

# Freedom With Writing

# The eBook Formula for Freelance Writers



Write and publish  
a high quality  
eBook  
in one week.

David Masters



# **eBooksThe eBook Formula for Freelance Writers**

**David Masters**

**Freedom With Writing**

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Questions or comments?

Email the editor:

[jacob@freedomwithwriting.com](mailto:jacob@freedomwithwriting.com)

Email the author:

[david@freedomwithwriting.com](mailto:david@freedomwithwriting.com)

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## **Introduction: So You Want to Write an eBook?**

You've picked up this book as a writer because you'd like to write and publish your own book. That's awesome! The aim of this book is to help you get started in writing your book. I'll walk you through the process from choosing your idea to sitting at your desk and getting your book written.

Maybe you've sat down to write a book before, and you've struggled to know what to write about. You've doubted yourself, and you've wondered if anyone would really buy your book. Or perhaps you've got a great idea for a book, but you've struggled to expand your idea into an outline. Or maybe you've actually sat at your writing desk, then been stumped by writer's block.

Whatever difficulties you've had with creating and writing your book, you'll find help in this ebook.

I'll show you:

- How writing an ebook helps you as a writer
- Techniques for finding an idea that will give your book the best possible chance to make sales
- How to title your ebook

- How to plan and structure your ebook
- How to write your ebook

I can't write your book for you. But I can walk you through the process—I can be your mentor. As such, this book is all about helping you find the motivation and ideas you need to start writing. It's not a complete how-to guide about self-publishing but a writer's manual to help you plan and complete a book. After all, without having written a book, you have nothing to publish.

What if you've already written your book? You'll still find some helpful ideas in this book. In particular, you'll find out what makes a book likely to sell. Like it or not, if you're planning to sell books, then the marketing process starts before you write a single word, when you consider *who* you'll be writing for. This book will cover the marketing strategies you should consider while planning and writing your book.

Once you've written your book, you're well on your way to being a self-published ebook author. You'll still have a few steps to go before your book is published, but you'll have done the hardest part. After your book is written, you'll need to edit, format, and publish it.

Are you ready to write your book? Then let's get started!



## Chapter 1: What The eBook Revolution Means For You

In the past five years, the publishing world has been turned upside down by the Internet publishing model. Devices such as the Amazon Kindle and the Kobo eReader allow books to be easily distributed and read in digital formats. Creating a digital book, better known as an ebook, requires far less resources than publishing a physical, paper book. All you need to create an ebook is access to a computer, and all you need to distribute your ebook is an Internet connection. The fact that *anyone* can write and publish an ebook has created a publishing revolution. For us writers, there are opportunities like never before.

To get a book published, we no longer have to get past the old-guard gatekeepers—the literary agents, editors, and publishers. Let's take a look at what this means in practice.

In traditional publishing, you first have to sign with an agent to represent you. This in itself is a process fraught with rejection. Good agents are inundated with manuscripts from writers, and they don't have the time to represent everyone. And once you've found an agent who will represent you, get ready to give 10 to 20 percent of your profits to them, because that is often what they will demand.

Of course, once you've got an agent, there's no guarantee you'll

find a publisher. Notoriously, *Harry Potter* was rejected by a dozen publishers, including big names such as Penguin and HarperCollins, before it was finally accepted. (It's fun to imagine how many editors probably kicked themselves for *that* oversight.) Likewise, Stephen King, George Orwell, John le Carré and Ursula K. Le Guin were all turned away by publishers in the beginnings of their careers. In the traditional publishing world, being a good writer is no guarantee of success, because the gatekeepers are tenacious in guarding the entrances.

With self-publishing, you bypass the gatekeepers. You can do all the publishing yourself with the click of the mouse or the press of a touchscreen. Of course, you'll still need to find a good editor, and you'll need to get your book formatted and a cover designed, and you'll need to build up a base of loyal readers. But in many ways, that's a lot easier than navigating through the maze of traditional publishing. If you're creative and tech-savvy, you can do most of these things yourself.

Self-publishing is no longer a niche market. These days, self-published ebooks (also known as indie-published ebooks) typically account for 30 books in Amazon's top 100 best-selling ebooks.

## How Much Can You Earn as an eBook Author?

So how much can you really make? Hugh Howey, one of the biggest success stories of self-publishing, has sold over a million copies of his runaway success novel, *Wool*. Howey recognizes that he's an outlier – not every self-published author is making as much as he does. But Howey loves to support other writers in any way he can. So he decided to conduct some research into how many writers are making a small but steady income from their craft. In an online writing forum, he asked how many writers were making between \$100 and \$500 per month selling self-published ebooks. The response shocked Howey. Not because he struggled to get responses. But because, in Howey's own words: “Every response I received started with a variation of: 'I'm actually making a lot more than that.'”

Howey heard from Jan Strand, who in January 2012 made over \$11,000 from his self-published novels. He received a response from Rachel Schurig, who sold over 100,000 ebooks in one year and cleared a six-figure income. He also heard from Rick Gualtieri, who made over \$25,000 in 2012, and Amanda Brice, who makes a nice side-income of \$750 per month.

