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*'A good head and good heart are always a formidable combination. But when you add to that a literate tongue or pen, then you have something very special.'*

Nelson Mandela

*'Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.'*

Benjamin Franklin

*'I am of the firm belief that everybody could write books and I never understand why they don't.'*

Beryl Bainbridge

# Introduction

Charles Dickens was a prolific author who understood the perils of procrastination. When we first meet Mr Dick, Miss Trotwood's eccentric lodger in *David Copperfield*, he has struggled for ten years to write his 'memorial'. By the end of the novel, some twenty years on, he is still struggling. It is too late for Mr Dick, but not for you.

I wrote *Writing Your Nonfiction Book* to inspire you and save you from Mr Dick's dilemma.

The only route to a successful book you can feel proud of – however it is published – is to produce the best possible manuscript you are capable of writing. Achieving this level of satisfaction requires commitment and hard work, but I will lead you, a step at a time, through the whole process, from your initial idea, to implementing options for publishing and marketing.

Everywhere, it seems, there is advice on how to write. What I've done differently here, is to focus on you, your subject and your reasons for writing about it, and to provide what you need to know in whichever corner of the world you happen to live, because with modern technology, everyone can write their book and participate successfully in the global market.

*Writing Your Nonfiction Book* is not a quick fix: there is no such method as a quick and easy way to produce a worthwhile book. Nor is there a one-size solution to constructing one, because nonfiction includes such a wide range of sub-genres and subjects. So, in addition to describing the techniques all nonfiction authors need to plan, research, and write, this guide includes detailed notes on structure and style for writing seven different genres:

- travelogues and guides
- history (including local history and family history)
- practical how-to books
- self-help

- memoir (including autobiography)
- biography
- educational and text books.

Enough scope here whether you intend to write on particle physics or brewing parsnip wine.

Reasons for writing a book vary as widely as the authors who create them, but passion, satisfaction and heritage usually figure somewhere among them. Because your own motivation influences what your book is about and how it is written, published and marketed, your purpose is the first question we consider at the beginning of Part One – Get it Together.

From that point, you follow the path that suits you best, because specific guidance is given whether your goal is to produce a handsome volume to distribute privately to family and friends, or you aim to take the marketplace by storm and challenge Bill Bryson in the best sellers list. To achieve the latter, you must research the market. Trying to sell a book on a topic that has been written dry, or that no one wants to read about, is a hopeless task. That is why Part One steers you through the process of searching the market, identifying your readers and finding a unique angle for your book.

Planning and research are essential for nonfiction, so the remainder of Part One explains the construction of timelines, outlines and chapter summaries that give direction to data-gathering, and thread through the entire process until they feed into your marketing content. Chapter 4 deals with research. It explains types and sources of information, and how to validate them, in addition to creating your own primary data. In particular, I share a technique essential for all nonfiction writers: a smile-by-smile account of how to carry out a successful interview. And to keep you out of trouble, there is advice on recording your material to avoid problems with libel, liability and copyright.

Part Two – Get it Down – prepares you for constructing your first draft by delving into style, grammar, finding ‘truth’ and writing different genres. My focus is on narrative style, and the application of creative writing and storytelling techniques that readers and publishers now expect in works of nonfiction. Even writers of educational and text books on the driest subjects, can apply these tools to avoid producing tedious reading. People seek verifiable facts and sound

research, but they also want to engage with subjects in ways that stimulate their imagination and emotions. Nonfiction writers who achieve this are the most successful, so we review the approaches of other authors, too.

Because I want to give you information and tips when you need them, and establishing a public presence as an author – an author platform – should begin well before a book is on the market, I explore initial steps in this long-term process in Chapter 6. The final chapter of Part Two pilots you through each stage of reviewing and self-editing your manuscript before accessing external feedback.

Part Three – Get it Out – untangles the confusing and constantly morphing process that leads to successful publication. After reviewing what current changes in publishing mean for you as an author with a new book to place, I explain the main options depending on the role you want to play: buying a full publishing package; selling publishing rights to a publisher; or publishing your book yourself. There are different costs and benefits involved with each option, and these are outlined to help you decide which role best achieves your goals.

The rest of Chapter 8 describes how to implement each of these options for print and digital publication. And as the emphasis in this guide is on practicality, detailed instructions are given on writing covering letters, queries, synopses and proposals, as well as critical aspects of designing a book cover, and where to obtain whatever technical assistance you might need if you decide to self-publish.

The final chapter covers a vital topic not often included in books on writing – how to market your book. One of the recent changes in publishing is that all authors, however they are published, must now participate in marketing and promoting their own work. For many writers, the market feels an alien and intimidating place, but it need not be so. Starting with the familiar – your own talents, your unique book, and the readers for whom you wrote it – I guide you through working out the most effective marketing strategy for your particular circumstances.

Marketing involves much more than ‘selling’ and is about identifying ‘benefits’ to customers, rather than pushing products. But no one set of methods suits everyone, so this chapter contains practical tips for setting up and using a wide range of promotional tools, such as social media, blogging, pitching, blurbs and tag-lines, press releases, launches, book reviews, and lots

of ideas for longer-term on-going events and collaborations.

The Appendices include a list of useful books and websites that open up a wide range of related resources, and a glossary of common terms bandied about in writing, publishing and printing circles.

To gain the most benefit from this book, it is advisable to read it straight through first, to view the whole landscape and understand why topics are arranged the way they are – to offer exactly what you need at the right time. You will also appreciate how the work you accomplish at the start, feeds into later stages of your project. Knowing the road ahead, return to the beginning with confidence to take the first steps in your journey – it is an exciting expedition. Or as Terry Pratchett puts it: ‘*Writing is the most fun you can have by yourself.*’

I’ve worked hard to provide in this one place everything you need to write and publish a good nonfiction book. Even if you have written before, don’t be tempted to skip stages and follow what you think are short-cuts. This is my seventh published nonfiction work, but as I draft *Writing Your Nonfiction Book*, I am following exactly the steps I share with you.



PART ONE

GET IT TOGETHER



## Pin Your Idea

**W**hat will you write about, why and for whom? You've obviously given it some thought already or you would not be here. And, no doubt, you know in general what you'd like to write, but vague intentions can drift for years unless you pin your idea down and determine why you are writing about a particular topic, and for whom. Who are your readers?

