you when it comes time to write that chapter.

## Start Writing

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Okay, it's not that simple, but Nike has it right, to a point—Just do it!

Staring at a blank screen or page and wondering how to begin has probably plagued every writer since Plato. Still, you have to start somewhere so, based on your outline or table of contents, pick one of the chapters you feel most comfortable writing about and start writing.



It doesn't have to be brilliant (not yet, anyway). If writing as good as John Grisham were a prerequisite to getting published, the Library of Congress would be a living room cabinet with a few, empty shelves. Dig in and let the words start flowing. Be concise but cover everything you think is important regarding this aspect of your overall topic. You'll be trimming away the excess later, but, for now, do a brain dump and get all your thoughts down.

Each chapter is a complete mini-topic unto itself (kind of like a blog post) with the bullet points you identified during your planning phase as your guide. Now, execute on those bullet points by fleshing out each one into one, or several, paragraphs.

Avoid long sentences and long, dense paragraphs. If you see a paragraph starting to get away from you, running 10, 12 lines or more, find a natural break point and split it in two. Readers are easily enough discouraged without the prospect of facing half a page or more of solid text to further turn them off.

If your topic lends itself to some supporting data (and most topics do), include it. Nothing lends credibility to your writing like facts—from reputable sources—to back up what you have to say. What's more, ebooks, like blog posts, allow you to insert hyperlinks into the text so your readers are never more than a mouse-click away from those substantiating facts. Don't overdo hyperlinks, you want readers to be reading your ebook, not sidetracked and reading someone else's prose. Still, when a link can provide valuable information to a reader that's too long or too complex to explain in your ebook, give it to them. They'll thank you later.



## What Not to Write

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When it comes to good writing, professional writers know that “Less is more.” Not so much as it relates to less content or less information—as long as you’re not repeating information, you’re fine—but in fewer words to convey your thoughts. Here are some examples of rookie writing mistakes:



“In other words...” If you’ve got other words that express the thought, then use them

“This means...” Just tell the reader what it means, you don’t have to say the equivalent of “We’re about to give you the definition of this or that...”

“In order to...” You don’t need “in order” to tell someone something, just “to” will suffice. “To use Facebook effectively....”

“Fortunately” or “Luckily” These two words must be among the most-overused words beginning writers lean on. “Luckily... I’m so brilliant, I have a solution to your problem...” Just explain the solution.

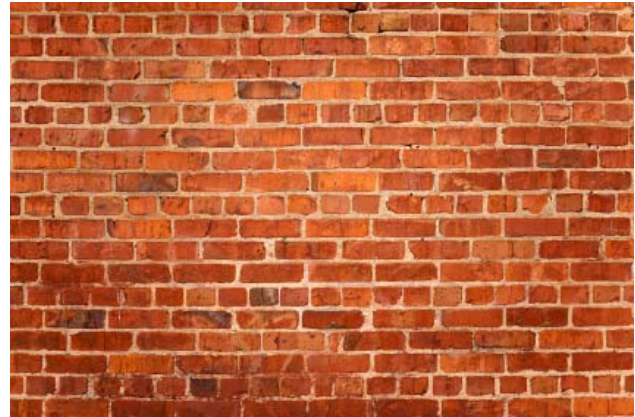
“You should” or “Then, you should” If the reader “should” do something, tell them to do it. “Tweet twice a day if you can,” not, “You should Tweet twice a day.”

“Will be able to” Never use four words, or three, or two when one will do. If a reader “will be able to” do something, they “can” do it.

## Dealing With Writer's Block

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Every writer hits a wall at some point during the creative process. Unlike other, more-linear endeavors, like plumbing or carpentry, there is no one clear path to completing a written project of any length and so, sometimes, it's hard to figure out what to do next.



If you're stuck on what to write next in Chapter 4, skip ahead to Chapter 5, or 7, or 17. There's no requirement to write your ebook in the order it will be published. If one segment has you temporarily stumped, move on to some other section. If that doesn't work, take a break. Better yet, take a walk.

