

Steps to Publishing a Novel, by Rick Stockwell

#	Step	Explanation	Reference
1	Get an Idea	An idea can come from anywhere – your mind, something you heard on TV or the radio, or something you read in a newspaper, magazine or book. Ideas can even come from God.	
2	Document your Idea	Write your idea down on paper or in Microsoft Word, so you don't forget it. Ideas can come and go quickly. Formatting doesn't matter at this point. Let the ideas flow through you freely onto the paper or computer screen. Don't inhibit yourself by editing and trying to make everything grammatically correct. Keep a notebook on your nightstand so you can record any additional thoughts that may come to you in the middle of the night or morning.	
3	Write What You Know	Write about things you have at least a minimal level of expertise in. This will give you greater credibility and confidence as you write. (You can tackle topics you are less familiar with in your next book.)	I wanted to confront evolution from a scientific perspective, and purchased several science-for-dummies books, but quickly realized that my English/History degree did not prepare me sufficiently for this task. I instead resorted to the power of story to make my points.
4	Humble Yourself	No matter how prestigious your background, how well-read you are, how good a writer you think you are, or how good a writer others say you are, forget it. Accept the fact that you don't know anything about writing a novel and be willing to learn from those who have gone before you.	
5	Learn How to Write – Part 1	Read books on writing.	Purchase paperback versions of the following books: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Scott Bell, <i>Plot & Structure</i> • Nancy Kress, <i>Characters, Emotion & Viewpoint</i> • Nancy Kress, <i>Dynamic Characters</i>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jill Elizabeth Nelson, <i>Rivet Your Readers with Deep Point of View</i> <p>Read each book twice and highlight / underline key concepts so you fully internalize the material presented. (This will save you years of frustration and rejection.)</p>
6	Learn How to Write – Part 2	Take writing courses.	<p>Jerry Jenkin’s online creative writing courses can help you learn the craft of writing. Here’s the link: https://jerryjenkins.com/online-creative-writing-courses/</p> <p>I took three correspondence courses through his predecessor organization – <i>The Jerry Jenkins Writer’s Guild</i>. I also took his <i>Your Novel Blueprint</i> course. It’s expensive (about two thousand dollars) but comprehensive. Jerry has written over 200 books, a number of which made it to the <i>New York Times Bestseller</i> list.</p>
7	Learn How to Write – Part 3	<p>Attend writer’s conferences. Sign up to take writing courses at writer’s conferences in your genre. You will not only learn more about how to write, but will also make contacts that will help you further down the road.</p> <p><i>Note: You may spend one to two thousand dollars (or more) on conference fees, lodging, and travel, depending on the conference.</i></p>	<p>I attended the Greater Philly Christian Writer’s Conference twice. Here is the link: http://philadelphia.writehisanswer.com/ (I met my third editor and website developer at this conference.)</p> <p>I’ve heard good things about the American Christian Fiction Writers conference, but have not attended. Here’s the link: https://www.acfw.com/conference</p>
8	Write a First Draft	Let the ideas flow out of you without inhibition or proper formatting. It’s okay if the writing is terrible – you can fix it later.	
9	Write a Second Draft	Edit, edit, and edit some more. Keep a notebook handy, and on your nightstand, so you can record solutions to plot problems that arise while you’re writing. Fixes can come to you at the weirdest times once your brain has had time to process a solution.	The James Scott Bell book contains advice about editing.

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10	Create/update a Summary Outline of the entire book	<p>Summary Outline includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme – One paragraph synopsis for the back cover, which summarizes the book, but leaves the reader intrigued, wondering what will happen next. • Plot Points – One-line bulleted summary of each major event in the entire book • Chapter Summaries – One paragraph summation of what is happening in each chapter. <p>Recommend doing these in reverse order (i.e., write chapter summaries first, plot points second, and the theme last).</p> <p>Add/delete/reorder plot points to make the book more exciting/compelling/structured.</p>	The James Scott Bell book contains advice about plotting.
11	Write a Third Draft	Rework your manuscript, focusing on plot, by following your summary outline, and incorporating any new thoughts that come to mind.	
12	Create/update Character Summaries	Create or update character summaries for each major character in your book, reflecting what you've learned about them to date.	The Nancy Kress books contain advice about characterization. The Jerry Jenkins <i>Your Novel Blueprint</i> course contains character templates.
13	Write a Fourth Draft	Update your manuscript, focusing on characterization, by incorporating information from your character summaries and any new thoughts that come to mind.	
14	Edit using Grammarly Premium	Purchase Grammarly Premium editing software. It will suggest stylistic, grammar, and spelling corrections far beyond what the	It costs about \$10.00/month and will dramatically improve your manuscript. Here's the link: https://grammarly.com/ .