At this stage, these questions are more important than how you want to publish your work. Traditionally, for nonfiction, publishers asked for an outline of the book and a sample chapter, and made a decision on that basis because they expected to work with the author to develop the basic concept into a book that would fit their lists and the market. This is what an advance payment was for. When you submitted your proposal, you were not expected to offer a completed manuscript.

The benefit to authors was the assurance of publication and editorial assistance once their basic idea had been accepted, and their writing ability demonstrated by the sample chapter. But this is no longer the case with all publishers. Publishing has changed significantly even in the last five years. In particular, many publishers no longer consider a proposal unless a manuscript has already been completed, and advances are becoming rare, especially for 'unknown' authors. In any case, major publishers do not accept submissions direct from authors: you need an agent and they are almost harder to engage than a publisher.

One significant result of these changes, for you, is that this is not the only choice. The advent of digital technology has opened up entirely new pathways to publication; spawned different kinds of publishers and a range of ways to self-publish. These options are discussed in detail in a later chapter.

Why later and not now? – Because the most critical outcome of recent shifts in publishing is that, whichever route you choose, it is essential to start with the best manuscript you can produce on a subject that will interest people enough to want to buy it. Publishers are in the business of selling books. They will only invest time and money in a book they are convinced people will want to read. If you self-publish, you will need to adopt a similar business approach if you want your book to be financially successful.

It is not necessary at this point to decide how you want your book published. Aim high: you can always adjust your sights later, if necessary. If you limit your vision before you start, it is harder to expand horizons.

## Defining your subject and readers:

Maybe you've completed the trip of a lifetime; survived an extraordinary experience; possess expertise in a particular subject; or wish to record your family history. Even if you intend your book to be shared only with family and friends, you will still want that written heritage to be the best you can write.

The first step is to clarify your purpose, because that will be your main motivation to sustain you through this lengthy adventure. To help your thinking, some of the reasons why people write a nonfiction book are to:

- Share with others their passion for a particular subject
- Leave a personal record for family, friends and posterity
- Correct the record of events or issues with new facts or insights
- Enable others to benefit from their specialist knowledge and expertise
- Disseminate a message they feel is of wide and urgent public interest
- Increase their professional credibility in a subject to further their career
- Apply the book as a promotional and marketing tool to boost their business
- Support and publicise a charitable cause

- Generate income – a tiny percentage achieve it but there are easier ways
- Enjoy the challenge and satisfaction of doing so

Mull over your aims for a while and make a few notes of your thoughts and conclusions.

Next, identify your potential readers by age range and general characteristics: students, hobbyists, the actively retired, small business owners, nature-lovers, general readers, and so on. The audience you aim for will affect what you say and how you say it – how much previous knowledge or experience you expect of readers, for example – so you should think about this now. It will also determine how the book is marketed later.

Jot down a brief description of the sort of people you want to read your book. What would they expect? What would they most like to know about? Where would you find them?

Finally, you need to be aware in which genre you will be writing. The thousands of titles published each year are categorised according to genres, i.e. their content and approach. The major divide is between fiction and nonfiction, but within nonfiction, books are further differentiated, for example, into travelogues, histories, memoirs, biographies, practical and business how-to books, self-help guides (including ‘mind, body and spirit’), food and wine, science and other educational topics, or commentaries on current issues.

You may think your idea does not fit neatly into a category – it is, after all, uniquely yours – but it is important to understand genres because that is the way both the physical and digital book trade is organised. Think of it as an array of stalls at the market: on which stall will your book be noticed by customers who congregate there because it displays the sort of books they like to read?

A small kiosk in a corner of the market hall might contain a collection of specialised books for devotees of a certain topic – what is called a niche market – but it is necessary to scout for potential customers to let browsers know you are there. Niche books depend on tightly focused and highly effective marketing.

To develop a better idea of genres and to identify your own, look on the shelves of a good bookshop to see what sort of books are in which sections, and search online bookstores and publishers’ websites.

I suggest starting with The Book Depository because their website design provides a calm experience for researching and it is extremely easy to find your way around. This link [www.thebookdepository.com](http://www.thebookdepository.com) opens onto the HOME page. Look at the column on the left which is a long list of categories (all are nonfiction except for the one listing of 'fiction' which takes browsers to a different section). Select your subject and browse the books that appear. For those closest to your topic, read the descriptions to gain an idea of content, and look at a few reviews to see what readers like and dislike about them. Note that The Book Depository lists only books that are in print form, so investigate a range of other online retail sites for ebooks, not only Amazon, but also those that serve your country.

Sometimes a classification is not clear cut: 'travel memoir' for example. But if your book is based on your experience in a particular location – working in Tuscany, say – includes detailed descriptions of the region and inhabitants, as well as how they affected you, then you can slant it to attract readers of travel; if you wish to aim at readers of memoir, it would focus more on you, with the location being simply part of the context. Memoir is fashionable at the moment (especially those of celebrities), but travel is a larger market and probably less prone to shifting tastes.

Similarly with a biography of a historical figure: although you would place them in the social context of the period, if your account focuses primarily on that person and their entire life, it is biography rather than history.

And I notice that 'autobiography' tends to be listed under 'biography' in online stores. This is misleading because there are significant differences I will discuss shortly, but you will find most modern autobiographies in the 'biography' category.

## Thinking around genres:

Travel – the range of content and style is surprisingly large:

- Guidebooks, normally quite short, may provide information on every aspect of a location, or specialise on certain features – e.g. 'the best beaches in New Zealand' – but they require meticulous research, and

shelf-life is shorter because details become out of date. Depending on the purpose of a guide, it may also contain historical and geographical background.

- Travelogues (sometimes referred to as ‘travel narratives’) focus on a single trip like a trek, a train journey, a canoeing holiday, or extol the virtues of an island or a whole country in greater depth and with more ‘story’ than a guide book, including the author’s experiences and reflections. They tend to form two main approaches: the ‘good life’ of food, wine and romance, and the ‘adventure’ of sailing across an ocean, scaling a mountain, or exploring a little known area. The main emphasis, though, is on the journey and/or the location.
- Travel memoir focuses more strongly on the author’s feelings and relationships and usually, but not always, recounts longer experience. For example, the author’s work or life in a particular location, or emigration to another country. People and places encountered are important to the story, but reflections and conclusions of broader significance are expected in this sub-genre.