There's something about walking around the block that stimulates creativity. It's just enough activity to keep you engaged and yet slightly distracted such that after a few minutes or even half an hour, that the thoughts will start flowing again.

Even if you don't get beyond your mental hurdle during your walk, sit down and write anyway. You may throw it all away later, but at least you're moving forward. Sooner or later, you'll get to where you want to be with that portion of your book.

## Design and Layout

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If content is king, design is the queen. And, her majesty insists that your content is presented in a clean, crisp, professional manner and that your brand is clearly represented in the subconscious communication that is graphic design.

Design and layout are the window dressing, the eye candy if you will, for your ebook. Window dressing and eye candy are very important.



You might have the best content in the world, but in most cases, if your ebook is poorly designed, it won't matter. A sloppy, unprofessional appearance doesn't bode well in business and it doesn't fare any better in publishing.

Good design and layout enhances good content, it doesn't distract from your content. Good ebook design is not overly fancy and reinforces your brand through the use of your company colors and fonts, and the overall look-and-feel your brand presents on your website, in your store, on your packaging, wherever your customers come into contact with your brand.

You might choose to outsource design to a professional designer, but if you have even the most fundamental skills in Microsoft Word, you can probably make do with one of the predesigned templates Word offers.

If you click on the Office button at the upper, left corner of a Word document and then click "New," you'll get a dropdown menu of templates. There are book templates, booklet templates, catalog and brochure templates. Some of the catalog templates seem to fit nicely for an ebook. They've got a good cover design with lots of white space, a table of contents, and some sample pages you can modify with your own text and images, whether they are pictures, illustrations, charts, or graphs.

Use images to help break up line after line of text. Straight text might appeal to people who like to read about HTML coding or other geeky, engineering subjects, but most readers will lose interest if there isn't something to break up the visual monotony of your copy. Sometimes, a picture is worth a thousand words; sometimes, it's enough if it just adds some color and pizzazz to an otherwise dull page to give readers' eyes a break.

## One for You, Two for Me

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Give readers what they came to your ebook to get and then some. But that doesn't mean you can't get something in the bargain beyond that first conversion form. Enhance your content with hyperlinks and calls-to action (CTAs) throughout the body of the book.

Don't overdo it, but include links to landing pages that provide other relevant content you've created. Ebooks, webinars, or whitepapers are great top-of-the-funnel offers. Free product trials, demos, or consultations are ideal middle-of-the-funnel offers. Each of these links and CTAs helps maximize your lead generation.



To reap the most benefit from your content, consider adding tracking tokens. You can create unique tokens that will provide analytics to track specific campaign elements, such as banner ads, newsletters, email blasts, or paid search. The Google URL builder will create the unique URL which defines the campaign, source and name. This then becomes your reference destination and is where you will choose the anchor text or image. Use Google Analytics or HubSpot Sources to view and analyze the results.

Social networks are arguably, the most powerful, cost-effective marketing tool you have. Make sure your ebook leverages those networks at every opportunity.

Include social sharing links to let readers “Tweet This” or “Share on Facebook” on every page. Use these links to direct people to the landing page for your ebook to ensure you collect those leads too. Your readers get to easily pass along the value you've created in your content with colleagues and co-workers; you get more free leads to convert.

Once you've written a first draft, go through your content and see where you can logically add your most important keywords. Don't force-fit them, don't overdo them, but when you repurpose your content in your blog, on your Facebook page, and other online sources, you will already have the keywords you rely on to optimize your search engine results naturally built into this content.

## A Rose by Any Other Name

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Shakespeare had it half-right. A rose by any other name may smell as sweet, but an ebook, much like a blog post, needs the sweetest-smelling name you can come up with.

Your ebook needs a name that's eye-catching, unique, and conveys the essence of your topic and its value to your prospects, all while cleverly including a keyword or two.

Titles that offer "How to" are always useful.

"Tips," "Tricks," and "Secrets to" also do well with readers. After all, who couldn't use a tip or a trick and everybody wants to know the "secret" to just about everything.

Numbers are always eye-catching, especially when part of a list, such as "51 Ways to Improve SEO."