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		Microsoft Word editor or most humans can provide.	
15	Edit by Listening to Your Book	Edit your manuscript for readability, by listening to it read aloud. I guarantee you will make hundreds of changes as a result of doing this. Modifications will not only include correction of typos/grammatical errors your brain glossed over, but will, more importantly cause you to want to rewrite entire paragraphs to improve readability.	In Microsoft Word, go to the Review tab, then select Read Aloud.
16	Get Reviews	Ask fellow writers, friends, and/or family members to read the latest version of your book.	Seek out reviewers who will give you honest feedback. It doesn't help to solicit readers who don't want to hurt your feelings, and only tell you what a wonderful writer you are. Jerry Jenkins runs a program in which he'll personally review your first page and provide feedback. Be sure to bring your thick skin.
17	Write a Final Draft	Incorporate ideas/corrections from your reviewers as you think appropriate. You are the final arbiter of what changes should be made. Make the manuscript the best it can possibly be from your perspective. The manuscript should be formatted with the Times New Roman font, font size 12, double-line spacing, and indented paragraphs. Repeat steps 14 and 15 before moving to the next step.	
18	Engage a Professional Editor	Once you feel the manuscript is the best it can be, engage a professional editor. Most will edit a few pages of your manuscript for free so you can evaluate them. Once you select an editor, they'll likely ask you to pay half the fee up front and the balance upon delivery. <i>Note: A professional edit may cost one to two thousand dollars (or more), depending on the</i>	I recommend Janice Boekhoff for developmental editing (story structure) and line editing (grammar/spelling). Here's the link to her website: https://janiceboekhoff.com . I also recommend Christy Distler of Adodah Editorial Services for line editing only. Here's the link to her website: https://avodaheditorialservices.com/ .

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		<p><i>size of your manuscript and the perceived quality of the editor.</i></p> <p>I recommend getting both a developmental edit and a line edit for your manuscript.</p>	
19	Make Revisions	<p>For developmental edits, your editor should recommend structural, character, plot, and other changes to improve your novel. For line edits, your editor will review your Microsoft Word manuscript with Track Changes On. They may identify hundreds, or even thousands of changes. You can accept all their changes at once (not recommended for a first edit), or review their edits and accept/reject them one at a time. Once again, you decide what changes should be included in your manuscript.</p>	
20	Create a Publisher-ready Manuscript	<p>After making all the edits recommended by your editor (which you agree with), revise and revise until the manuscript is as good as it can be. Repeat steps 14 and 15 before moving to the next step.</p>	
21	Reach out to Traditional Publishing Houses and Agents	<p>Your novel should be complete before you engage publishers. Purchase a writer's guide listing publishers and agents in your field, then narrow the list to those specializing in your specific genre. Engage each publisher/agent (who fit your criteria) according to the specific instructions on their respective websites. Typical submission requirements include some or all of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Query letter (single page) 2. Proposal (book and/or chapter summaries, plus first three chapters) 	<p>Here's the link to the Christian Writer's Market Guide, which I used for many years to identify and engage traditional publishers/agents: https://christianwritersmarketguide.com/</p> <p>Query letter and proposal instructions/templates abound on the internet.</p> <p>Writing a good proposal is a fairly involved process. To help, I recommend <i>A Christian Writer's Guide to The Book Proposal</i>, by David E. Fessenden.</p>

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		3. Entire manuscript	
22	Track Responses	Create a spreadsheet listing the publishing houses and agents contacted, the date they were contacted, and the contact person's email address. If you don't receive a response within three months, send a follow-up email. If you don't hear within a month after that, forget it.	
23	Evaluate Next Steps	Traditional publishing houses are reluctant to bring on first-time authors unless their writing is spectacular or they are a celebrity. At some point, you have to decide how long you want to keep trying to get your book published through an agent or traditional publisher. The remaining steps apply if you decide to abandon this approach.	<p>I spent eight years trying to get my book published with traditional publishers. I finally set a deadline by which I'd wait no longer. After that date passed, I decided to self-publish.</p> <p>Each author has a message that is important and unique. No one else can share your message. You owe it to yourself, and your future readers, to get your message communicated, as that may be the primary reason while you're still on this earth (Ephesians 2:10).</p>
24	Self-publishing – Part 1	Take a self-publishing class. There are a lot of steps involved here – you don't want to go it alone.	<p>I recommend Eva Natiello's self-publishing class. Here's the link to her website: https://evanatiello.com/</p> <p>Eva self-published her first novel entitled, <i>The Memory Box</i>, and it became a <i>New York Times</i> bestseller. Her classes are offered in person in northern New Jersey. She also provides personal consultations over the phone for a fee.</p>
25	Self-publishing – Part 1 (details)	<p>Key thoughts regarding self-publishing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage a professional cover designer (separate eBook and paper back covers must be created) • Engage a professional manuscript formatter (separate .epub, .mobi, and .pdf versions must be created) • Get a professional photograph taken for the back cover of your paperback book, social media profiles, and for your website 	<p>I used Damonza to create my book cover and format my manuscript. Here's the link to their website: https://damonza.com/</p> <p>ISBN numbers are obtained from Bowker. It's most cost-effective to get a quantity of ten. Here's the link: http://www.bowker.com/products/ISBN-US.html</p> <p>Domain names can be registered by your website developer, or at either of these sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.godaddy.com/ • http://www.register.com/register-domain-names.rcmx