History – a similarly wide choice of focus and breadth:

- A general history describes events during a specified period – for example, the reign of a particular monarch; the 18<sup>th</sup> century; or the years between the two World Wars. It is not easy to cover all aspects of society in one study and requires extensive research. Unless you access previously unpublished material that provides an entirely fresh interpretation of events, it may be difficult to compete with what is already published, but many ‘post-colonial’ countries have yet to write their own histories and there is a lot of scope in that area.
- A focused history narrows the field to a deeper exploration of one aspect of a period or event – the Victorian’s preoccupation with murder, for example, which has already been written. Research may be especially demanding because of the detail required, but the scope is limited only by what would interest a wide audience of readers.

(Be aware that the reason a subject is neglected in books may be that few people wish to read about it).

- The lives of ordinary people are often neglected in older general histories, especially those of women and the poor. Both are more topical now and could be worth investigating; other possibilities are changes in a particular industry; in transport; science; a product – beer, for example – and the history of a particular idea, of cigarette smoking, fashion, musical instruments, or even teddy bears.
- Local histories – their potential as a topic depends on what your locality has to offer. Local histories obviously appeal to a smaller market, but most people in the area will want to read it and, depending on the location, it might be sufficiently attractive to visitors to be stocked by local museums, bookshops, hotels and visitor centres.
- Extended local histories – another way to broaden the interest is to relate local history to national or international affairs or prominent people, if there is scope for this. Perhaps a local railway line has some special feature of potential interest to rail enthusiasts anywhere, or a historical event of national significance took place in the town.
- Family history – probably for self-publishing or private circulation. Although a family history is a closely-centred form of history, in many respects it is close to memoir, and is unlikely to be taken up by a publisher. I include it here because the research and planning are similar to any other history. The potential market can also be broadened by identifying any special characteristics of family members and their actions that have, or had, wider implications. And one way to gain universal appeal is to make it funny – everyone loves a laugh – but writing humour requires a great deal of skill and, presumably, peculiar relatives.

Memoir, autobiography and biography:

- A memoir is not about an entire life from birth to death (that is

autobiography). Instead, it is a noteworthy slice of a life, the period covered depending on the key episode or relationship that forms its focus. Sometimes an author's significant other – parent, partner, child or friend – has as large a role as the author in the story because of the impact of their relationship. Your memoir may share a period of your life, or that of someone close to you.

- Memoirs have been written about journeys, about recovering from illness, or surviving some cataclysmic event like an earthquake, and they involve places and other people as well as the author. They also include reflections and conclusions on the meaning of the experience. While memoirs of the less-famous are difficult to place with agents and publishers, they are sometimes successfully written to fit a genre with a wider market, such as travel and self-help books.
- Autobiographies recount an entire life, but obviously, not *everything* that happened. Selection is critical in revealing personality as well as achievements and failures. Although place and other people clearly play a role, the individual is the core of an autobiography. Unless you are already a public figure, or have led a truly exceptional life, it is unlikely that your autobiography would be published by anyone but yourself. But this is no reason not to write one, whatever your life story. It can be an enriching experience and a heritage to leave for others.
- Biographies also cover an entire life, but someone else's, so how much can be written about that person depends on what original documents and private papers are available. If a biography has already been written about your subject, you would have to find new material or a new interpretation of existing information to make your book unique. If no one has written about them before, ask yourself why not: perhaps they are not sufficiently interesting to enough readers.
- A biography also includes a social history of the time in which the person lived, but it should be woven into their story and balanced, or the account may become a history rather than a biography.

How-to and self-help books – success depends on picking the right topic:

- ‘How-to’ is a phrase so loved by internet search engines that you can capitalise on the fact in the titles of books normally in other categories: ‘How to Travel on a Pension’ for a travel guide, or ‘How to Do Your Homework’ for an educational book on study methods. The range of topics encompasses every field of human endeavour, although money, health and happiness figure prominently. Researching what is already published is essential.
- Practical how-to books can be about any skill, from making matchstick models to starting a llama farm. Choice of subject depends on your knowledge and expertise for which you will be required to demonstrate credibility. The main question is: How many people would want to know? ‘How to Make a Fast Buck’ will have wider appeal than ‘How to Repair Old Books’, but popular subjects will already be published. If yours is, search for some fresh approach or new technique.
- Self-help books range from guidance written by experts on medical or psychological conditions, for example, to advice based on shared experience such as bereavement, divorce, changing a career, or leading a fuller, happier life. It is a growing genre and books are usually short, but success can be short-lived as each new solution to life is nudged out of the way by the next.
- Writing about shared experience is close to memoir and a detailed, well-informed and well-written account of living successfully with dyslexia, dementia or Asperger’s Syndrome, for example – all of which affect large numbers of people – might contain wider appeal as an engaging memoir, and help many more readers.

Text books and educational books:

- Educational books cover any field of learning and are often directed at the interested general reader as well as students: ‘popular science’

and ‘popular history’ categories, for example. The difference to other books on a particular subject is that teaching is the main purpose. This influences the way information is presented: educational books include a bibliography, appendices, end notes and, possibly, study guidance and questions.

- A text book can cover any field that is taught in an educational establishment, and is usually written by someone teaching that subject. Text books are a specialised field of publishing and requirements differ according to curricula in different countries.
- Unless you are connected to an institution likely to publish your book – a university press, for example – this is one genre for which you should contact publishers before you complete the manuscript. They may, for example, list a series to which you could contribute, in which case you would follow closely their editorial instructions regarding content and approach. Depending on subject, text books can be listed for many years, but it is a finite market and the main benefit for an author may be professional, rather than financial.
- Despite these special conditions, I include text books here because the current trend is increasingly to write even academic books in a more narrative style – easier to read and less detached from the reader. To write for educational purposes these days, you need not only up-to-date subject knowledge, but the skill to engage and stimulate a reader’s imagination through the written word (skills explained in Chapter 5).

## Finding your spot in the market:

Once you’ve identified your genre, keep searching to see what else is written on your subject. Click on the ‘Look Inside’ feature in online bookstores to see what each book covers and how the material is organised; download free samples and read them, making a note of titles you might want to read fully later.

Look for ideas on how to approach your project, but note especially what is already published so that you can find a different angle for your own book. As you examine the market for your topic, ask yourself:

- Is a particular area, time period, perspective or technique, not covered?
- Is a book listed as part of a series to which you could contribute?
- Are existing titles out of date?
- Is there a type of reader that is not catered for?
- What will be uniquely special about *your* book?

