

**The 10 Most Important Things To Do  
To Finish Writing Your **First** Book  
By Mary Marcdante  
www.marymarcdante.com**

**And 34 more bonus tips from other NSA Author/Speakers!**

1. **Look at and revise your self-talk.** What are you telling yourself every day about finishing this book? Is your thinking moving you forward? Chances are your thinking is the reason you haven't finished your book. This may sound simplistic and trivial but it is THE most important step in the completion process. Give yourself a pep talk in the mirror, on your computer, on tape. Read *Excuse Me Your Life is Waiting: The Astonishing Power of Feelings* by Lynn Grabhorn.
2. **Know why you're writing your book.** What's your core intention? Credibility? Celebrity status? Calling? To heal or resolve a past issue? To learn more about a subject? Marketing? Different reasons will affect how long it takes you to write your book.
3. **Make sure your book idea is one you're really committed to.** We're talking MAJOR relationship here. Ask yourself if you love your book idea enough to give your all to it for at least 3 years no matter how bored, frustrated, or distracted you get. If the answer is yes, get off the fence and write (see #6). If not, let it go and find an idea that calls to you, haunts you, or inspires you to want to learn more. Does your idea have staying power for you?
4. **Write a formal proposal first.** This will show you and others whether your idea is worth the life energy you will give to it (and take away from other people and activities in your life). A proposal is your outline for your writing and will save you YEARS of frustration. (See *How To Write A Proposal* by Michael Larsen or *The Shortest Distance Between You and A Published Book* by Susan Page)
5. **Organize yourself.** Create a filing system (online and/or on paper. I use Filemaker Pro. See page 6) or try NSAer Mari Pat Varga's software for speaking that can be adapted for writing — [www.vargacom.com](http://www.vargacom.com)). I prepared each chapter in sections in the following order and then wrote the first draft pulling from my database.
  - Points (most likely from your outline)
  - Research (find your experts — I had at least one for each chapter)
  - Interviews, Stories
  - Quotes (one every 2-3 manuscript pages minimum)
  - Your own personal stories
6. **Give yourself permission to write a shitty first draft.** This will free up so much energy and make it easier for you to sit and do the most important thing: write! On your first draft, don't edit, **JUST WRITE!**
7. **Hire an editor.** Use your editor to review your proposal and give you structure and grammar editing on your first (at the minimum) and last drafts (I did 4-7 drafts on each chapter) to keep you focused and on a timeline. (NSAers Susan Roane and Dan Poynter coach writers. Miriam Clarke at Chris Clarke-Epstein Speaking/Another Pair of Shoes Press does editing). If you don't want to make writing a priority hire a co-writer (Patrick Miller/[www.FearlessBooks.com](http://www.FearlessBooks.com)).

8. **Work with your writing rhythms and write for 15 minutes minimum every day.** On the days you're speaking, commit to writing down one example, story, point, or detail from your day that relates to your book. Create blocks of time to write — one week writing — two weeks speaking. On your writing days, write in the chunks of time you speak — one hour, three hours, six hours. When you're on a roll, take 5-minute energy breaks when you become aware of your butt (dance, sing, walk, move!) Or try NSAer Steve Manning's Tips for writing a book in 14 days or less (write in 5-minute chunks) — e-mail: [manning0@home.com](mailto:manning0@home.com) (amazing system to get you started and a very funny guy).
9. **Set reading dates and read your writing out loud to trusted friends.** Have a few cheerleaders who listen and give positive feedback, and a few "critiquers." This will keep you encouraged, help you develop your writing voice, and give you timelines.
10. **Keep yourself inspired about writing.** Read something about writers or the art of writing every day for at least 5-15 minutes. Do writing warm-ups — free form for 5 minutes to get started.
  - *On Writing Well*. William Zinsser
  - *Bird by Bird*. Anne LaMott
  - *If You Want to Write*. Brenda Ueland
  - *Writing Down the Bones*. Wild Mind. Natalie Goldberg
  - [www.authorlink.com/](http://www.authorlink.com/) (great resource for book and writing news)
  - [www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com)
  - [www.writersdigest.com](http://www.writersdigest.com) (sign up for their weekly writer's tips)

**NSA Author Wisdom**  
**The 3 Most Important Things To Do To Finish Your First Book**

**Dianna Booher**

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***Get a Life Without Sacrificing Your Career : How to Make More Time for What's Really Important***

1. Stop talking about it and do it. Talking about the book dissipates your energy and passion to write. You "talk it through" and never get around to writing it.
2. Do writing marathons (long hours of writing on consecutive days) rather than writing in brief spurts only a few days a week or month.
3. Sell it first with a great proposal. Nothing motivates writers like having a signed contract, an advance check, and a due date.

**Gordon Burgett**

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***Niche Marketing for Writers, Speakers, and Entrepreneurs : How to Make Yourself Indispensable, Slightly Immortal, and Lifelong Rich in 18 Months!***

1. If it's a novel, consider it a hobby and do it in your spare time. Unless it's got magic in it — magic is as rare as fairy dust — finding a publisher who will either accept your novel or believe in it is like jumping directly from free Lions lunch talks to \$40,000 keynotes.
2. Make your book answer a question. Then outline it and write it. Don't worry about grammar or spelling or making

much more than rough sense. Throw out what doesn't answer that question. Then go back and add what's missing, move what's out of order, and edited it bone thin. Prune the adverbs; question every adjective. Use action verbs. Finally, send it to the publisher or publish it yourself.

3. If it's a nonfiction niched book, first follow the steps in my *Publishing to Niche Markets*. If the idea tests well, write the book quickly and get it in the buyers' hands. That will save you thousands of dollars, tell you precisely what the buyer wants, and save you months (or years) of time. Self-publish the book, using Dan Poynter's *The Self-Publishing Manual*.

