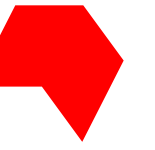


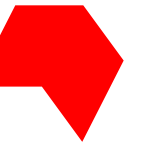
**So, you have
written a book.**

What are the next steps?



Overview

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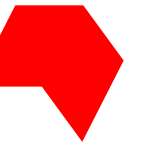


Professional tips for first-time authors

How do I get my book into the hands of readers?

First, authors should ask themselves whether they want to go down the traditional publishing route or self-publish. This depends on how many rights and decision-making processes you want to transfer and what services you want to receive in return. If you want to remain as independent as possible, you may want to take a closer look at **self-publishing**. If you prefer to place the entire publication process in the capable hands of others, you are well advised to look for a suitable publishing company.

For many authors, the search for the right partners to publish their book starts after finishing writing. Publishers often ignore unsolicited manuscripts, emails go unanswered, agents say „sorry, we’re full“, you get evasive answers at book fairs, and in Frankfurt you are barred from entry to the Literary Agents & Scouts Centre (LitAg).



Professional tips for first-time authors

Publisher or agent?

When trying to contact agents and publishers, there are a couple of things to keep in mind:

First and foremost, be clear about the **genre** your book belongs to, and what **audience** you want to attract.

→ If your book can be categorised as **niche or genre publishing**, then you should be fine without an **agent**. Smaller publishers can often only afford small fees that are not worth splitting with an agency. Besides, small publishers often work very closely with their authors, rendering an agent's services unnecessary.

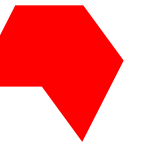
→ If you want your book to reach a **wider market**, working with an agent is a good idea. Editors at large publishing houses rarely have the time to deal with submissions that are neither professionally presented nor written. Most major houses only accept manuscripts that have been **previewed by a professional agent**. **The upside of this:** since reputable agencies tend to work with publishers on a commission basis, chances are you will be able to get a higher fee.



How to catch the attention of a publisher

You need a really **first-class manuscript**, and you need to present it first-class as well. Check the publisher's and agency's website for their submission guidelines: Do they want a **synopsis only**, a **reading sample**, or the entire **manuscript**? Do they prefer those to be sent by post or e-mail? Stick to these guidelines.

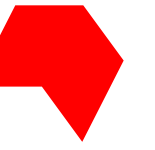




Presenting your book

Some publishers may ask you to pitch your book over the phone before asking for the full manuscript.

Think of this as an opportunity: if the presentation goes well and you are then asked to submit your manuscript, chances are it will not be gathering dust, but that someone will deal with it swiftly. **Practise presenting your book in a meaningful way, with just a few sentences about the core of the story.**



Presenting your book

Here are some of the questions you should be able to answer:

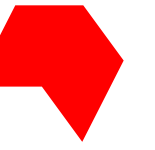
- What **genre or type** is your book? One word will do here, as agents and editors know all about genre publishing.
- **What is it about?** For a novel, name the main character and the central storyline. If you have written a non-fiction book, name your subject and the target audience.
- What can be considered **typical about your book**? If you know your genre, an answer will almost be self-evident. With a thriller, for example, you will describe what kind of threat is involved.
- What makes **your book stand out**? While agents and publishers tend to look for safe sells, they are also keen to discover new and innovative voices. Make sure you focus on what makes your book – a witty style perhaps, or the fact that it is re-telling a familiar story with a surprising angle that will surprise the audience.
- Can your book **be compared to** other, successful books? This will help others to understand your style. Comparing yourself to famous authors does not mean you are trying to put yourself on the same level as them, but it does help to define your target audience.

Presenting your book

Practise your pitch!

There is no better test for your book: If you succeed in preparing an exciting pitch, then you probably have good material to offer. If you don't succeed because you simply don't know what it's about and what readers might be interested in, your book will show that. This is actually one of the most common beginner's mistakes. **Even if it's hard: don't give up your work until it's really finished!**





Writing the perfect synopsis

A well-written synopsis gives time-pressed agents and editors a quick overview of your book, and should include:

→ A **cover page** with the headline „Synopsis“, your name and contact details, the book’s working title, its genre, and information on the text length (in manuscript pages = approx. 1,800 keystrokes per page)

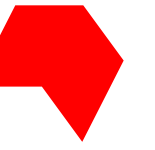
→ For fiction: a **short summary** no longer than one-third of a page. Introduce the main character and plot; time and place of the action may also be of interest.

→ For non-fiction titles: a **description of the approach** to the topic and explain what might interest the reader.

Summary for non-fiction books:

→ Write one to two more pages in the style of an introduction.

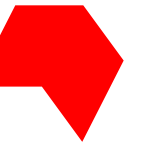
→ Include the table of contents



Writing the perfect synopsis

Summary for fiction books:

- Write a plot outline of **maximum three pages** in the present tense.
- For a novel with multiple storylines, stick with the **main character's storyline** and resist the urge to cram every detail into the summary, otherwise readers unfamiliar with your book will end up confused. Try to keep the plot outline simple and comprehensive.
- Avoid timelapses and flashbacks: a **chronological text** is much easier to follow.
- Give the **ending of the plot**. Editors and agents are professional readers who need to judge where your book is going and whether you have a grip on the plot and ending; a cliffhanger would tend to hinder this.
- For novels with many characters make sure to include a **list of the central protagonists** and their characteristics to show their importance to the plot.
- Only comment on **characters who are crucial** in terms of plot development.
- Psychoanalytical passages about the characters that go beyond the main plot should be saved for the book itself.