To check what local histories and guides are already available in your area, talk to staff at the library, museum and tourist information office.

There is no point in writing a book about a topic with an approach that is already published: that pitch in the market-place is already taken. You must find a spot of your own with an original angle on the subject. When I made this type of search the other day, I found the following titles with an innovative perspective on their genres:

*Deep Sea and Foreign Going* by Rose George (published by Portobello) is an ethnographic travelogue of people involved in container shipping. The author joined a massive container ship on a long sea voyage to investigate the effects on the crew of this rapidly expanding trade, and carried out further research on environmental and wider social outcomes. The travel aspect encompasses a global economic trend and relates this to the lives of individuals the author interviewed during her sea journey. She also shows its relevance to our daily lives.

*What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew* by Daniel Pool (Touchstone) contains factual history with a slant towards fiction. The items selected for inclusion are those that readers of nineteenth century English novels need to understand in order to gain the most from their reading. It includes an explanation of ‘the ague’ and the social intricacies of ‘calling cards’, as well as how social and political institutions of the times operated. Although the style is humorous, the research is thorough and the last third of the book is an annotated glossary of words or phrases, citing in which novels they are significant.

*The Poets’ Daughters: Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge* by Katie

Waldegrave (Hutchinson) offers fresh biographical points of view on the lives of two poets already much written about, by focusing on the close relationship between their daughters. The two families lived not far from each other in the English Lake District and their lives were intertwined. Both daughters played significant roles in their respective fathers' literary careers by editing, copying, or writing accompanying notes, and both acted as guardians of the poets' literary legacies. More books are published about Coleridge and Wordsworth than perhaps any other poets, but *The Poets' Daughters* provides an entirely fresh perspective on their lives.

*Mongol* by Uuganaa Ramsay (Saraband Books) is a memoir which recounts the author's early life in Mongolia. When she moves to the UK and her baby son is diagnosed with Down's Syndrome, she discovers that the word 'mongol' has a different, and offensive, meaning in the West. She has to cope with this stigma and superstition as well as grief after Billy's death. Through this experience, she gains the strength to champion a public understanding of this medical condition as nothing to do with being Mongolian. Although the book is a memorial to Billy, it is not a tirade of advocacy; instead, these issues are woven into her story of personal transformation.

*Tie-dye: Dye it, Wear it, Share it* by Shabd Simon-Alexander (Potter Craft), a practical how-to book, describes the ancient techniques of tie-dyeing step-by-step, but does so from the perspective of its modern relevance in fashion, and details twenty-five different project ideas for applying it. When I saw it, it was high on The Book Depository's sales ranking. Potter Craft is a small press specialising in a wide range of craft and DIY titles; a useful possibility for craft writers. (Potter Craft is part of the Crown Publishing Group which is now an imprint of the Penguin Random House conglomerate.)

*The Kiwi Backyard Handbook* by Justin Newcombe (Penguin Group NZ) is not so much innovative in content as closely targeted to the New Zealand market, in particular, the do-it-yourself culture, and the popularity of gardening and outdoor magazines. His book contains twenty-five step-by-step practical projects for starting a garden and enhancing the backyard with useful structures. The layout is similar to a magazine, with every page illustrated with colour photographs of the author completing each step.

*How to Get a Grip: (Forget Namby-Pamby, Wishy Washy, Self-Help Drivel. This is the Book You Need)* by Matthew Kimberley (Ad Lib, a private printing press). The author has written a self-help book with the unique approach of bucking the trend in this genre, aiming to appeal to a wider market. It is described in the advertising blurb as: ‘*the self-help manual for people who hate self-help*’, and covers a broad range of issues including career, personal relationships and health. Although a self-published book with an extraordinarily long – but provocative – title, it was selling well on The Book Depository, presumably attracting readers who would not normally buy a self-help book.

*17 Equations that Changed the World* by Ian Stewart (Profile Books) provides an accessible and popular text book on algebra by explaining the significance of these equations to our social history. In a series of ‘stories’, he describes, for example, how Pythagorus led us to GPS systems and the development of SatNav, the role logarithms play in architecture, and so on, through all seventeen equations. An unusually entertaining approach to mathematics, this book is listed as a best seller.

The way you approach this stage depends on your reasons for writing a book: if you want it to be financially successful, researching and responding to the market is essential; if you have a yen to write about repairing old books, you will need to search out the niche market where others are passionate about old books, too. Or, you can write for the sheer joy of writing and the love of your subject, accepting that the number of people who read it will be limited. The choice is yours, but you do need to make one, so that you can lay the right foundations.

You may find it helpful to discuss your idea with someone else – a colleague, friend, or a potential source of information – but a word of warning: think carefully about who you should approach. For whatever reason, others may be discouraging, unintentionally or otherwise, or their attitude towards the topic may lead you from your own path. Initial book ideas are delicate creatures and must be handled with care and respect. It is better at this stage to ask in more general terms about the subject and what is available, which may also reap suggestions on unmet needs for information.

And beware of ‘talking the book out’ – speaking about your ideas so often and fully that you drain them from your head and the talking

replaces the writing. Keep a notebook handy and jot down ideas and thoughts as they come to you for later review, rather than dissipate them by discussing them too early. Later, with a firm plan and your first draft, you will be in a stronger position to benefit from others' comments and consider them more critically.

## What to do now:

- Once you've done some searching and thinking around your idea, write three short paragraphs to state clearly and specifically each of the following: your overall purpose; your potential readers and what benefit they gain from reading your book; the genre of your book and how you will make it different to other works on that topic. Print it out and stick it on the wall.

It is important to be clear on your general destination, but remember, this is not chiselled into granite – don't let it become your headstone. One of the wonderful aspects of writing with modern technology is the flexibility of the process; the ease with which we can add, edit or correct what we write. Your ideas will develop as you carry out further research and write your first draft, so will your skills. You can review where you're heading and make adjustments as you progress.

There are no mistakes, only small exploits that may or may not produce what you wanted for this specific project. Keep everything: nothing in writing is wasted.

- Read as much as you can of your genre before you start. Make brief notes on each book like the examples above, (you will also be accumulating a useful list of publishers).
- Read reviews in newspapers and magazines, as well as online, to become aware of what critics and readers consider 'good' about nonfiction books.

You will need to read for research throughout the writing of your book,

but whether you continue with background reading of your genre is a matter of personal confidence. If you fear undue influence from someone else's style, or find yourself tempted to copy what they write, it might be better not to. Just something you should think about.

