



launch map

*10 STEPS TO SHARING YOUR
WRITING WITH THE WORLD*

YOU'RE ABOUT TO SHARE YOUR WRITING WITH THE WORLD.

Writers don't write for themselves. They write for readers.

Part of our calling, as writers, is to share our writing with the world, to send it out with courage and hope as far and as wide as we can.

Stories are meant to be shared. Books are meant to be shared. If you have written something (and of course re-written it again and again), then you *need* to share it.

How else can you grow as a writer?

If you just write for yourself, you are not a writer. You are a journaler.

Which is fine, if that's what you want to be.

But real writers? Real writers share.

THE MAP

PRELAUNCH

- ONE:* Build your presence.
- TWO:* Build relationships with readers.
- THREE:* Build your cartel.

PUBLISH

- FOUR:* Self-publish -OR- traditionally publish your book. *

LAUNCH

- FIVE:* Incentivize people to read your writing.
- SIX:* Ask for help.
- SEVEN:* Share with your readers.
- EIGHT:* Ask for reviews.
- NINE:* Explain why people should read your writing.
- TEN:* Celebrate your readers!

**Obviously this step has a few sub-steps depending on which type you choose, which we'll go into below, but BOTH self-published and traditionally published authors follow the same prelaunch and launch steps.*

ONE: BUILD YOUR PRESENCE

Before you publish anything, whether a book or an article or a short story, you need to have built your presence, a way for readers to find you, learn more, and sign up to receive future updates about you and your work.

Today, this means having a website, email newsletter list, some form of social media, and perhaps some other published content (like a blog, podcast, or YouTube channel).

Here's how these rank in terms of priority:

1. The *first* among these is a clean, simple author website. ([Here's how to build one](#))
2. The *most* effective for all your efforts is an email newsletter list. ([Here are my email newsletter recommendations](#))
3. The *least* effective (but often the first place new writers start) is social media.

You should have all three, but all your efforts should point to building your email newsletter list.

If you take just one thing from this guide, let it be this: if you want to publish, building an author website with an email list is the first place to start.

[Here's our free guide.](#)

TWO: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH READERS

Before you launch your writing and share it with the world, you need to have someone to share it with, preferably a large group of readers who already know and love your writing.

So, how do you find those people? And how do you turn them from strangers into fans?

Building relationships with readers comes down to just two simple principles: 1) be generous, 2) ask for help. In fact, all your publishing and book marketing efforts come down to these two principles.

Ideas for generosity:

- Give away a short story, a short guide (like this one), or even a whole novel or book away, for free to email subscribers.
- Share blog posts, podcast episodes, YouTube vides, or other useful or entertaining content with your readers (you don't necessarily even have to create this content).
- Review your favorite books.
- Do a giveaway of your favorite books to your fans (or even signed copies of *your* books).

This is how people get to know you and trust you. Once they trust you, they'll read your writing forever.

But you can't just be generous. You also have to ask for help sometimes.

As you prepare for launch, here are some ideas to ask for help:

- **30 beta readers.** Ask your followers (including email, social media, blog followers) for feedback on your writing. Share the piece you plan on launching. Say, "I need your help! I have 30 spots open for beta readers on my latest book/short story/guide and I would love your feedback. Let me know if you're interested in seeing my best writing before everyone else."
- **Launch Team.** Ask your followers to be part of the team! This launch team will read your writing early and share about your launch with their social networks on launch day and will probably even give early reviews.

Book marketing sounds complicated, but it's not. In the end it comes down to those two basic principles.

Be generous.

Ask for help.

You should be doing both of these early and often before your launch.

THREE: BUILD YOUR CARTEL

You might be wondering what this word Cartel means. It sounds kind of sinister, right?

But the reality is that a Cartel just means “an agreement among competitors.”

Instead of fighting with other writers over an audience, a Cartel helps its members create an even larger audience. In other words, your Cartel becomes your team.