Writing the perfect synopsis

Dos and Don'ts for your synopsis:

- **Do not hand in synopses for unfinished books.**
No one will want to rely on your ability to complete your manuscript.
- Refrain from typographic design experiments that have nothing to do with the content. People will suspect an attempt to disguise a lack of quality behind colourful squiggly fonts and images. Stay factual and informative
- **Your work should stand on its own.** Impress with your own style and not with borrowed quotes.
- Refrain from **declarations of intent.** Don't tell readers what you want them to experience but show it!
- **No self-praise** or praise from other agents. Editors can form their own opinions.
- **Don't misrepresent the facts:** A cosy crime novel should not be sold as a nerve-wracking psychological thriller.
- Stick to the **1,800 keystrokes per page.** Publishers and editors have a trained eye and notice when fonts and margins are being manipulated. Each page should be roughly the same length of text.

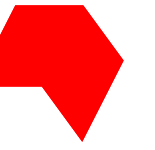


Why not pitch at Frankfurter Buchmesse?

It is tempting to take your manuscript to Frankfurt – nothing beats a face-to-face meeting, especially at a venue where all publishers and agents meet every year.

However, book fairs are usually trade fairs, with agents and publishers too busy with pre-booked appointments to speak to budding authors, and they will be reluctant to carry your manuscript home. It is much more advisable to check their office hours, look up their phone numbers and e-mail addresses, and reach out to them directly outside the time of the fair.

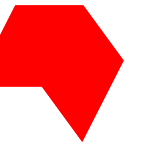




Why is it still worth attending Frankfurter Buchmesse?

If you want to work professionally with agents and publishers as an author, it is useful to know a little about the publishing landscape. Visiting book fairs will help to find out about the latest trends, new publications, and the relevant titles within your genre. You will also be able to get an overview of the self-publishing scene, its service providers and distribution. All in all, visiting Frankfurt will give you a taste of the book world and what it would be like to be part of the „literary circus“. It is great fun and will keep you focused at the same time.

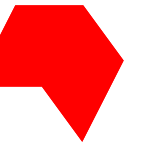
The Frankfurter Buchmesse [↗ digital matchmaking tool](#) is also an easy way to expand your network: after registration you will receive tailor-made contact recommendations, free of charge!



Exhibiting at Frankfurter Buchmesse

As an author you can of course also book a stand to showcase your work and meet with book sellers and the reading public. Stand sizes start at 4 sqm, and you will have a base for the duration of the fair.

If this sounds too daunting, then it might be worth contacting your respective country's book associations to check whether they run collective stands at Frankfurt, and what services for co-exhibitor they offer.



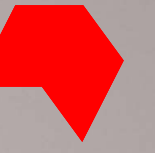
Self-Publishing

There are alternative ways to get your book on the market besides the traditional publishing route. Self-publishing is now **well established**, but it also means you are responsible for editing, proofreading, cover design as well as production and marketing. So, you are thus author and publisher in one. It requires a lot of work, but also offers creative freedom and can be successful if done right.

Print on demand (PoD) service providers offer an interesting and low-risk option in addition to self-financed print runs: Your manuscript is professionally typeset, digitally printed, bound, given an ISBN ([↗ International Standard Book Number](#)), and then

distributed either to readers directly or bookstores. Ask for cost estimates from different PoD service providers and be aware of any exclusivity of printing rights when signing the contract.

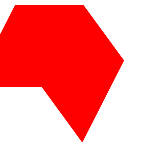
As an alternative to the printed version, you can also distribute your work as an **e-book**: Platforms such as Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, Smashwords, Book Baby, or Lulu, but also most of the PoD service providers offer the distribution of e-books. The demand for e-books is steadily increasing as they are so easily and widely available.



Get networking!

In addition to the book fair, there are also excellent **online opportunities** for aspiring authors to get comprehensive information and to network within the industry. You can **join literary forums** or read author blogs to get tips and help from more experienced colleagues. Having your own **author website** with biography, reading samples and contact details is also a great idea. **Be present and alert**, respond to emails, post on social media to attract and interact with interested readers.





Get networking!

Useful links

- ↗ [Alliance of Independent Authors:](#)
- [Association For Self-Publishing Authors](#)
- ↗ [Writers' Digest](#)
- ↗ [Jericho Writers](#)
- ↗ [Society of Young Publishers](#)
- ↗ [Literary Agents Database](#)
- ↗ [Literary Agent Directory 2022-2023](#)
- ↗ [AgentQurey: online database of agents, searchable by genre \(US, UK, Canada\)](#)

Writers' blogs

- ↗ [Terrible Minds](#)
- ↗ [The Other Side of the Story](#)
- ↗ [So you want to write?](#)
- ↗ [Query Shark](#)
- ↗ [Absolute Write](#)

Further reading

- ↗ On writing: 10th anniversary edition:
A Memoir of the Craft, by Stephen King
- ↗ **Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life**,
by Anne Lamott
- ↗ **Writing tips**
- ↗ **20 Writing Tips from Fiction Authors**
- ↗ **Pre-editors and Agents**
- ↗ **How to Choose the Right Talent Agent | Backstage**
- ↗ **Self-Publishing: Dos and Don'ts**
- ↗ **Three Keys to Self-Publishing Success**
- ↗ **Self-publishing a book: 25 things you need to know**
- ↗ **Jane Friedman on how to self-publish your book**
- ↗ **11 Tips on Getting Your Book Published**



Good luck!