## 2.

# Make Your Plan

If you have written any fiction, or heard writers talk about their work, you might already be familiar with the ‘pantsers’ versus ‘plotters’ debate. ‘Pantsers’ swing straight into writing ‘by the seat of their pants’ without prior planning on the basis that this allows creativity to flow unrestricted. This method requires major edits and several re-writes of the first draft. ‘Plotters’ lay out the plot and critical sequences to guide them before they start, although the plan will not be followed rigidly. In fiction, it’s a matter of personal choice as to which system suits an individual writer. In nonfiction, ‘pantsing’ does not work.

Although you will apply creative writing craft and story techniques to enhance your manuscript (covered in detail in chapter 5), nonfiction writers must follow logical steps; keep track of sources and references, and check the accuracy of what they write. You need a plan.

If you decide to submit your manuscript to agents or publishers, they will ask for a proposal, which includes the genre, purpose and potential readers (you noted these already); an outline of each chapter, and a synopsis. But don’t wait until that stage: you need the framework in front of you as you write.

Because people often confuse a synopsis with an outline – thinking they are the same thing – it is a good idea to clarify the difference before we start. An outline indicates the main topics that will be included in a manuscript; how they are arranged into separate chapters and sections, and the order in which they are presented. In appearance, it is similar to a table of contents, but with brief descriptions of the key features in each chapter, and how one links to the next.

A synopsis is a compact piece of text – around 300 words – through which an author provides an overall impression of a book by selecting

the essential elements to show how the idea is developed and concluded. It is written in the same style as the main manuscript. You can think of it as a miniature experience of the book. Imagine looking through the wrong end of a telescope: you can't see all the details, but you appreciate the basic shape, pattern and colour.

Obviously, the synopsis is best written when the first draft is complete – we come to that in a later chapter – but the outline is your essential starting point to guide your research as well as your writing. It also allows the creative freedom to work on any chapter you wish, depending on the material or inspiration available at the time, because you always know exactly where you are in the outline.

Your outline is not etched on steel – it will develop with revisions and additions as you complete your research and work your way through the manuscript – but it is the SatNav to keep you on the right road. Putting effort into this preparatory stage is the best investment you will make in your book. It saves time and avoids errors in all subsequent stages.

The three steps to follow are: compiling a timeline; determining the theme of your book, and creating the outline structure.

## Compiling a timeline:

A timeline is a list of key dates and events in chronological order. Accurate dates are essential for history, biography and memoir; for travel, routes and locations might be more significant, and for how-to books, a timeline focuses on the sequence of steps or instructions to be followed in a process. Even if time and sequences seem less relevant to your subject, you still need to list topics and issues to be covered and put them in some kind of order: that is what the timeline achieves.

Do some preliminary research and brainstorming – the list should be as full as possible to give you plenty of ideas to work with. Your book will not necessarily be written in exactly this order, but the timeline has several valuable functions:

- It sets down briefly the events relevant to the topic to give you an

overall view, making it easier to prioritise what to include and what to omit.

- It enables you to assess whether or not your list is complete and where there might be gaps, and if you think of other things later, it is easy to add them in the right place.
- You have a quick, accurate reference tool as you write – this is the time to double-check details before possible errors become embedded in your text.
- As an option, you can include in the timeline a note of references you need to access, or people to be interviewed. I find this helpful to forward-plan my research, especially for information that might take time to acquire.
- The timeline can form the basis of a simplified chronology for an appendix to your book, if that is necessary.
- It builds the foundation for working out your theme, and then your outline.

A useful tip is to construct your timeline as a table with three columns, listing the events or issues in one, research to be accessed in the second, and notes on progress in the third. It is a working document that will be updated as you progress. But if that sounds too complicated at this stage, a simple list will suffice.

The important thing is to make your timeline as comprehensive as possible. You may not include everything from the list in your book, but this is your foundation. It will inspire as well as guide you, and small details could provide excellent examples or lighter moments in the final text.

Print out the timeline and pin that to the wall, too, or at least keep it on the desk for easy reference. You will add to it or adjust it as you work through the research later.

## Determining your theme:

The theme is the slant, the angle, the perspective from which you share the knowledge and experience you write about. It will be related to your purpose, but is more than that. Every piece of writing needs a theme, which may or may not be explicitly expressed, but is reflected in its content and in the author's selection of words and images.

You should think about this now because the theme determines what you research, and the way you look at your material and assess your priorities – giving more space to some issues than others, or describing certain places in more detail – and deciding the order in which to present information.

Read through the timeline to remind yourself of the whole 'story' and reflect on the main reason you want to explain it – the message you want to share – that will lead you to your theme. It could provide the clue to what makes your book unique among others in the same genre.

Theme can be an elusive concept to grasp initially, so here are a few examples:

- A scientist whose purpose is to stimulate public interest in her area of study could select the theme: how the ordinary gives rise to the extraordinary. The focus of the book might then be the personal stories of unsung heroes in science and the discoveries they made. This would guide the research and selection of material to be included.
- Someone who had spent time overseas, perhaps as a volunteer worker, and gained insights into environmental or development problems, might want to share his passion. The theme for his travel narrative could be: development transforms peoples' lives in unpredictable ways. The book would focus on local peoples' experiences in their geographical setting, with perhaps an introduction on the main issues involved.
- A writer of a business book aiming to encourage others to start small ventures might identify a particular section of the population for a

theme: active retirees can make additional income, for example. In that case, the book would address the problems of credit for older people, the risks in re-mortgaging property for working capital and other related concerns, as well as general tips on business acumen.

- As a memoir does not cover the whole of a life, but revolves around a particular experience and how this affected the author and the people associated with her, these events provide your theme. The experience could involve an illness, a relationship, or a journey – themes for any of these could be: we don't know our inner strength until it is challenged, or, acceptance and perseverance work in tandem.

Theme runs like a fine thread woven through the book. It may be explicitly stated in the introduction and/or the ending, or simply 'there' as a subtle presence, but without a theme, a book lacks cohesion and a sense of purpose; it becomes a dull series of facts or happenings leaving the reader wondering why it was written.