If you know how to spin a good yarn, and if you connect with the right audience, you can earn a good living selling your own ebooks. And remember, you only have to write a book *once* for it to start earning money. After you've written and published that

eBook, you continue earning royalties from the work for as long as it continues to sell. And the more books you write, the more you earn.

The upside doesn't stop there. Go down the traditional publishing route, and you'll typically earn royalties of between 10–15 percent on the cover price of your book. That means if your book sells for \$9.99, you get \$1.50 for every copy sold. With self-published ebooks, royalties are typically 70 percent of the cover price. That means for a \$9.99 ebook, you pocket seven bucks. Or think of it another way—instead of selling your ebook for \$9.99, you could sell it for \$2.99 and still make more money on each book sold compared to traditional publishing. With a 70 percent royalty on a \$2.99 ebook, you would still make \$2.10 per book. So you can give yourself a huge competitive advantage by pricing your books more affordably.

But even that's not all there is to it.

### **How eBooks Help You as a Freelance Writer**

Even if you don't manage to write a bestseller—and not every author will—writing an ebook is still good news for your writing career.

I'm a professional blogger by trade. That means most of my income comes from working with clients. Before a client hires

me, they want to know that I'm a good enough writer for the job. They want proof that I can write well. My ebooks are one of the ways I show clients that I know how to write.

You can also write ebooks as a marketing tool to connect with potential clients. Just offer a free copy of your ebook to anyone who signs up to your email newsletter. This is a fantastic way to grow your email list. People will sign up because they want a copy of your ebook. The more people you have on your list, the more potential clients you'll connect with.

Steve Slaunwhite, co-author of *The Wealthy Freelancer*, calls this free ebook you give to email subscribers your *buzz piece*. Slaunwhite explains:

“[A] buzz piece can help you attract a lot more clients, position you as the go-to expert, and ... well ... create a buzz that brings opportunities to your doorstep. Next to an effective website, creating a buzz piece is the best investment you can make in your business.”

If you're a freelance writer, or if you'd like to earn a side income doing freelance writing, then writing an ebook is a great idea. You'll learn a lot from the experience, and you can use your final product to show potential clients that you're a solid writer. Plus, your ebook establishes you as an authority in your field—after

all, you *did* write the book on it. Of course, if you plan to use your ebook in this way, then it should focus on a topic that's relevant to your clients.

### **Doesn't Publishing eBooks Cost Money?**

While researching this ebook, one of the biggest concerns our potential readers raised was the cost of publishing an ebook. The truth is, to get an ebook published on Amazon, you don't have to spend a single penny. That said, you *may* want to spend money on:

- Getting a cover professionally designed
- Hiring an editor
- Hiring someone to format your book for you

But all of these costs are optional, and if you're willing to invest some time to learn how, you can do them yourself. What's more, you can find affordable options. All you need to know for now is that you don't have to worry about spending money. What's important is getting your book written.

Now that we've looked at what ebooks can do for your writing business, let's consider how ebooks can help you as a writer.

## Chapter 2: How Writing an eBook Helps You as a Writer

If you've always wanted to write a book, but you've been overwhelmed by the enormity of the task, then writing an ebook might be the best way to get started. Let's take a look at why this is.

### Break the "Writing a Book" Barrier

In the early 1950s, no one believed it was possible to run a mile in under four minutes. No matter how hard athletes tried to break the four-minute barrier, it couldn't be done. For decades, the record had hovered at just seconds over four minutes. That was until 1954, when at a local athletics event in Oxford, England, the British athlete Roger Bannister ran a mile-long race in 3 minutes 59.4 seconds. He smashed the barrier.

Here's what's even more remarkable: within two months, *two more* athletes also broke the four-minute barrier.

The problem wasn't that it was impossible to run a mile in under four minutes. These days, the world record for running a mile stands at 3 minutes 43.17 seconds, well under four minutes. The problem was that no one *believed* it was possible to run a mile in

under four minutes. As soon as Bannister achieved a four-minute mile, the beliefs of other athletes shifted. Bannister changed what was possible in the world of athletics.

Have you ever tried to write a book, and struggled to complete it? Maybe you got stuck at the idea stage, or maybe you felt overwhelmed when you started to write, and you gave in to writer's block. For whatever reason, until this point you've been unable to write a book.

I don't blame you at all. Writing a book is a mammoth task. Paperback books are usually around 80,000 words in length. That's a lot of words to read, let alone write! Writing a book is a barrier for many writers, like the four-minute mile was for athletes in the early 1950s.

That's why I recommend that you write an ebook. eBooks can be a lot shorter than paperback books. Paperback books need to be a certain length for a couple of reasons. First, most people expect a paperback to be around 200 pages long. If it's not, they feel like they're being short-changed. Second, publishing costs mean it's uneconomical to publish short books. eBooks, as we've established, have shifted the economics of publishing. Because your ebook isn't a physical object, it can have as many—or as few—pages as you like. There are no physical constraints as to what makes a book. The only important thing is that you create a



book that's helpful or enjoyable for your readers. If you do that, then word count is a secondary consideration. This ebook, for example, is under 10,000 words long. But in these 10,000 words we've packed a ton of valuable information. And the truth is, it's better for you, the reader, that we keep this information concise, as that saves you time.