Try to come up with several names for your ebook, then do a little test marketing with co-workers, customers, and vendors to see which one people tend to gravitate to and why.



## Editing and Proofreading

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Read the acknowledgement pages of most published books and you'll see that writers usually graciously thank their editors. Sure, it's good form to recognize anyone who helped bring your work to term, but it's no coincidence. Professional writers—from Hemingway to O. Henry—know that books are made or broken in the editing process.



Much like the film strips that get left “on the cutting room floor” by a film editor, copy editing shapes and hones your work by cleaning up spelling and grammatical errors (which are the kiss of death in terms of credibility if left unchecked), makes your book less wordy, clearer, and easier to read, and in the bargain, produces a better read.

Because every writer is so close to their work they cannot view it objectively, only the most experienced writers can edit their own work, so don't expect to do this on your own.

After you've completed your first draft, step away from the file for at least a week. Then, take the first pass at paring back your prose and making sure words are correctly spelled and periods put in the proper place. Once you've done the best you can do, ask a colleague or hire a professional copy editor to have a fresh set of eyes copy edit and proofread your ebook before you finalize it for publication.

## Landing Pages

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The landing page for your ebook offer is the linchpin to your ebook offering. This is where the rubber meets the road for you and your prospects. It's crunch time and visitors to this page will either commit to your promotion or head for the hills, so optimizing your landing page is critical.



From a reader's perspective, they want to see the title, the cover image, and a summary (usually bullet points) of what takeaways they will get by turning over their contact information.

The landing page is a teaser, like the front or back jacket of a printed book. So, whatever you can do to whet readers' appetites without giving away the farm goes here. Give them one tip, cite a quote from an expert if you've consulted one for your book, or include an endorsement from one of your customers who has been given an advance copy to review.

From your point of view, make sure you include social media sharing links and your conversion form has a call-to-action for the download. Gather just enough information on this form to be useful to you for follow-up.

## Market Like a Mad Man

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By the time you've written and designed your ebook, you know you've got a lot of time, energy and resources invested in it, so pull out all the stops and fire every e-marketing weapon in your arsenal to promote it.

Put a promo and a link to your ebook landing in a prominent place on your website homepage. Don't stop there, put links on every page where it makes sense to do so (which is just about everywhere if you've chosen the right topic for your ebook).

Post a teaser paragraph with a hyperlink to your landing page on your Facebook page once a week for several weeks running.

Tweet all about it. Make those 140 characters count and tweet about the book's launch, how people are reacting to it, what insights it offers, or how many downloads (if it's a respectable number).

An email blast is the perfect venue for an ebook promotion. So is a blog post. Each of these formats allow you enough space to give customers and prospects a healthy preview of what's inside your ebook and a link to your landing page. Use your blog to post snippets of chapters that will draw readers in to want to read more. Don't forget the CTAs in these promotional efforts.

Add a teaser and a link beneath the email signature for everyone in the company for as long as it makes sense. Something like: "Read our ebook: "Insider Secrets Every Investor Should Know."

Use one of the free press release services and do a press release on your ebook. Be sure to include several CTAs and links in the release. Approach the release from several different angles, such as the expertise of the author or the leading role your company plays in your industry. Don't forget to send individualized press releases to trade publications, trade associations, and local media. They all have content machines that need feeding 24/7 and your ebook has a decent chance of at least getting a mention or a blurb that will drive traffic to your landing page.





## Post-Mortem

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There's a lot to be learned from publishing an ebook, and not just for the readers.

Having written, edited, designed, published and promoted your ebook, what did you learn about how it achieved its goal?

Use your [HubSpot analytics](#) to see how many people clicked through to your landing page. Determine which sources drove the most traffic to your landing page, which sources drove the best traffic to your landing page.

Find out which social media outlet was the most shared. Did certain sneak previews of the content outperform others?

Publishing an ebook is part of a learning process. Learn from your mistakes and double-down on your successes the next time around.



## It's Not Recycling, It's Repurposing

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With 5,000 or so words all polished and published, see how many places you can repurpose that content and have it do double-duty.