Great writers have always had Cartels:

- J.R.R. Tolkien had the Inklings, his group of writer friends who met at a pub in Oxford.
- Ernest Hemingway had the Lost Generation, his group of writer friends who hung out in Paris in the 1920s.
- Virginia Woolf had the Bloomsbury Group, her group of writer friends who hung out in London.
- Mary Shelley had P.B. Shelley and Lord Byron, her group of writer friends who hung out in Austrian chalets and told ghost stories.

Your group of writer friends, your Cartel, will promote your work, inspire you to become a better writer, and keep you going when you want to quit. It's impossible to succeed without one.

*Write to
Publish*

How do you make friends with writers? How do you build a Cartel?

You do it the same way you meet normal friends (and the same way you make friends with your readers):

Be generous:

- Read their writing and review it on your website to promote their work.
- Share everything you've learned about the writing and publishing process (and be honest with what you *don't* know).
- Take interest in them and their lives.

And of course, you ask for help:

- Ask them to read and endorse the book you're launching.
- Ask them for writing and publishing tips.
- Ask them to introduce you to other writers you should get to know.

What's exciting about this is that stronger your Cartel becomes, the stronger you become. As you help them, you help yourself.

And if you do it right (i.e. generously), when you're ready to launch, you'll know they have your back.

FOUR: PUBLISH (SELF OR TRADITIONAL)

Traditional publishing and self-publishing are two tracks to achieve largely the same thing, the ability to share your book with the world. Gone are the days where self-publishing has stigma attached to it (publishing a bad book still has stigma, regardless of which track you choose).

There are benefits and drawbacks of each, and each has its own unique path to publication. Let's briefly look at each.

Self-Publishing

1. Finish your book (hiring your own content editor and line editor to help)
2. Hire self-publishing company (e.g. Bookbaby) OR
Hire contractors: cover designer, interior designer, formatter OR
Go DIY route and self-design cover (Photoshop, DIY Book Covers), design interior (Vellum, templates, Indesign), and self-format (Vellum)
3. Submit your book to Digital Bookstores (Amazon KDP, Draft2Digital, Apple Books, Barnes and Noble, etc)
4. Publish! (Total time: 1 day to 2 months, depending on whether or not you do it yourself and the time your contractors need)

Write to Publish

Traditional Publishing for Fiction/Memoir:

1. Finish your book (perhaps hiring a content editor)
2. Get a literary agent (usually through pitching in person or through query letter/book proposal)
3. Agent submits to publishers, with your feedback
4. Wait a long time
5. Get a publisher (fingers crossed!)
6. Wait a long time
7. Publish! (Total time: 9-24+ months)

Traditional Publishing for Nonfiction:

1. Write a book proposal (*DON'T* finish your book first)
2. Get an agent (usually through pitching in person or through query letter/book proposal)
3. Agent submits to publishers, with your feedback
4. Wait a long time
5. Get a publisher (fingers crossed!)
6. Finish your book, with your assigned editor's feedback
7. Wait a long time
8. Publish! (Total time: 9-24+ months)

Each of these paths and each of many of these steps could fill its own guide. To learn more, we recommend Jane Friedman's great guides on [self-publishing](#) and [traditional publishing](#). Good luck!

FIVE: INCENTIVIZE PEOPLE TO READ YOUR WRITING

You're about to launch, but before you send your book out into the world, think for a moment about your reader's perspective.

What's in it for them? They're busy. They have too many books to read already. Why should they read *your* book? And yes, I know it's brilliant and amazing, but so is John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and I can read that for free. So? Why? Why now?

You have to answer that question before you launch your book. Your job is to make your reader both *want* to read your book AND want to read it *now*, ahead of all those other books they *should* be reading.

How do you do that? Here are three emotional levers that book marketers use to get you to read a book now:

- **Urgency.** How can you make your reader need to buy *now*, not later? (e.g. limited time bonuses)
- **Scarcity.** How can you create a (true or false) sense of scarcity around your book? (e.g. special editions)
- **Belonging.** How can you make people feel like they're part of something bigger?

If you can speak to these, you can make your readers feel like they *have* to read your book *now*.