Once you know that ebooks can be as short as 5,000 words, writing a book becomes far more achievable. And what you've done once, you can do it again. After you've written your first ebook, your beliefs about what's possible will shift. You'll be an author. Of course, you're not changing the belief framework of the whole world, like Roger Bannister did. But you're changing your own beliefs about what's possible. And as it's *you* that matters most in this situation, that's what counts.

Talking of beliefs, let's look at how writing an ebook can help you shift another misconception about writing.

### **Beat "Masterpiece Syndrome"**

Are you working on a masterpiece to rival Shakespeare? Let me guess. You've planned it all in your mind. You've spent years working on it. It's going to be *absolutely perfect*. And you're going to write it all in a couple of months. That's what geniuses do, isn't it?

You tell yourself that you must write a masterpiece, or it's not worth writing anything.

Let me guess again. You've not written anything. Or each time you sit down to write, you manage a paragraph or two. But it's so far short of your expectations that you give up right away.

Having high expectations of yourself is good. Pushing yourself is good. Believing that you must write a masterpiece, however, is unhelpful. Very few writers are fortunate enough to do so. And even the greatest masterpieces have their flaws. Planning to write a masterpiece is a recipe for staying blocked. I call this “masterpiece syndrome.”

Masterpiece syndrome can take another form. Knowing how many works of literary genius there are already in the world—from books by Jane Austen to Emile Zola—it's easy to feel overwhelmed. You wonder about the point of writing when so much has already been written.

Here's the truth. I've read dozens of ebooks that I've enjoyed and that have enriched my life. But none of them were masterpieces. They just did a good job of explaining a concept, showing me how to do something, or telling a story.

Of course, ebooks can be great works of literature. But they don't

have to be. When you're writing an ebook, the pressure is off. All you can do is give your best. If the final result falls short of your ideal, that's okay. What's important is learning to have fun in the process of writing. You'll discover that even if your writing isn't what you'd like it be, you can still have fun being creative and splashing your imagination onto the page.

Once you've written an ebook, maybe one day you'll go on to write a masterpiece. Maybe. As they say, practice makes perfect. In any case, once you drop the goal of writing a masterpiece, you'll find it much easier to write. So why not write an ebook to beat masterpiece syndrome?

## **You Can Follow Your Passions**

When you're writing a book for traditional publication, you have to write something that's marketable. If publishers don't see a market for your book, they'll turn it down.

The same is true if you want to write an ebook that sells. In a moment, I'll guide you through the process of coming up with a marketable idea. This works best if you can find a place where the market intersects with your experience and passions.

That said, with ebooks you can take a risk. If you want to write about your niche hobby, you can. Of course, you might not sell

many copies. But you will have published a book about something that matters to you. If that's what's important, then I say go for it!

If, however, sales matter to you (as they do to most writers), then you'll need to consider the market. In the next chapter, we'll look at the type of ebook that gives you the best chance of success when you're starting out.

## **Chapter 3: Here's the Key to Writing a Book That Will Sell**

For your first ebook, I recommend writing a non-fiction book.

This is for two reasons:

- It's easier to come up with a saleable idea for nonfiction
- Nonfiction is easier to write when you're starting out

Let's look at each of these in turn, starting with why nonfiction is easier to sell.

Why do people turn to nonfiction books? Occasionally they do so for entertainment, as is the case with biographies. But most of the time, it's because they need help solving a pressing problem. They need to know how to do something. Books are a resource for finding the information they need

Maybe they want to find out:

- How to eat more healthily
- How to train their dog
- How to heal a broken relationship
- How to fix a fault in their car

- How to find a new job

As you can imagine, the possibilities are endless. If there's a problem that someone's stuck with, then there's a book in it. In the next chapter, we'll look at how you can generate ideas and zero in on a problem that you're qualified to help with.

Why does this make nonfiction more marketable? Because most people are willing to *pay* for a solution to their problem. Sure, you can find out information for free on the Internet, using a Google search. But that's not always the best quality information, and it can take time to find it. It's far easier to buy a book telling you exactly what you need to know. In other words, a nonfiction book has a built-in “buy” button.

Maybe you're thinking, “Sure, maybe some people might pay for solutions. But *I* sure don't. And I'm not sure there are many people in the world who do.”

Think again! The book you're reading right now is nonfiction helping you solve a problem—namely, how to write a saleable ebook.

I'll add one qualifier. Nonfiction books are great for making steady sales, because they're in constant demand. But it's worth noting that the most successful authors in the self-publishing

world are fiction writers. When you're just starting out as a writer, novels are much harder to sell compared to nonfiction books. However, once you've got the momentum rolling, fiction can be far more lucrative.

The second reason for writing nonfiction books is that they're easier to write, at least in my experience. If you've struggled to complete a book in the past, it's probably because you didn't have an outline or a framework to follow. You were working only with your imagination—which means limitless possibilities. When you can go anywhere, it's tough to choose a direction. When you've got a framework to adhere to, it focuses your mind, and you're more likely to get your book finished. I'll show you a simple framework you can use to construct your non-fiction book, starting with the next chapter.