In the popular history *Medieval Lives* (BBC Books), authors Terry Jones and Alan Ereira set out to correct the common misconception that the medieval period in Europe – the 'Middle Ages' – was a time of unrelieved ignorance, squalor and doom. This is their theme. To achieve it, they research and describe the life and livelihoods of eight different 'occupational' groups – peasant, minstrel, outlaw, monk, philosopher, knight, damsel and king – and weave into these daily details the facts that prove their point. For example, an archaeological dig in a rural village revealed the skeleton of a man with a head injury that had been surgically treated; successfully so, because he had recovered, dying some years later from other causes.

The theme determines not only the content of *Medieval Lives*, but emerges in its structure – the form in which the material is organised and presented. The 'characters' and their stories echo the motley collection of pilgrims who set out together, and entertain each other along the way, in *The Canterbury Tales* written by Geoffrey Chaucer, himself one of the most memorable characters of the Middle Ages.

In *Deep Sea and Foreign Going* mentioned earlier, the theme – that

the shipping-container trade is not only a huge international affair economically, but has global social and environmental effects – guided the questions the author asked in interviews, and the data bases she consulted for statistical information.

In her recent book *Conversations With my Sons and Daughters* (Penguin Global), South African social and political activist, Mamphela Ramphele, takes as her theme the disillusionment of young South Africans, and how cross-generational understanding can help them to retrieve and realise the dream of a just and open post-apartheid society.

Our experiences, memories and knowledge are not neutral; what we notice, how we interpret and decide to write about it – and the theme we choose – are based on our own values. Writing a book shares your vision; it is an expression of your voice as a person.

Having the theme in your mind enables you to ‘highlight’, mentally, or actually, your material for what is most relevant, and guides you in constructing the outline of your book.

## Creating your chapter outline:

The chapter outline defines the structure which leads readers through the subject of your book. It’s like the design of a building – an exhibition centre for example – where a foyer might contain some announcements, or reveal highlights of the event, and then direct you through a door to the first room. Here, discreet signs might guide you through the exhibits in a particular order before drawing you along to the next room, and the next; there may be stairs, passages, corners and other doorways to all the other rooms, until you end up at the cafeteria with a well-earned coffee and cake while you think about your experience.

The route through your book should be logical – don’t leave readers stranded on the first floor landing or accidentally trapped in a broom cupboard – but the journey needs variety in content and pace, with points of excitement and places for reflection, and so does the substance of each chapter.

And size does matter. Unless you are writing for a series of mini-books or guides, for example, (which might be any length from 10,000

words to 30,000), the usual minimum word count for nonfiction paperback books is 40,000–60,000 words. Anything less and the production costs per book become disproportionate to the price readers are willing to pay. Publishers also like at least a 0.5cm width spine to print the title and author in a font large enough to be read from the shelf by bookshop customers.

Typing on A4 page size, double spaced with normal margins (2.54cms) and using 12pt Times New Roman font, 60,000 words would amount to approximately 160 pages. Many books are longer than this, up to 100,000 words, especially for history, travelogue or biography, but publishers are wary of manuscripts much beyond that length. The number of pages in a final printed book will depend on its width of margins, font size and style, and overall dimensions.

Digital production costs are lower (though not the fees for professional editing, indexing and proofreading) and ebooks can be any length. No longer are writers pressured to pad out their text to fill a publishers' requirement for a minimum spine width. The value of strong, concise writing at its natural length is receiving more recognition, in Amazon's Kindle Singles and Collca's BiteSize series, for example. There is ample scope to break down a large collection of material into a series of short digital books, each 15,000–25,000 words – a more achievable goal for many first-time authors and much easier to have published.

Most print books are also available in digital formats these days, although a book of practical instructions might be handier in print form than on a screen. However, if you want to show illustrations and photographs, they are expensive to print and the number you could include is likely to be limited, whereas the lower costs of digital publication allows you as many as you wish.

To get the feel of book sizes, look through books in your genre to see how they are laid out, and how many pages they contain. Make a rough estimate of how many pages and chapters might be required for your subject.

With your theme at the back of your mind, examine the timeline carefully and work out which events need a whole chapter; how you could chunk others together, and whether some information should come first to make sense of later chapters. Chapter length can vary: the

first couple might be quite short – 1,000-2,000 words each – with later chapters being 5-6,000. And short chapters might act as links from one part of a topic to another, for example. But each chapter, and the book as a whole, should be balanced, so all the interesting parts don't bulge out at the beginning and fizzle out to nothing before you reach the end.

Think back to your readers. What kind of read would they expect? Are they devotees who would want a deep read of a favourite subject? An in-depth study of some facet of sport, music, or history, for example, might demand fewer, longer chapters delving into all aspects connected with the topic, perhaps with subheadings. Or is your audience seeking an easy-read reference of many brief ideas, or a basic introduction to a subject? A book containing forty ways to make an extra dollar will comprise at least forty short, snappy sections and probably lots of bullet points.

What you are looking for in your outline is a logical progression that maintains readers' interest without confusing them by switching time, place or subject too violently.

The simplest structure is chronological – a linear time progression from the start to the finish. For a practical how-to book, you would need to apply this structure for describing the steps to be followed in a process. But a self-help book on taking up a new life-style, for example, might start at the end by showing some of the benefits gained, then go on to explain the situation 'before'.

Whatever outline you construct, the book should start with impact to compel the reader to keep turning the pages. The first chapter might recount some dramatic episode that has wide repercussions later in the book, and then in the next chapter, draw the reader in to learn how it all started. That first bit of drama acts as a 'hook': arousing the reader's curiosity to read further. This story technique can be used for almost any subject.

A chapter might be needed that is out of sequence, that digresses to an earlier or a future period, or to a side issue which needs to be disclosed before you can move on to the next part of the narrative. This is called a 'flashback' (or 'flash forward'); used sparingly, they can create variety of pace and content, but they must be clearly 'signposted' before and afterwards: readers have been known to get lost in flashbacks, never to be seen again.

Below are some possibilities to consider for each genre. These are more complex structures which may appear challenging, but they suggest potential for an original approach and it is worth considering whether they would allow you to explore your subject fully. Sketch an idea out roughly, if it doesn't work – because the right kind of data is not available, for example – you can always return to a simpler outline.

Whatever your genre, I recommend you read the whole section: inspiration comes from unexpected directions.

## Ideas for structuring different genres:

### Travel:

Above all, a travel guide must be clear and logical to follow. Describing country walks would follow each path and route, describing the terrain and what to look out for. A more general guide of an area could be divided into places of interest, accommodation, where to eat and so on, with subheadings. But travelogues offer wide possibilities for structure.