SIX: ASK FOR HELP

Launching is like stage diving. You jump into a crowd of your closest fans, the ones who got there early to get spots in the front row, and hope they'll catch you and hold you up. All launches rely on the support of your cartel and your closest fans.

Before launching your writing out into the world, you laid the foundation through generosity with readers and with your cartel. But now, this is the time you need to ask for help. Your launch can't succeed without support from your cartel and your closest fans.

So ask for help.

- Ask for readers to join your launch team, to review the book on the day it's launched and share about the launch on all their social media channels.
- Ask your cartel to write a blog post or send an email newsletter about your book.
- Ask your readers to *buy* your book on the day of your launch.
- Ask if you can guest post, be on the podcast, or be on the YouTube channels of the writers in your cartel.

The proverb goes, ask and you shall receive. The opposite is true, too: you can't receive unless you ask. So ASK!

SEVEN: SHARE WITH YOUR READERS

This is it. This is what we've been building toward. The moment when your finished book, writing piece, or short story is finally published, when your readers are finally reading it, when it's finally flying off the shelves.

Publishing is inherently generous. Sharing itself is an act of generosity. It feels good to keep your writing locked away, to always have it be *potential* rather than something that might fall slightly short of its potential, to keep perfecting it forever.

But you're not going to do that. You're going to share boldly, generously, with your readers and their needs in mind, because this is what it's all about.

It's scary. It's exhilarating. It's stressful. It's a huge relief. You'll feel ashamed of your writing at one moment and then swelling with pride the next.

Whatever you do, don't forget to enjoy this moment. It's why we're here.

EIGHT: ASK FOR REVIEWS

Getting reviews is one of the most important things you can do to help you sell more books.

Reviews do three things:

- 1. Social Proof.** You're more likely to buy a book that has 100 reviews than 5 reviews, even if all 5 of those reviews are 5 stars. Why? Because humans are social animals. We like reading what other people are reading.
- 2. Word of Mouth.** People usually choose books based on recommendations from their friends, and reviews drive personal recommendations.
- 3. Algorithms.** While Amazon and other retailers don't confirm this, we've found a high number of reviews causes books to be recommended more than others with fewer reviews.

A week after you launch your book, ask your readers to leave a review.

When someone emails you telling you they loved your book, ask them to copy and paste what they said into a review on Amazon and the other retailers (include the links to make it easy).

Keep asking, incessantly, for your readers to leave reviews. It's important enough that you should never stop asking.

NINE: EXPLAIN WHY PEOPLE SHOULD READ YOUR WRITING

Like step 5, in the week after you launch your writing, write three to five emails to your email newsletter list about why people should read your writing.

Don't assume it's obvious.

Don't assume people are tired of hearing about it.

Don't assume it's stupid and it won't work.

Explain, for example:

- Why you wrote your book
- Why it's awesome
- Why other people are reading your book, quoting your best reviews
- Why readers should read NOW, and not later

It might be obvious to you. It's not obvious to strangers who haven't been living in your head for the many months or years that you've been working on this project.

So tell them why they should read.

TEN: CELEBRATE YOUR READERS!

Your writing is out in the world. How does it feel? Maybe you feel excited, maybe disappointed, maybe you feel outright depressed.

Whatever you feel, part of your job is to celebrate your cartel and your readers.

They bought your book, downloaded your story, read your writing, shared it with their friends and family, gave you a review, and so on. They deserve to be celebrated.

Say “thank you.”

And if you happen to make a bestsellers list, even an Amazon category list, take a screenshot, post it to social media, and say something like this:

“I couldn’t have done this without all of you. Thank you so much for all your help. I’m so grateful.”

Don’t forget to put a link to where people can get their copy.

MORE RESOURCES

- [Write to Publish](#), our publishing and platform building program
- [BookLaunch.com](#), our friend Tim Grahl's website packed with resources and publishing tricks
- [Tools for Writers](#), 30+ of our favorite tools for writing, publishing, and marketing your books
- [How to Get Your Book Published](#), the thorough guide from Jane Friedman
- [How to Self-Publish Your Book](#), another thorough guide from Jane Friedman