In any case, if you're anything like me, you write nonfiction all the time. You write emails, Facebook posts, business memos, and calendar entries. All of this is nonfiction. Yet you probably don't think of it as writing. You just do it naturally. It just flows from your mind. That's how easy writing can be. You don't have to be intimidated by it.

Finally, writing nonfiction is easier because it comes directly from your own experience. We've all faced problems in life and overcome them—it's part of the human condition. So you've got

something you can write a book about. You've probably heard the adage “write what you know.” While I disagree that you should always write what you know, it's a good starting point. Writing about what you know makes it easier to get words onto the page. This builds your confidence and stretches what's possible for you.

Even if it's your dream to write fiction, nonfiction is an excellent starting point. You'll grow as a writer, and you'll find it easier to turn to fiction when you hit that crossroads.

Now, let's take a look at a process you can use to develop an idea for your ebook.



## Chapter 4: How to Find Your eBook Idea

Famous writers are often asked: “How do you come up with your ideas?” The truth is, ideas are a dime a dozen. If I asked you right now to give me an idea for an interesting book, you'd probably give me a list as long as my arm. That's imagination at work for you. Writers need imagination—it's one of our greatest assets. And it's immensely helpful for generating ideas.

But imagination isn't everything. The problem with completing an ebook isn't coming up with ideas. The problem is *choosing* an idea. Writing a book is a big commitment. You need to find an idea you can stick with through the roller-coaster ride of sitting at your writing desk for several hours over a period of days. How do you go about choosing the best idea for your book?

Truth is, there is no perfect idea. Every idea you come up with will have some shortcomings. So don't stress about making the right decision, because there is no right decision. That said, you can make a *good* decision. You can pick an idea that will make it easier for you to write and sell your ebook.

Also, remember that by choosing one idea, you're not discarding all your other ideas. You can save them for your future books.

As you hone in on an idea for your ebook, you'll need to consider three factors:

- **Your interests.** Writing an ebook – even a short ebook – takes a lot of time and effort. If the topic of your ebook doesn't capture your imagination, then you'll struggle to finish it.
- **Your life experience.** Readers will appreciate your book more if it's authentic; that is, if it draws upon your own experience. You're not writing a biography, but it's good to tell stories from your life that will reflect what you're sharing in your book.
- **The marketplace.** What topics are people willing to pay for information about? Some subjects have more willing buyers than others. You may not know what these are off the top of your head (in fact, it's best not to guess), but you can find out. In a moment, I'll show you how.

The crossover between your interests, your life experience, and the marketplace is where you'll find the most fruitful ebook ideas.

Let's look at each of these in turn.

## **Your Interests**

By interests, I don't just mean hobbies. Most people only have

one or two hobbies. These are the activities we can fit in around work, family, and our other commitments. Interests are anything that you invest time and energy in—including mental energy. If you enjoy aspects of your work, that's one of your interests. If you've got kids, they're one of your interests. If you dream of being an astronaut, that's one of your interests.

To uncover your interests, ask yourself:

- What do you do in your spare time?
- What do you find exciting?
- What nonfiction books and magazines do you enjoy reading?
- What are your secret dreams?
- What are you curious about?
- What do you enjoy about your work?

Set aside 20 minutes to answer these questions. Once you've got your initial answers, keep pushing. You want to dig everything up, and leave no stone unturned. If it fascinates you, write it down.

Using free association can help to release your thoughts. The easiest way to explain how to do this is with an example. Let's say you cycle to work, so you put down cycling as one of your interests. To free associate, you'd put the word "cycling" in the center of a piece of paper, then connect it to any words you think of. For example, you might think of "wheels," "transport," "fitness," "bicycle repair," etc. With every idea you come up,

you can then free associate from that. So bicycle repair might lead you to think of “mechanical tools,” “being organized,” “self-sufficiency,” “DIY,” and so on. Don't worry if you come up with ideas that cannot be turned into a book (personally, I can't see a book about wheels being all that helpful). The point is to see your interests in a new way, and to come up with specific niches you might be able to target with your writing. We'll look further at exploring niches in the next chapter.

After you've listed all your interests, you're ready to move on to your life experience.

## **Your Life Experience**

Bringing real life experience to your writing is essential. Writing from your own experience makes things easier for you as a writer, because the stories you tell will be from your life. It's also helpful for your readers. By sharing the skills and experience you have with others, you give them a pathway to reach where you've gotten to.

As you reflect on which aspects of your life experience you could write about, ask yourself:

- What do other people ask you to help them with?
- What are some of the most remarkable things you've done in your life?

- What ordinary things have you done that everyone else does too?
- What have been your greatest learning experiences?
- What skills do you have that you consider “ordinary” or “easy” but that few people know how to do?

You may struggle to answer some of these questions yourself. You know yourself so well that you may struggle to take a step back and see what's special or different about you. It's worth asking a couple of close friends or family members to help you answer these questions. They see things in you that you don't see in yourself.