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get your own ISBN numbers • Decide on a publisher name for your book • Reserve the publisher domain name and your website domain name • Get a testimonial for your back cover from another author (he or she doesn't have to be famous) • Include book club questions on the last page of your book • Include "A Novel" on the front cover • Determine the BISAC category (genre) of your book • Self-publish your eBook exclusively with Amazon the first year. They offer the widest exposure and the highest royalties. Branch out to other eBook distributors later. • Register your paperback book with Amazon and Ingram Spark. The latter will distribute it to all non-Amazon outlets (e.g., Barnes & Noble). • Beware of self-publishing houses who charge large up-front fees, and/or large percentages of each sale. • Copyright your book with the Library of Congress within 2.5 months of the launch date. 	<p>BISAC Categories can be identified here: https://bisg.org/page/bisacedition</p> <p>Library of Congress copyright registration can be initiated here: https://www.copyright.gov/registration/</p> <p>Amazon's getting started link (eBook and paperback): https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G202187740</p> <p>Ingram Spark link (paperback only): https://www.ingramspark.com/</p>
26	Self-publishing – Part 2	Take an internet book marketing class. There are lots of steps involved here – you don't want to go it alone.	I recommend Chase Neely's https://leveragebrands.co/ They perform marketing for Jerry Jenkins. They will analyze your online footprint and make recommendations for improving your website and optimizing your site's searchability. The cost is about \$1,000.

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			<p>To get started, I recommend Eva Natiello’s internet marketing class. Here’s the link to her website: https://evanatiello.com/ Eva self-published her first novel entitled, <i>The Memory Box</i>, and it became a <i>New York Times</i> bestseller. Her classes are offered in person in northern New Jersey. She also provides personal consultations. Each class cost a few hundred dollars.</p>
27	Self-publishing – Part 2 (details)	<p>Key thoughts regarding internet book marketing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending all day at book fairs and/or libraries to sell two books isn’t worth it. Focus on using social media and the internet instead. • Create a Linked-in page • Create a Goodreads page • Create a Facebook page • Determine a launch date (applies to eBooks only) • Populate your Amazon Author Central page • Obtain proof copies of your book (eBook (Kindle) and paperback versions), and confirm there are no errors. (Readers may find spelling errors later, so you may have to go through this process multiple times.) • Post your launch announcement on social media and via email to friends/family. Include the link to your Amazon author page so they can click on it to order the book. Ask them to write a review on Amazon afterward (if they like the book). 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order author copies on Amazon (available at cost) and send a free copy to influencers in your genre. Ask them to review your book. Include any positive feedback from them in future updates to your manuscript and/or cover. • Reach out to local media outlets, as appropriate for your genre. Write interview questions and answers for them so they don't have to. 	
28	Create a business	<p>You can treat the publishing of your book as a hobby or as a business. There are pros/cons to either approach. The former is simpler, the latter offers liability protection. If you decide on the latter, do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an LLC with your state's Secretary of State office • Register with your state's tax department • Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS • Register with the IRS as an "S" corporation • Submit a separate Subchapter S tax return annually • Submit quarterly estimated tax payments, if you have significant income from your book • Open a business checking account so book royalties can be kept separate from your personal accounts. This is required for Amazon and Ingram 	<p>Obtain an EIN (Employer Identification Number) from the IRS: https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/employer-id-numbers</p> <p>Obtain a subchapter S designation by filing IRS Form 2553: https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/form-2553</p>

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		Spark monthly royalty payment deposits for businesses.	
29	Create a website	<p>Create a website that readers can access to learn more about you and your book. This also enables you to enlarge your social media footprint, write a blog, and display your other writings.</p> <p>You can build the website yourself, using various online tools such as Vistaprint, or you can engage a website development company to build it for you. Having someone do it for you allows for more customization and greater quality.</p> <p><i>Note: Having someone build the website for you can cost one to two thousand dollars. There also are monthly fees associated with having a website, whether you build it yourself or have someone else build it for you.</i></p>	<p>I recommend Celebration Web Design. They specialize in building author websites. Here's the link to their website: https://www.celebrationwebdesign.com/</p> <p>Here's the link to my website: https://rickstockwell.com/</p>