A trek or a long train or sea journey might best be described chronologically, one day at a time, weaving in adventures along the way, but in the gaps where nothing much happens for several days, (which is often the case on such trips), intervening chapters might reflect on the country, the journey and life in general, providing variety of content and pace.

For other activities, regardless of the route you actually travelled, a country can be described by starting at the coast and working inland; from a river estuary to the watershed and vice versa; from a cold region to a hot one, or you might structure your account to follow the trail of a famous, earlier traveller and make comparisons with what he or she observed.

If your travelogue is based on a year or more in a particular location, you could divide your material into chapters according to the four seasons; or into four parts as an overall framework, arranging shorter chapters within each.

A travelogue themed on the 'good life' and exploring the food and

wine of a region as well as other activities, might be based for its overall structure on the notion of a dinner menu: an early chapter of ‘pre-dinner nibbles’ describing your initial impressions; ‘the entree’ detailing short trips and snack food; a ‘main course’ with deeper portrayal of your principal destination and major entertainments it offers, including restaurants, and so on through dessert, coffee and mints or however many ‘courses’ you need to tell your travel tale.

A book about a city may not involve much travel, but if it is renowned for some product – silk weaving, glass blowing, carpet making – or for a famous artist or founding hero, the logic of the account could follow the processes of production, or the life of the hero, revealing facts, places, events, architectural features and significant people at each stage. In the French city of Lyon – the centre of silk weaving in the 15th century – visible clues to the city’s past and present are evident in the covered stone alleys (*traboules*), through which silk weavers carried bolts of fabric to keep them safe from the weather. One silk producer remains, bringing the story up to date.

If you are lucky enough to spend time with a family in another country, you could – with their permission – structure your narrative around that family’s story, expanding from the particular to the general in showing the culture and surroundings in which they live: a wedding, for example, reveals a great deal about relationships and customs, as well as descriptions of location. For an example of this, read Asne Seierstad’s *The Bookseller of Kabul* (Virago), where she portrays society under the Taliban, and the forms of resistance people adopted, through an intimate portrait of a bookseller and his family.

### Histories and biographies:

Histories and biographies are likely to be based, overall, on a chronology of events, but other possibilities within that general arc are worth thinking about, depending on the amount and type of information available. If you have access to diaries and correspondence, chapters could be written from the perspective of different key people involved, each building up the ‘story’, with other chapters providing historical context

and tying it all together. This structure suits family histories where living members are able to give their own stories, while the author provides the framework and feeds in background data from other research.

If several interesting locations are involved, and important in the theme, chapters might be divided according to place, with descriptions that weave into the account their influence on events that happened there.

A history of a particular profession, or craft – pottery, for example – might follow the life stages of a potter, and through that, expand on wider aspects of the craft, the materials, products and trade. Similarly, the phases of constructing a manor house or the laying out of a 16<sup>th</sup> century ornamental garden, can act as signposts to explore related matters that gradually build up the wider history of an area or period. These structures are called ‘framing devices’ and, once you start to think about them, the possibilities are limitless.

Similar frames can work for biographies. But even a simple chronological biography can avoid the monotony of a life divided evenly into decades. Each chapter might concentrate on a phase of life: if your subject’s teenage years were significant, those might be in a ‘coming of age’ chapter. A period of travel or uncertainty might be the ‘wanderer’ chapter, and a particularly traumatic event lasting only a weekend might require an entire chapter of its own.

If the circumstances of birth are especially interesting, that could make a dramatic beginning, but it is not necessary to start with their birth, or even their parents. If their death was mysterious or otherwise remarkable, begin with that, perhaps giving only part of the story, revealing the rest at the end when you’ve revealed the life that led up to it.

Peter Ackroyd employs this approach in his biography of Edgar Allan Poe, *Poe: a Life Cut Short* (Vintage). The first chapter relates the mysterious circumstances of Poe’s death; the second narrates the lives of his parents with a suggestion that their lifestyle and poverty influenced Poe’s character and the subsequent difficulties of his life, even before his birth. An idea supported by a quote from Poe: ‘*I do believe God gave me a spark of genius but He quenched it in misery.*’ In the final chapter we learn of Poe’s last year of life and the rest of the story of his death.

An interesting combination of history and biography is found in *The History of Tibet – Conversations with the Dalai Lama*, by Thomas Laird (Atlantic). The fourteen chapters are chronological, beginning with Tibet's pre-history, and obviously required a great deal of historical research, but its interpretation is largely through the eyes of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, based on eighteen personal interviews with him spread over three years. Approximately a third of the book focuses on events during his incumbency up until 2006, when the account was concluded and published. The final chapter is an Epilogue, in which the Dalai Lama has the last word in the form of a long letter to the author.

### Memoir and autobiography:

Although an entire lifespan forms the arc of an autobiography, and some events may need to be established before later developments can be understood, there are more interesting and creative ways of describing your life than plodding stolidly from year to year.

Your life and character can be revealed through special events – personal or social – that affected you, or key people who influenced you for good or ill. The same applies to memoir, and a possibility for both is to work with a framing device to explore your past. For example, the rationale for your outline could be an activity you are engaged in – a long walk, or trip, starting a garden, examining a painting – where different stages of that activity trigger memories, related one by one until you reach your destination or the 'framing' task is completed and you reflect upon and conclude your story.

Although some of your text will need corroborative information from other sources, most of your material is within your own memory and this can make planning more difficult than for other genres. Memories come haphazardly, we can often provoke them, but they are not amenable to the same kind of 'preliminary research' as other subjects. If you find that difficulty in creating a structure is blocking your progress, work initially directly from your timeline, writing memories as they surface in any order to record them while they are there. Once you accumulate a substantial amount of writing, look for patterns which

might suggest both theme and structure and work from there.

In *Ammonites and Leaping Fish: A Life in Time* (Fig Tree), the 80-year-old novelist Penelope Lively relates her memoir in a three-part structure. Part one highlights images from her childhood memories; part two uses the volumes on her bookshelf as a frame for telling the stories of how she acquired them and what they mean to her; the final part applies the same device with her six most-treasured objects. Revealing a life story through possessions could work for many people; for others, actions might be more appropriate. It depends on the lives in question because structures must suit content and vice versa.

How-to and self-help:

Careful sequencing is essential in structuring a how-to book that describes the steps in achieving something. You may write: 'Now quickly place the paper that has already been soaked, onto the board.' What? If you didn't tell your reader to soak it at the appropriate time, she hasn't done it. She is stumped and she will hate you.