After you've listed all your interests and life experience, set aside 30 minutes to come up with book ideas that combine the two. Come up with as many as you can at this stage! Remember you're looking to help people *solve a problem*. So based on your passions and skills, what problems could you help solve? Keep going until you've come up with 20 ideas, and more if possible. You don't need full titles at this stage, just topics about which you could write. We'll be analyzing them in a moment to see whether there's demand from readers.

The final aspect to choosing an idea for your book is considering the marketplace.

## **The Marketplace**

You plan to make money from your writing, right? That's why you're reading this ebook. To make money writing, you need to see your writing as a business. Businesses are about profit, which is another way of saying they exist to make money.

To make money as an ebook writer, you have to write books that people will want to read. There has to be demand for the ebooks you'll write. Fortunately, there are simple ways of checking market demand before you start writing. Do this correctly, and you won't waste time writing a book that no one wants to read.

Let's take a look at some of the strategies and tools you can use to check marketplace demand.

**Look closely at the topic. Is there a consumer magazine about it?** Head to your local newsstand, and check out the magazine racks. Take a notepad with you so you can take notes on what you see. If there's a magazine on your topic, this means people are willing to pay money to read about it. To help you get started, here are some of the topics you might notice on a magazine stand:

- Health and fitness
- Travel and transport
- Money and property

- Relationships
- Technology
- Food and cooking

What you discover may trigger new ideas for ebooks. Add these to the ideas list you started earlier.

Hint: If you want to do this in the comfort of your own home, head to the magazine subscriptions section on Amazon.com. Pay most attention to the bestselling magazines.

**Are people searching for help on Google?** Where do people turn for help and advice nowadays? The answer is the Internet. And Google is the portal to the Internet.

You can find out whether people will buy your book by checking whether they're searching for that topic on Google. Head over to the Google Trends website (which you can find using a Google search), and run a search for the topic of the first book idea on your list. You'll see how search volumes for this topic have changed over time. Scroll down, and you'll also see related searches, which may give you more ideas for your book.

Here's the secret to using Google trends: you can compare different book ideas to see how popular they are. Click “add term” and put in your second book idea. You'll see how popular

this idea is compared to your first idea. Neat, huh?

**Are people buying books on Amazon?** You might think that if people are buying books on your topic already on Amazon, that's a bad sign, because you'll have competition. Actually, the opposite is true. The fact that people are buying books on a topic shows there's demand for that type of book.

Head over to the Kindle store on Amazon, and search for books in your niche. Organize the books by best selling (this is usually the default option), then take a look at the top-selling book. Once you're on the book page, scroll down to the Product Details. You're looking for the Amazon Best Sellers Rank. If it's ranked above 20,000 in the paid Kindle store, then there's a good market for your idea. A sales rank of 20,000 might sound low, but there are millions of books available for the Kindle, so it actually shows the book is selling well.

Using these three strategies, hone your list of book ideas down to the three with the most market potential. In the next chapter, I'll show you how to choose the best idea and how to turn it into a book title.



## Chapter 5: How to Title Your eBook

Here's a statistic you'd probably prefer not to read: almost all of the people who come across your book will only read the title. The better your title, the more people you'll entice to buy and read your book.

How can you write a title that draws in readers? The answer is to use a hook. Hooks arouse curiosity and create desire. A good hook makes readers feel they *need* your book. They can't go without it.

Here's another way of looking at it. You've done your research and discovered there's demand for a book on a particular topic. With your hook, you channel that audience demand towards your ebook.

### What Makes a Good Hook?

What are the components of a good hook?

First, hooks **promise something that your readers want**. In other words, your hook must promise to help readers solve a problem, or achieve something they've always dreamed of doing. You can use your intuition on this, but it's even better to talk to people. Check out online forums on the topics you've decided

could make a good book. What do people have questions about? What do they ask for help with? You can also look at Amazon reviews of other books on the topic. Pay special attention to the negative reviews. Where did the books fall short? Your book could fill those gaps.

It's best if the title you use reflects the language of the people you'll be helping with your book. So take careful notes during your research. You're mining for hook gold!

You might find that people want to:

- Lose weight
- Make money in their spare time
- Learn how to use a tablet computer
- ☐
- 

Of course, it goes without saying that your book's content must deliver on the promise you make in the title. If you don't, it's dishonest, and you'll earn a reputation for being a writer who fails to deliver.

As well as making a promise, a good hook is **as specific as possible**. You can do this by using numbers in your promise, adding a timeframe, or targeting a particular type of reader. To continue the four examples above:

- The No-Diet Diet: Lost 10 lbs. in 6 Months with Exercise Alone
- Get Your First Freelance Client (Without Quitting Your Job)
- The Silver Surfer: From Newbie to iPad Wizard in 30 Days
- The Speed Writing Method—Write an eBook in a Week

### **Extra Tips for Choosing an Effective Hook**

Getting specific on your hook can be tricky. There are so many options for what you could offer! How can you narrow it down further? As always, the answer is finding out what your readers want.

Here are two tools to help you do that:

**The Amazon Search Bar.** If you've ever bought anything from Amazon, you probably used the search bar to find it. The wonderful thing about the search bar is its autopredict function. When you start typing a search, Amazon guesses how you're going to complete it. The guesses are based on what people search for most. So if you type your topic into Amazon, and see how Amazon completes it, you'll get ideas for your hook.

