

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 idea 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.	
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 the task. I instead resorted to the power of story to make my points.
4	Humble Yourself	No matter how prestigious your background, or how well-read you are, or 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> Read each book twice and highlight / underline key concepts so you

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			fully internalize the material presented. (This will save you years of frustration and a slew of rejections from publishers later.)
6	Learn How to Write – Part 2	Taking writing courses.	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/ I took three correspondence courses through his predecessor organization – <i>The Jerry Jenkins Writer’s Guild</i> . Jerry has written about 200 books, a number of which made it to the <i>New York Times Bestseller</i> list.
7	Learn How to Write – Part 3	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. <i>Note: You may spend one to two thousand dollars (or more) on conference fees, lodging, and travel, depending on the conference.</i>	I attended the Greater Philly Christian Writer’s Conference twice. Here is the link: http://philadelphia.writehisanswer.com/ (I met my editor and website developer at this conference.) I’ve heard good things about the American Christian Fiction Writers conference, but have not attended it. Here’s the link: https://www.acfw.com/conference
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. Ideas 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.
10	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.
11	Write a Final	Incorporate ideas / corrections from your	

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	Draft	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 double line spacing and the Times New Roman font.	
12	Engage a Professional Editor	Once you feel the manuscript is the best it can be, engage a professional editor. Most editors will edit a small writing sample for free so you can evaluate their editing methodology. 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 size of your manuscript and the perceived quality of the editor.</i>	I recommend Christy Distler of Adodah Editorial Services. Here's the link to her website: https://avodaheditorialservices.com/ She was the third editor I used.
13	Make Revisions	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. A good editor will not only fix grammatical / spelling errors, but will also make extensive recommendations regarding plot and character improvements.	
14	Create a Publisher-ready Manuscript	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. Then have someone proofread it for you (a	

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		friend/family member you trust, your editor, or a separate professional proofreader).	
15	Reach out to Traditional Publishing Houses and Agents	<p>Purchase a writer’s guide listing publishers and agents in your field, and 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 summary plus first three chapters) 3. Entire manuscript 	<p>Here’s the link to the Christian Writer’s Market Guide, which I used for many years to engage traditional publishers/agents: https://christianwritersmarketguide.com/</p> <p>Query letter instructions abound on the internet.</p> <p>Writing a good proposal is fairly involved process. To help, I recommend <i>A Christian Writer’s Guide to The Book Proposal</i>, by David E. Fessenden.</p>
16	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.	
17	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>
18	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</p>

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19	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 • 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 exclusively with Amazon for a year. • Branch out to other book distributors later (e.g., Barnes & Noble, Ingram Spark). 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 	<p>consultations.</p> <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 <p>BISAC Categories: https://bisg.org/page/bisacedition</p> <p>Library of Congress copyright registration: https://www.copyright.gov/registration/</p> <p>Amazon's getting started link: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G202187740</p>

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		Congress within 2.5 months of the launch date.	
20	Self-publishing – Part 2	Take an internet book marketing class. There are a lot of steps involved here – you don’t want to go it alone.	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.
21	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 	

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		<p>they like the book).</p> <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. 	
22	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 • Complete a Schedule C on your next federal tax return • Submit quarterly estimated tax payments • Open a business checking account so book royalties can be kept separate from your personal accounts. 	<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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23	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>