However, structure can be varied in other ways. At some point, a book on how to build your own house must have clear steps that begin with digging foundations and work upwards, with opening chapters on financing, land acquisition, design, surveying or planning consents, but variety can be achieved by interspersing sections with brief personal stories, or anecdotes about things going wrong.

For self-help books, I've already suggested starting with the benefits – the 'after' story – so that subsequent chapters can explore why and how changes were made. An alternative would be to structure the material around a series of personal case-studies, drawing conclusions from them and relating that to your theme. Polly Morland employs this method in *The Society of Timid Souls: Or, How to be Brave* (Profile Books). From a series of vignettes of individuals who faced horrific events with tremendous bravery – and not always surviving – she concludes that bravery is not a moral choice that we weigh up and make decisions about, but an instinct that drives us.

Educational and text books:

If your book is for an existing series or for an educational institution, the structure you can employ may be predetermined by the house style of the publisher. Where you wield a free hand, any of the above ideas could be applied to a wide variety of educational subjects. We've seen already a book on mathematics constructed of stories about each equation, and a history divided into chapters on particular kinds of people and their lives.

The attractiveness of a manual can be increased by organising the material around projects with specific examples, as in *Outdoor Classrooms: A Handbook for School Gardens* (Permanent Publications), by Carolyn Nuttall and Janet Millington. (This publisher specialises in environmental sustainability and has a special interest in 'permaculture'. A useful publisher to note if this is your area of expertise and you need to find a niche in this field or to source other books on these topics).

An entirely different approach is used by Sudhir Venkatesh in *Floating City* (Allen Lane). Venkatesh is a sociologist specialising in deep research: living alongside the people he investigates and sharing their lives (also called 'immersion research' or 'participative research'). *Floating City* contains material not included in academic papers normally issued after such projects because the contents are both personal and not measurable with the rigorous tools employed by academics – it was too anecdotal. But from a broader educational point of view, it opens a rich seam of material for understanding New York's 'under-life', and demonstrates the major challenge of participative research: remaining fully engaged while sustaining intellectual distance and perspective.

Venkatesh failed in this last respect, sharing with us his self-doubt and near breakdown through the experience. The result is a memoir, but the book is listed in the categories 'sociology' and 'economics', reflecting the depth of research and Venkatesh's stature both as an academic and an author in his subject. Bridging genres highlights new perspectives, but a publisher is more likely to accept the marketing risks of a split readership if a book is by an established author.

## What about prefaces, introductions, prologues and epilogues?

Prologues are mainly used in fiction, but I once wrote a brief one as a playful piece to lighten the tone at the beginning of a nonfiction book of popular science. They should be used with caution. A prologue can tell a story as the backdrop to a book, but if the episode is so interesting that it's the first thing you want readers to see, it should be the opening hook of your first chapter. Nothing should go into a prologue that ought to be inside the book, and unless there is some exceptional reason why you need one, avoid it. Certainly don't plan for it at the start.

A preface is a brief statement by the author of the contents and scope of the book. It may also include his or her reasons for writing it or other background information – explanations that could equally go into an introduction if the book requires one for other purposes.

A foreword is an endorsement of the book and/or the author, usually written by an expert or celebrity figure in the genre. The value of this as a marketing feature is doubtful, but it can be effective in increasing an author's credibility. For example, in the case of a biography authorised by a member of the subject's family; or the owner of a historic building authenticating an account of its history.

Your book is likely to benefit from an introduction to prepare readers' expectations; 'how to use this book' advice; why you wrote it and where your expertise comes from, or some general background and context to the subject. Allow for it in your outline and, as you work through the book, note anything that comes to mind which is relevant, but it is better not to write an introduction until the manuscript is complete and the whole perspective is in your head.

One reason is that if the finished book is listed in online retail sites with 'Look Inside' features, it is the first impression of the book that a potential buyer receives. An introduction must be written with great care. Although it serves a useful purpose for readers, it inevitably becomes part of your promotion and marketing in the same way as the title and cover, and is best left till the end, when you know precisely what the book contains and your writing skills are at their peak.

Epilogues are even rarer than prologues and nearly always superfluous, containing material that should be woven into the final chapters. Or else they are extraneous ‘pets’ of the author’s that don’t need to be there at all. One example where readers might appreciate it is in an account of experiences that ended some years ago, and included details of people crucial to the event. If you know what has happened to some of those people since, but the information is not an appropriate way to conclude your final chapter, those personal updates could form an epilogue. But don’t plan for an epilogue in your outline: wait to see if you need one.

## Filling out your chapter outline:

If you are uncertain about where to put some of the sections you want to write about, don’t spend too much time agonising over it: you have yet to complete deeper research which may produce new ideas and require updates to both the timeline and outline. And during the first full edit, it is easy enough to switch the order of one or two passages or chapters, if necessary.

What you are constructing is an initial guide: a draft outline to guide research. It is tentative at this stage and will be built up gradually as you move back and forth between research and structuring with your timeline and outline. The two processes run alongside each other in the early stages, but we start by organising our thoughts and existing material into a provisional structure – a work in progress that will be fine-tuned after you complete the bulk of your research.

Although it is important to think it through as carefully as you can at the beginning, everything can be tweaked at review and editing stage because, by then, your comprehensive timeline and refined chapter outline act as reference points.

Once you decide on the number of chapters and what to include in each, give a descriptive heading to each chapter (the fun of creating catchy chapter titles comes later), and you are ready to write a brief précis – a couple of sentences – on the key contents of each chapter, and why they are placed in that order. These form your initial chapter outline.

Finally, give your book a working title. ‘Working’ because choosing titles, like covers, is primarily a marketing decision and publishers generate their own ideas, and anyway, you may think of something better when you get to the end, but it is a good feeling to put a name to your book. It will be sharing your life for some time.

## What to do now:

- Compile your timeline. Check it carefully. Save as a separate document and print.
- Determine the theme of your book and write that down alongside your purpose, readers and genre on the slip of paper that will remain pinned to the wall: your theme is part of how you make *your* book unique.
- Using the timeline for reference, and bearing in mind your theme, construct your initial chapter outline and précis. Save and print.

You will then be ready for the final part of your plan: setting up your working space, equipment, resources and filing systems before you become overwhelmed by documents and folders. We cover that in the next chapter.