For example, let's say I'm putting together a book on how to write. If I put “how to write” into the Amazon search bar, I find that people most often search for:

- how to write a novel
- how to write a lot
- how to write a business plan
- how to write a screenplay
- how to write anything

Aside from the final option (which is too generic), these searches all offer potential hooks, or at least further avenues for me to explore.

**The Google Keyword Planner.** The Google Keyword Planner lets you search for anything, and see how often people search for that term on Google. Even better, it suggests related terms. Let's say I'm researching my book on writing again. By typing “writing” into the Google Keyword Planner, I get the following results. People search for:

- “How to write” 56,000 times per month.
- “Write a book” 41,000 times per month
- “Writing jobs” 13,500 times per month
- “Technical writing” 13,000 times per month
- “Write a Story” 11,000 times per month

These are all helpful ideas for how I could make my hook more specific, and as there are tens of thousands of searches per month on these topics, there's demand to know about them.

Finally, it's a good idea to start noticing good hooks when you see them, and collecting them in a swipe file. Hooks are all around you, in newspaper headlines, book titles, magazines, blog post titles, and radio advertisements. If you read something that gets your attention, it's a good hook! So note it down, and you could use it as inspiration for one of your future book titles.

## Chapter 6: How to Plan Your eBook

You've found an idea, and you've made sure there's an audience of willing and ready buyers out there. From that idea, you've developed a hook. You're well on your way to being an ebook author! And you've done the hard work of developing a solid, saleable idea. Your next step is perhaps the toughest of all: writing your book. I know writing is hard work. I write full time, and while it's often fun, it's rarely easy. In fact, writing is one of the most difficult things you can do.

Writing combines being creative (coming up with new ideas, and combining words into sentences) with being critical (editing your writing so it makes sense). This complexity means that many writers are constantly fighting with themselves as they write. Their inner child wants to get on and make something beautiful! The inner critic, meanwhile, slams on the brakes and tells them they can't continue until the previous sentence is perfect.

What's to be done?

Because writing is such a complex process, it's a good idea to break it down into a series of tasks. By focusing on one thing at a time, you're less likely to get distracted or blocked. You can just focus on the task in front of you, whether that's coming up with ideas, writing or editing. You've already completed the first task

of writing a book: coming up with an idea. The next step is to plan your ebook. The planning stage can be broken down into a series of tasks:

- A brain dump—jotting down everything you know
- Organizing your ideas
- Creating a structure
- Breaking your structure down into components

## **The Brain Dump**

You've got your topic and your hook. Now write down everything you can about the topic as it relates to your hook. You can do this in a number of ways. Use one or more of the following tools to generate ideas:

- **Freewriting.** Such a simple technique: just grab a pen and paper, set a timer, and write without stopping. Don't judge, and don't stop until the timer rings. That's it. It's a good way to clear out your system of any blocks, uncover what you already know about the subject, and get your creative juices flowing.
- **Mindmapping.** Write the topic of your book at the center of a piece of paper. Then add your main ideas—which can branch out to sub-ideas.
- **Clustering.** Clustering is similar to mindmapping, but with less structure. With clustering, you write down one

idea, circle it, then write down the next idea that comes to mind. Then you circle the second topic and draw a line to the first circle. It's very similar to free association. You continue this until you've filled your page with linked circles.

- **Writing a list.** If you love lists, then go with this option. Lists are great ways of getting things down onto paper.
- Having an **idea quota**. An idea quota forces you to break through your mundane, everyday ideas and come up with unlikely solutions. You give yourself a set number of ideas to come up with—100 is a good target. Write down every idea you have on a given topic until you hit 100. Some will be terrible; some will be ordinary. But a few will be gems.

You can also use your own processes for generating ideas. Notice that all the tools I suggested involve using pen and paper. I find getting away from a screen helps to release more creative energy. The physicality of moving a pen or pencil across a piece of paper opens up my creativity. You could well be the same – so give it a try.

In particular, your ideas should answer the following two questions:

- What problem am I solving? What does this problem



look like or feel like?

- What solutions am I offering? How can I break these solutions down into simple-to-follow steps?

Your first brain dumping session will probably take around 30 minutes to one hour. But before you move on to the next step, give yourself a break. Leave the idea with your subconscious. Over the next couple of days, you'll find new ideas emerge for your book when you least expect them—while you're out walking the dog, or when you're in the shower. Keep a pen and paper handy for when this happens!

After you've allowed your ideas to percolate, you're ready to organize them.

## **Organize Your Ideas**

You've got everything down onto paper. Now it's time to organize your ideas into a coherent structure.

Start by assessing the ideas you have. Not every idea you've come up with will make it into your book. Choose those that fit with your hook. Don't throw out your other ideas! You never know when you might need them, so keep them somewhere safe.

Now you've limited yourself to relevant ideas, group together similar ideas. You can do this in a couple of ways. I like to type

what I've got into a text document on my computer, grouping together similar ideas as I go. Alternatively, you can put each of your ideas onto a Post-It note, then physically stick them into groups on the wall of your writing room. The groups you form in this process will likely become the chapters in your book.

