Nonfiction

Book Proposal Checklist



Mark Wainwright

Write Purposefully • Edit Insightfully • Publish Strategically

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Book Proposal Checklist

Developing a thorough nonfiction book proposal is no easy task. Anyone who tells you it can be completed in a few hours doesn't understand its components, importance, or purpose.

At its essence, the book proposal accomplishes three primary objectives:

1. Conveys a compelling book idea

- Although it may seem that every nonfiction book idea has already been written about, how do you approach those topics in your own unique way? Do you provide updated content? Do you target an unreached audience? Do you have a unique writing style? What makes your book stand out from others within the category? As you write your book proposal, make this difference clear.

2. Assures the publisher of your qualifications and platform

- What makes you the best person to write on this subject? Is it your position, experience, knowledge, approach, enthusiasm, or notoriety? Why should people listen to you discuss this topic? Additionally, publishers need to know that you've already established an audience or following. Do you engage in social media? Have you built up an email list of qualified readers? What is your promotional plan? Because publishers must make a financial return on their investment, they need to see the value and potential not only in your book concept, but also in you as an enthusiastic and effective marketing partner.

3. Demonstrates outstanding writing quality

- Even with a compelling book idea and acceptable author platform, you've still got to write with clarity, substance, and style. Can you communicate ideas in an engaging way that not only provides information, but (more importantly) generates enthusiasm? By focusing on your readers' needs, you'll captivate their interest. Writing engaging copy will enable publishers to have confidence in you as an author.

Now that you know the primary objectives of the nonfiction book proposal, spend time developing and refining its components. Use the book proposal checklist (provided on the following page) as a guide. Remember, time invested crafting a thorough and well-written proposal is essential in attracting a publisher.



Want to continue transforming your writing and editing? Ready to take your craft to the next level? If so, Mark Wainwright provides coaching services to help make your writing, editing, and publishing dreams a reality.

Learn more at www.Mark-Wainwright.com.

Book Proposal Checklist

Cover Letter

- ☐ Use author letterhead (name / contact info); date; salutation
- ☐ 1st paragraph: Hook + Topic (3–4 sentence summary) + Length
- ☐ 2nd paragraph: Audience (size / tone)
- ☐ 3rd paragraph: Credentials, relevant work, publishing credits
- ☐ 4th paragraph: Indicate if simultaneous submission; express hope to hear back; SASE; closing; signature; encl:

Title Page

- ☐ Upper left corner: Name, full contact info, etc.
- ☐ Upper right corner: Estimated length
- ☐ Center of page: Title, author's name

Book Proposal Contents

- ☐ Provide section titles and page numbers of Book Proposal

Overview

- ☐ Concept: pitch, focus, purpose of book, benefits, word count
- ☐ Style: Write in the style of the book; 3rd person; What sources will you use?
- ☐ Market: Why is the book needed? Who is the target audience?
- ☐ Promotional Plan: How will you personally promote the book?
- ☐ Competition: What else is out there like it?
- ☐ Bio Info: Why are you the one to write it? What are your qualifications and platform?

Author Biography

- ☐ Qualifications, credentials, experience, education, relevant activities, associations, etc.
- ☐ 3rd person, Narrative style

Market Analysis

- ☐ Primary audience / secondary audience
- ☐ U.S. census data or other statistics / location in bookstore
- ☐ For quotations and citations, use footnotes.

Promotional Plan

- ☐ How will YOU market your book? (website, conferences, blog, social media, speaking opportunities, book signings, industry events, partnerships, friends, etc.)
- ☐ People / organizations who might promote or provide a promotional endorsement

Competitive Titles

- ☐ Bibliography information
- ☐ List page count, price, indication of success, similarities, differences, etc.
- ☐ Describe how your book reaches readers' needs / desires

Table of Contents

- ☐ Creative or informational chapter titles; list subtitles if needed; logical order

Chapter Outlines / Summaries

- ☐ Provide chapter outline OR briefly describe the beginning, middle, and end of each chapter (3rd person, present tense)

Sample Chapters

- ☐ Always send first chapter(s). Send 2 or 3 chapters, but no more than 50 pages.