

How to write a book

For a writer, announcing that you've scored a book deal is the professional equivalent of the engagement or baby announcement on Facebook: it's life-defining, it's exciting, it gets you hundreds of likes and comments from people you haven't spoken to in years.

I just announced my book news on social media the other day, and felt the temporary glow of achievement. But then I swiftly returned to the rather gnarly reality: that writing a book is a lonely, doubtful, at times excruciating experience that causes you to question your abilities, your life choices and yourself. There's a reason people always say it's like giving birth to a literary baby: it's an enormous undertaking and you're literally creating something out of nothing.

And yet... Writing a book is one of the most popular life ambitions in the world. There are millions of half-finished debut novels, just-started memoirs and nearly-there works of non-fiction tucked away in desk drawers, and millions more ideas for books on secret bucket lists. Everyone thinks they could maybe whip up a bestseller, and there's always been something glamorous about the perception of a writer's life. Like tapping on a typewriter or a laptop is the most romantic thing a creative person can do with their brain. Writers in movies and books are always depicted as brilliant and a little bit tortured, because writing, *really* writing, is like extracting a piece of your soul every time you open a Word document. Or so legend would have us believe.

Given how many people desperately or casually wish to write a book, I thought I'd give you a few brutal hints about what it's really like to actually sit down and do it. Because that's the real difference between the

people who do write a book and those who don't: the actual physical act of forcing words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, paragraphs into chapters and chapters into a book.

The first thing you should know about book-writing is that when you strip away the loveliness of getting a book deal and the thrill of having an idea worth chasing, it really is just you and a word processor in a room. There are few things on this planet more solitary than writing a book. It can get pretty lonely. As a freelance journalist, I'm used to the solitude of the thinking-writing cycle, but if you're unaccustomed to it, it could be a shock. Sure, you've got editors and friends and loved people who can offer an opinion – and they're all fantastic – but ultimately, your book doesn't exist until you make it exist through sheer force of will and hard work.

And it is hard work. It's not all stringing together beautiful sentences, moving plots and writing characters into life. It's dogged, diligent research, planning, scheming, thinking and then bashing out words at the rate of your imagination until you have the right amount. It's an arduous, baffling, exhausting task that could bring you to the precipice of your sanity again and again. Somehow, every time you feel like you've run out of inspiration, you've got to find the courage and the stamina to keep moving words onto pages in time for your deadline. That's what I'm trying to do right now – I've been stuck on 35,000 words (out of my required 80,000) for three weeks. The inspiration has just stalled and quite frankly, all I can do is blindly trust that it will return because it has to. That's what a deadline and a cheque will do: it'll make the act of writing urgent, inevitable and terrifying.

Through all this external pressure, you've got yourself to contend with, too. Maybe you're the kind of writer who lays down a sentence and whispers aloud, "Oh, well

done! What a sentence!” Maybe you’re the kind of writer who sees the beauty in their own writing immediately, and often. And that’s terrific for you.

If you’re anything like me, though, or indeed any other writer I’ve ever spoken to, you will more likely hate every word you’ve written as soon as you’ve written it. I’m at the stage now where I just focus on churning out words and hope that the noise of my fingers on the keyboard will drown out the sound of my self-doubt. My confidence in my own work comes and goes like a pernicious cat: it visits me for reassurance only on its time and its terms.

Some days, I like my idea for a [book](#). I can imagine people reading it, even liking it. Most days, I berate myself for ever having the audacity to think I could be a published writer. It’s exhausting. And I’m not a timid, self-loathing sort of writer typically – apart from a brief time where I thought I might follow my mother and grandparents into acting, this is all I’ve ever wanted to do. Writing is what I’ve chosen to do with my life, and I wouldn’t have it any other way. To do it, you have to push through layers and layers of fear, doubt and guilt. You have to have the sort of ambition that carries you through all that and the tenacity to get the job done, no matter what. It’s intense and difficult – but that’s just what it’s like to write a book.

Cover Letters – How To Impress Your Prospective

Employer

The Basics

- Always include a cover letter. The recruiter may not read it, but if they do, it is a key way to differentiate you from your competition. Over 85% of candidates do not routinely include a cover letter with their applications.
- Remember that the first person who will look at your application will be a member of the HR Team. Therefore everything needs spelling out, as they will not be an expert in your area. Do not use acronyms unless they are used in the job advert. Use words that the recruiter will recognise and be able to link to the duties of the role. This will increase your chances of having your application put forward to the hiring manager.

Things To Remember

- Make sure you have included your name, address, telephone number, email address and the date of your application at the top of your letter.
- Include the company name and address if you have it.
- If you have the name of the specific person to send your application to, make sure you include it and CHECK THE SPELLING. Recruiters are known to reject applications on the grounds that their name is spelt wrong. They believe that it shows that the candidate cannot pay attention to details.
- Address the letter correctly if you do not have a name. You should address it to "Dear Sir/Madam".
- Sign the letter correctly. If you have written, "Dear Mr X", you should end with, "Yours sincerely". If you have addressed the letter, "Dear Sir/Madam", you should end with, "Yours

faithfully”.