## **Create a Structure**

Once you've grouped together similar ideas, your next step is to put them into a book framework.

Using this framework has two advantages. First, it's a proven structure for keeping your readers engaged. You want to write a book that's helping and that keeps readers gripped, right? Second, using this structure helps you write. You already generated the ideas you need for this structure in the idea-generation phase, so it's just about inserting them in the right places.

This is the framework:

- **Explain the problem your book solves.** Show the difficulties this problem causes in your readers' lives. This shows you're someone who understands and who knows what you're talking about. It also encourages your readers to continue reading. Stories of people who've faced the problem can help here.

- **Introduce the solution.** Don't give an in-depth explanation yet. Just show that you've got an effective answer to the problem. Stories of people who've used the solution fit well in this section of the book.
- **Give your solution(s).** Guide your reader, step-by-step, through solving the problem that faces them. They should feel like you're a friend offering helpful advice.
- **Add further tips.** Do you have any other relevant advice for your readers? You can drop them throughout your book, or add a section at the end.
- **Show how your solution benefits your readers.** Re-emphasise how the life of your reader could be different if they implement your advice. This encourages them to try your solution. When they find that it works, they're more likely to recommend your book to friends.

The most important part of the framework is *starting with the problem* then *providing the solution*. Aside from this basic logic, it's perfectly okay to adjust the structure as works best for your book. For example, in this ebook, I started by showing how writing ebooks (the solution I'm offering) benefits writers. I used this approach to explore some of the problems writers face when they're writing. Only then did I provide a solution.

Your aim at this stage is to create a series of chapter headings. I recommend having at least three chapters in your ebook

(outlining the problem, introducing the solution, providing the solution). You can of course have as many chapters as you like. However, if you go any longer than 10 chapters, your book will be longer than 10,000 words.

With your chapter headings ready, you can expand your outline by breaking each chapter down into components.

## **Break Down Chapters**

This is the process I follow. For example, the outline for this chapter looked like the following:

- Start with a brain dump—mind map everything you know
- Organize into topics/chapter titles
- Break down each chapter into sections
- The simple structure is problem ... solution

As you can see, I've added more details into the chapter and adjusted my original structure slightly. You don't have to run with what you planned. When you write, your mind will give you new ideas and take you to new places. Your outline is a starting block that makes it easier to get going and keep writing.

Speaking of keeping writing, let's see how you can make writing

as simple as possible.

## **Chapter 7: How to Write Your eBook in Seven Days**

I vividly remember the first time I was commissioned to write an ebook. I had one week to write 10,000 words—around 40 pages double-spaced. I was sure it was an impossible task. “I’m a slow writer,” I told myself, and I had plenty of evidence to prove it. When I was at college, I would struggle to hit 1,000 words in a day.

I believed I’d be writing around the clock, and even then I’d barely get it finished.

I planned to write 2,000 words per day for five days. The first day, I woke up early and sat at my writing desk by 7:30 a.m. I began writing—relatively slowly—but I didn’t allow myself to stop. I pushed and pushed. I was desperate to be done with my 2,000 words. What happened next astounded me.

At 10:30 a.m., I stopped for a break and checked my word count. I had to double check what I saw. It couldn’t be right: 2,500 words.

When I checked again, it turned out that it was right. I’d beaten my target, and the morning wasn’t even over. I amazed myself with what was possible when I sat down to focus. Needless to say, I took the rest of the day off to celebrate.

I easily met my deadline on that ebook, and aside from having an outline, I wasn't even using any of the fast writing techniques that I'll teach you in the next chapter. I was researching and editing as I went along.

### **Start with a 10,000 Word eBook**

When you're starting out, I recommend you start with a relatively short ebook of around 10,000 words. If you've not written that much before, or you're convinced that you're a naturally slow writer, that might seem like a huge target. It is a lot to write, but it's achievable.

Why start with a 10,000-word ebook? First, that's long enough to be considered an ebook. There are thousands of ebooks on Amazon that are around 10,000 words (just like this ebook). Second, it's highly achievable. Even with a full-time job, you can write that many words in a week. Imagine that! Within the next seven days, you could claim the title of ebook author. That's a big boost to your confidence. And once you've written a 10,000-word ebook, you can go on to write longer ebooks.

### **How to Write an eBook in Seven Days**

Let's look at a process you can use to write your 10,000-word ebook in a week. Writing it in a week assumes you've already got a title and you've prepared an outline.

First, find a place to write. You might be lucky enough to have a dedicated writing desk. Or you may have to write at a dining table or in your bedroom. Stephen King wrote his first book in the laundry room. The important thing is to choose somewhere that you won't be disturbed while you're writing. Writing requires intense concentration, so make sure those you live with know that you need space and quiet.

Second, set a time to write. If you're fitting your writing goals around a full-time job, you'll probably have to write in the early morning or late at night. I'm not naturally a morning person (I love sleep!), but I find that I do my best work in the early mornings. So I've trained myself to be a morning person. To write 10,000 words in a week, you'll need about two hours per day. Using the techniques I'll teach you in the next chapter, you'll easily get 2,000 words written in each of those two-hour slots. You'll have your 10,000 words written in five days, which gives you two days for editing and research, which we'll look at in the next chapter.