Don't steal the thunder of your launch by posting this content immediately after you've published, but once the content has been live for a while, it's perfectly fine to parse the content across your other distribution channels.

Use the content on new Web pages and drive SEO results higher with fresh content.

Tweak the content just a little and use in blog posts. Take a couple of chapters and run a series of three or four posts to sustain interest across one aspect of your content.

If the content is really good, share it with online publications. Find out who the appropriate editors are and drop them an email with a sample chapter. Don't forget to mention that you might be persuaded to sit for an interview too.



## The End

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To an author who has just run the marathon of writing a book—any book—there are no two, sweeter words to type than “The End.”

But, by the time you get to the end of the ebook publishing process, you might have forgotten that this is where you began. So, take a deep breath and congratulate yourself on finishing such a formidable challenge.



Then, realize that the end of the writing and design is only the beginning. Once you’ve published your ebook and all the links and CTAs to your landing page, it’s time to publish and reap the rewards. Start collecting those leads and following up. The marketing and selling has only just begun.

## 7 Insider Tricks of the Trade

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Here are 7 tips savvy writers use to produce effective content:

1. *That first sentence better be a doozy.* Like everything else in life these days, readers are going to judge you in the first 10 seconds, the first sentence or two. Your “lead” (as it’s called in journalism) is your hook. It may not be the first thing you write, but it better be the most finely crafted sentence in the entire book. If you don’t grab your readers with something interesting, something unique in that opening paragraph, don’t expect them to hang around much longer. You had your shot, they filled out your form, now it’s time to dazzle them, inform them, and entertain them.
2. *Good writing isn’t written. It’s rewritten.* Maybe the Bible was written in one take. So, unless you’re some kind of Supreme Being, you will need to edit and rewrite your first draft just like the rest of us. There are two approaches you can take: Do it yourself or hire someone to do it for you. Unless you’re an experienced writer, you may want to hire out the copy editing to a professional., someone who will make sure the i’s are dotted, the Ts are crossed, and all the punctuation is where it should be. Don’t rely on your word processor for this, it doesn’t know the difference between their and there, your and you’re. If your English skills are up to the task, at the very least, let some time pass, about a week or so, before you revisit your first draft. You’ll be amazed at what you see the second time around that you missed the first time through.
3. *The best method for writing: Seat of the pants to seat of the chair.* That chair might be in your office, in the spare bedroom or at the coffee shop, but you will need to put in the necessary time at the keyboard to produce your ebook. Set aside some time—even if it’s just an hour—to write every day. Set a goal for yourself, 250 words every day, come hell or high water. Then, don’t leave the chair until you get it done.



4. *Leave a sentence half-finished.* One of the biggest causes of writer's block is not knowing where to begin. If you have a thought completed and you know what you want to say, at the end of the writing day, leave that thought unfinished. When you come back to your writing the next day, you will already know where to pick up from where you left off. It will get the fingers loosened up and your mind in gear without even having to think about it.
5. *Find the right piece of music.* Jazz or classical, it doesn't matter as long as it doesn't have lyrics you find yourself singing along to. The right piece of instrumental music can get you in the mood and set your frame of mind over and over, day after day. Turn on the music and, within minutes, you're lost in productive thought and pounding out prose like a pro.
6. *Readers like lists and numbers.* The next time you're cruising through the checkout line at the supermarket, glance at the magazines displayed there. It won't take you long to realize what magazine editors already know, people like lists and they like numbers—*31 Great Hairstyles, 10 Ways to Beat the Heat, 7 Secrets to a Leaner You*. If you can give readers a numbered list, you're likely to get their attention.
7. *You can break all the rules except one.* It's not spelling. It has nothing to do with grammar. Don't be boring! Nothing else matters if what you've written is boring. Readers will click their way out of your ebook faster than you can say "Facebook has how many hundreds of millions of users?"

## Next Steps

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If you are a company that is interested in growing your business and generating leads, [use HubSpot's free 30-day trial to learn how HubSpot's software can help you.](#)