- If you have been asked to include anything with your application, such as references from previous employers, evidence of qualifications or samples of your work, make sure they are attached; otherwise your application will be rejected for not paying attention to detail.
- Avoid humour or jokes in your cover letter (unless you are applying for a role as a comedian or a comedy writer). Your sense of humour may not appeal to everybody.
- Do not use swear words or crude language in your cover letter.

First Paragraph

- Make a heading for your letter. This should be in bold with the title of the job you are applying for and the location (if there are several options).
- Your first line should be simple and to the point: “Please find attached my CV for the post of X”.
- Then tell them where you saw it advertised. If you are being referred to the role by someone already working for the company, mention their name here, as if there is an internal employee referral scheme, they stand to make some money if you are appointed.

Second Paragraph

- Outline briefly why you are interested in working for the company and the key skills you can bring to the role. To do this effectively, read through the advertisement and highlight which words seem to be important within it. Then double check by looking at the company website and see what they state their corporate values to be. The chances are that some of these will be in the advert. Use these key words in your cover letter.

- If they mention key experience in the job advert, mention the experience 3 times in your application (across both the cover letter and the CV). For some reason, recruiters believe something that is mentioned 3 times. For example, if they state that they want someone with team management experience, you should point out in your cover letter that you have team management experience. Within your CV you should also state under at least 2 jobs that you have team management experience. Bear in mind that your cover letter and CV may be being scanned and ranked against other candidates by an automated e-recruitment system. By using the exact words used in the advert you are more likely to get yourself ranked highly. Similar phrases are not generally searched for so if, for example, “team management” is used, use the phrase “team management” not “managed a team”.
- If they have asked for essential qualifications or accreditations, make sure that you mention them in this paragraph.

Third Paragraph

- Outline briefly relevant work experience and any other experience (non-work related) which would make you suitable for the role.

Fourth Paragraph

- Re-emphasise your interest in the role and ask them to invite you in for interview. Be subtle about this. Something simple such as, “I would welcome the opportunity of an interview” is fine. If you are going to be out of the country when the job closes, let them know at this point and tell them when you will return. If you will be checking your emails whilst you are

away, this is a good point to let them know.

- Thank them for their time in reading your application.
- Finish with, “I look forward to hearing from you”.
- End with either, “Yours sincerely” or “Yours faithfully”.
- If you are emailing or uploading your application to a website, it is not necessary to hand sign the letter. If it is being posted or hand delivered, you must sign your name at the bottom of the letter. A typed name will not be sufficient.

Attachments

- If you have been asked to attach work samples, evidence of certifications and accreditations or references from previous employers, list them under attachments.
- If you have not been asked to attach any additional information and you have decided to, it is worth listing them under “Attachments” so that the recruiter knows to look for them and that they are relevant to your application.
- If you are only attaching a CV, it is not necessary to have an “Attachments” section at the bottom of your letter. It is optional.

Notes:

Carolyn Philip is the Director of [Fremantle HR Consultancy](#) and regularly advises clients about how to apply for jobs and get their applications noticed.

Applicants to nursing courses

in England up 16% as NHS employs record number of nurses and midwives

A record number of nurses and midwives are employed in the NHS, as the Nursing and Midwifery's Council reports its largest ever annual increase of registered nursing and midwifery professionals.

Around 18,370 more nurses, midwives and nursing associates are now on the Nursing and Midwifery Council's permanent register to work in the UK compared to a year ago, bringing the total number to 716,607 by 31 March 2020. The number of people trained in the UK leaving the register has also fallen to a five-year low.

The number of nursing and midwifery applicants to English universities has also risen for the second year running as the Government works towards delivering 50,000 more nurses by the end of Parliament.

The latest UCAS stats show that applicant numbers for nursing and midwifery courses are up 16% year-on-year, reaching 47,320 by the end of June.

This is the second year in a row that applicant numbers have risen. In 2019 there was a 6.4% increase in people accepted onto nursing and midwifery courses in England compared to 2018.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I'm delighted to see record numbers of nurses and midwives now working in our NHS as we work towards delivering 50,000 more nurses in this parliament.

As we continue our battle with this deadly disease, our world leading healthcare system has never been more important. We will continue to give it the support it needs today, as well as protecting it for generations to come.

Nurses have saved countless lives during the pandemic, and the NHS simply couldn't function without them.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This pandemic demonstrated just how talented and valued our brilliant nurses and midwives are, and it is fantastic to see an explosion of applications for nursing and midwifery courses.

As well as a hugely rewarding career in one of the world's best healthcare systems, degree students will benefit from at least £5,000 a year from the Government in free additional support during their studies.

With over 12,000 more fully qualified nurses working in our NHS compared to last year, we are well on our way to delivering 50,000 more by the end of this Parliament.

The number of new applicants between January and June was 68% higher than the same period last year (11,360 in 2020, compared to 6,750 in 2019).

Nearly two thirds of nursing and midwifery applicants living in England are mature students aged 21 or over, a 24% increase on last year.

New applicants or those without an offer can still seek a place at university via the clearing process which runs from the 6th July to 20th October.