You've got a time and a place to write. As such, you've created an intention to write. That's a big step already! Next you actually have to sit down and just write. Here's what you can do to help with that:



**Remove all distractions.** Turn off your mobile phone. If possible, turn off your Wi-Fi connection. When you hit a block in your writing (and you will), you'll feel tempted to surf the Internet or check your email. Making the Internet unavailable removes this distraction. Instead, you'll have to sit through your writer's block until you're ready to start writing again.

**Find a writing buddy.** There are thousands of writers in the world, and almost all of us have issues with staying focused! From time to time, I've found it helpful to have a writing buddy. This is someone who writes alongside me—whether in the same physical space, or across the world via Skype. When you're both writing, it's easier to stay motivated.

## Chapter 9: The Fast Writing Formula

You can write a lot faster than you imagine. There are many techniques you can use to speed up your writing. The key to them all can be summarized in one word:

### *Focus*

The better you focus, the faster you'll write. In the last chapter, we looked at environmental factors that improve your focus, such as having a place to write and removing distractions. In this chapter, we'll look at a specific writing process you can use to improve your focus. This fast writing formula has three steps:

1. Outline
2. Write
3. Edit

It sounds simple, right? It *is* very simple. Yet too many writers try to combine these processes. They sit in front of a blank document without an outline. They spend 20 minutes writing one sentence. Then another 10 minutes editing that sentence until it's perfect. Before they know it, 30 minutes have gone by. They could have written a page or two in that time. Instead, all they've got is a measly sentence.

By breaking down your writing into three steps, you'll drastically improve your focus. Your inner editor and your inner critic will stop squabbling. You'll write far faster than you ever have before.

You've already prepared your outline. So now you're on step two, which means writing! Boot up your outline in a word processor and just start writing. Use the following tips to give yourself an extra boost.

### **Fast Writing Tips**

**Set a timer.** I find that working with a timer helps me maintain an intense focus on my writing. While the timer is running, I just write as fast as I can. When the timer's done, I get out of my chair, stretch, walk around my room, drink a glass of water, or take a bathroom break. Then I set the timer and go again. I work in 25-minute sessions, known as Pomodoros. Pomodoro is Italian for tomato, because the guy who invented the system was Italian and used a tomato shaped kitchen timer. I use a timer that I've downloaded to my computer. Other writers I know prefer to work with a kitchen timer.

**Stop waiting for the magic to strike.** If you wait for inspiration, you could be waiting all day. Some days you will do just that. To have any chance of earning a living as a writer, you have to act like a professional. That means writing whether you feel like it

or not. As the American comedian Peter de Vries said: “I only write when I'm inspired, and I see to it that I'm inspired at 9 o'clock every morning.”

**Keep writing!** While the timer is running, keep getting words onto the page. Write as fast as you humanly can. Don't stop to correct spelling mistakes, typos, or grammatical errors. Keep moving forward. You'll edit what you've written later. Also, don't worry if you find yourself deviating from your outline. Some of my most interesting writing happens when I wander away from my plans. I'm sure you'll find the same is true for you.

**Don't stop for anything.** Even if you're totally stumped for what to say, just write “I don't know what to write” over and over again. Eventually, your brain will get bored and give you something more creative to say. The only time you should stop is when the timer buzzes.

**Use CAPS GAPS.** There will be times when you can't write something until you've researched it more. Or you need to think of an interesting name for a concept (such as “CAPS GAPS”). This will be the time when the distraction monster strikes hardest. The monster will tell to stop writing so you can think about it or do some more research. You need a strong defense to keep him at bay. Your shield here is CAPS GAPS. When you need to research a concept, or when you need to come up with a name, type “RESEARCH THIS” or “COME UP WITH NAME,” or whatever is appropriate for the situation. If you want to make these gaps easy to find when it comes to editing, put them in [square brackets]. That way, you can use the search function in your word processor to search for square brackets.

## **Edit Your eBook**

Once your writing is done, you're ready for editing. This is when you check for spelling and grammar mistakes and fill out your research where you inserted CAPS GAPS. Even though you've written at speed, you'll be pleasantly surprised at how little editing your work needs. Since you've written to an outline, you'll find that the structural editing you'll need to do is minimal.

## Conclusion

You've read this far, which either means you've skipped to the end for the best bits (sorry—if you want the secrets, you're going to have to go back and read the book), or you're passionate about becoming an ebook author. Great job!

Now, go back to Chapter 4, and start the exercises to come up with ideas. As the ideas flow, you'll grow in confidence that you can do this. Stick with the process, and in a couple of weeks you'll have an ebook.

When you're done with writing, come back and read these words: “Welcome, my friend, to the world of authors.”

You did it. Great job!

I'd love to hear how you get on. If you write an ebook using the methods I share in this book, drop me a line at [david@freedomwithwriting.com](mailto:david@freedomwithwriting.com). I can't promise to read your book, but I'd love to hear how you got on. I'm looking forward to hearing from you!