#### **Leslie Charles**

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#### ***Why is Everyone So Cranky?: The Ten Trends That Are Making Us Angry and What We Can Do Instead***

1. Remember that you don't have to begin at the beginning; begin with the chapters or sections where you have the most energy: once you hit your "writing stride" the more difficult chapters will come.
2. So you can keep track of which chapters you've edited, spread them out on the floor in a seldom used room and color code the chapter covers so you know which are finished and which are still in progress.
3. Sequester yourself. Go away, at least for a few weeks so you can give your full energy to writing, thinking, reflecting, and rewriting for hours each day.

#### **Chris Clarke Epstein**

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#### ***Simple Encounters: Stories of Life, Laughter, & Livelihood***

1. Write what you are passionate about. That way, you'll be excited to be working on it, rather than seeing it as a chore.
2. Find a writing buddy - someone who is also working on a writing project and who is willing to share your hopes, fears, and nagging!
3. Set aside 30 minutes every day to read about writers and writing. You might want to start with either *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser or *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott.
4. Bonus Tip: Put your you-know-what into a chair and write!!

#### **Jeff Davidson**

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#### ***Breathing Space; Living and Working at a Comfortable Pace in a Sped-Up Society***

1. Barricade yourself from all intrusion!
2. Rely on college English majors for editorial assistance
3. Hold the vision of how you'll feel when it's finished.

#### **Sam Horn**

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***What's Holding You Back? : 30 Days to Having the Courage and Confidence to Do What You Want, Meet Whom You Want, and Go Where You Want***

1. Do you get depressed when you walk into book stores and see all those other books on your topic? The question to ask isn't has it been done before better? The question to ask: will someone reading my book benefit? If yes, then not only do we have the right to right, we have the responsibility to write.
2. Most people think they're too busy to write; understand the more we'll speak, the more we'll speak. Investing three months in taking the time off, writing and finishing our book is the single best thing we can do to catapult our speaking career.
3. Correcting as we go stops the flow. Write it out and edit afterwards, not during.

Recommends: Susan Page's book, *The Shortest Distance between You and a Published Book*; Dan Poynter's book, *Successful Secrets to Nonfiction Books*

**Michael Larsen**

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***How to Write a Book Proposal***

1. Stay passionate about your idea. Your excitement about your idea because of how it will help your readers must be great enough to sustain you through whatever problems you encounter in writing, selling and promoting your book.
2. Have goals that keep you motivated. Every line you write must motivate your readers to read the next line and must motivate you to write it. Write the ideal review for your book, what you want your book to achieve, a full-page ad with the quotes you would want to include, and how much you want to earn from the book. Change your goals whenever you want. Whether you write at home or on the road, get yourself psyched up by looking at your goals on your wall or your laptop before you start writing.
3. Find the one way for you to write that enables you to produce your best work: the place, the writing tools, the time of day, the network of people who give you feedback, and whether you revise your work as you go along or write the whole manuscript and then revise it.

**Susan Page**

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***The Shortest Distance Between You and a Published Book***

1. Know exactly why you are writing this book and what success will look like to you. Take the time to write down specific goals for your book, and then revisit them from time to time to see whether they have changed. Your true reasons for writing this book will affect decisions you make about it all along the way.
2. Focus early on your distinctive contribution to this topic. What is unique about this book? The ideas themselves? The way you organize them? Have you developed your own language or metaphors? Emphasize what makes your book different!
3. Finding a really stunning title early on will add focus, energy, and excitement to your project. Don't stick with your working title, unless it is spectacular. You can always come back to it if it is still the best one. Brainstorm twenty-five titles at a sitting, and do this over and over. As you are writing, does a title leap out of a sentence? Nurture your

imagination and see what it offers you!

**Dan Poynter**

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***Writing Nonfiction : Turning Thoughts into Books***

1. Do your back cover sales copy before you write the book. See attached.
2. Don't start on a (writing) journey without a map. Research your field to find out what has been written before (your competition and your resources) and, therefore, where you can fit in with something different. Visit a large bookstore and look on that shelf where your book is going to be. Write down the titles, authors, ISBNs, trim sizes, page counts, prices, etc. See Amazon.com and do the same for books in your area. Call the Ingram computer at 615-213-6803 and punch in the ISBNs for all those books. Find out how they are selling. Chart all this information and you will see what areas are covered well or are not covered. Now you will have a clear picture of where you should go and you will be motivated to start writing.

**Susan Roane**

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***What Do I Say Next? : Talking Your Way to Business and Social Success***

1. Spend time THINKING, talking to yourself and alone. Listen to the voices in your head...not tapes.
2. Have a comprehensive outline/table of contents, contract and a deadline! And have a PLAN to meet the deadline. Have an OH WOW person--even if you have to hire that coach who will be sure you do the writing.
3. Allocate the time. Much as we like to think we can, we cannot be writing and on stage or in a gym or in a movie at the same time.
4. PUT your tush in a chair. This is the most important and most difficult aspect :-)
5. EDIT, edit, edit. OR HIRE a professional editor.

**Nancy Rosanoff**

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***The Complete Idiot's Guide to Making Money Through Intuition***

1. Be sensitive to timing. When it was the right time, the information came, the publisher was there, I wrote it in eight weeks. Everything flowed. Stay in the flow.
2. Trust your own sense of discipline. Everyone has a different rhythm. I work better on a deadline. It sets a boundary. When you get that uncomfortable feeling, sit down and write wherever you are. That nagging feeling is that something wants to come through. You need to give it time to happen.
3. Remember your book doesn't make your life, but it does give you a jumping off spot for the next plateau. It completes a phase of your life.

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