Student nurses and midwives starting courses from September

will benefit from new guaranteed, additional support of at least £5,000 a year to help with their living costs, which they won't have to pay back.

Best Jobs For Single Parents

When it comes to being a single mother, the two most important characteristics of a job are flexibility and salary. And while those elements are found on a company by company basis, there are certain industries that lend themselves to being more flexible than others.

The most flexible professions include sales, public relations, health care and real estate. As an added bonus, employees who work in those fields have the potential to make decent salaries. Education is also on the list. Although the hours are set, they're likely to be the same as their school-age children's.

Of course not all companies in those professions are ideal for single parents. That's why single moms must do their research to find out how family friendly their potential employer is. Among the characteristics they should look for (aside from the ability to control their own schedule) are flex time, job sharing and on-site child care.

One place to start is *Working Mother* magazine's annual list of [100 best companies for working mothers](#).

From there, moms shouldn't be shy during the interview process. There are ways to tactfully learn if their potential employer allows its staff to work from home and adjust their

schedule according to their child care needs. Of course it can't be the first thing asked in a job interview. But it is reasonable during the second or third meeting to say things like: Tell me what it's like to work here; how do you find working here personally?; tell me about the opportunities to make use of here in terms of flexible environment.

Another way to learn about family friendliness is to ask if there are any affinity groups, says Jennifer Owens, an editor for *Working Mother*. Those are groups of employees that meet regularly on specific topics. For instance, many companies have working parent's affinity groups or parents of special needs children.

If you don't feel comfortable asking the interviewer, ask someone else within the company. Also, check out the company's Web site to see what it says about values and work culture.

Much of this depends on where a single mother is in her career. For instance, Margy Sweeney's two daughters were 2 and 5 when she got divorced. Sweeney was age 29 and still wanted to explore different careers. She was a marketing manager at a real estate firm and wasn't convinced she wanted to do it forever. It became clear when her boss yelled at her for coming into the office at 9:15 a.m. after staying up until 4 a.m. to finish a presentation. It was particularly frustrating because she left the office at 5 p.m. the previous day to pick up her children from school. She continued to work on the presentation after they went to bed so she could meet her deadline.

"A single mother should look at a company and say, 'Do they appreciate the work I do outside of regular working hours?,' " says Sweeney, who, since then, worked as a freelance writer and is now happily settled in her job as a PR professional in Chicago. In other words, find out if they're results-oriented or if they simply want employees at their desks.

Some jobs, like nursing, require employees to be on-site. But there are lots of shift options so they can work while the kids are at school—or sleeping. The average national salary of a registered nurse is \$49,534, according to CareerBuilder.com. Another well paying and flexible job in health care is physical therapy. They set their hours according to patient need, and there are many offices that allow them to work part-time. Their average national salary is \$53,508.

Still, single parents need to prioritize their needs. Companies that provide the most flexibility don't necessarily offer the highest salaries. Think medical transcription. They listen to dictated recordings from doctors and transcribe them into medical reports. The upside is they can work from anywhere; the downside is they often make less than \$30,000, according to data from CareerBuilder.com.

It's a balancing act—something single parents are very familiar with.

Forbes

The Queen is hiring – New curtain maker wanted



The Queen is hiring a royal cushion and curtain maker. The chosen applicant will work in 1,000 rooms across **Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle** and **St James's Palace**, helping to create and maintain the bespoke soft furnishings in all three royal residences. The Royal Household has advertised the full-time position online, telling prospective employees that it is their chance to leave their mark on "some of the most famous houses in the world".

According to the job description, the ideal candidate will be an expert in machine and hand stitching, with extensive experience in the field, "outstanding" practical skills and an ability to meet "challenging" deadlines. "It's knowing your curtains add the finishing touches to state rooms," it reads. "It's protecting heritage by leaving your own legacy. And it's furnishing some of the most famous house in the world. That's what makes working for the Royal Household exceptional."

The advert continues: "Your challenge will be to provide curtains and soft furnishings that will maintain the presentation and functionality of these unique environments. You'll manage and deliver multiple soft furnishings projects, designing new items, estimating materials, costs and timings, and cutting fabrics. From tailoring furniture covers, to creating new curtain to scale the heights of state room, you'll consistently aim for the highest standards.

"Working with numerous historic items, you'll survey and evaluate the condition of furnishings, prioritising work to both repair and preserve items, whilst also meeting the operational needs of working Royal residences. You'll carefully record all your handlings of historic furnishings, as well as keeping workrooms in good condition, fully equipped and stocked. The range of projects will stretch you. And knowing that you're conserving and creating magnificent items that will be enjoyed by future generations will give you the greatest sense of reward."

The starting salary for the position is £22,000 per annum, plus 15 per cent employer contribution pension scheme and benefits. Closing date for applicants is 6 April. Vacancies are frequently posted on the Royal Household website. Other positions currently advertised include a £24,000-a-year secretarial assistant based at Buckingham Palace, and a £18,000-a-year assistant gardener to help maintain the grounds of Bagshot Park, home to Prince Edward and his family.

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