



An Excerpt
from the NEW Dudley Court Press Book
by Gail Woodard

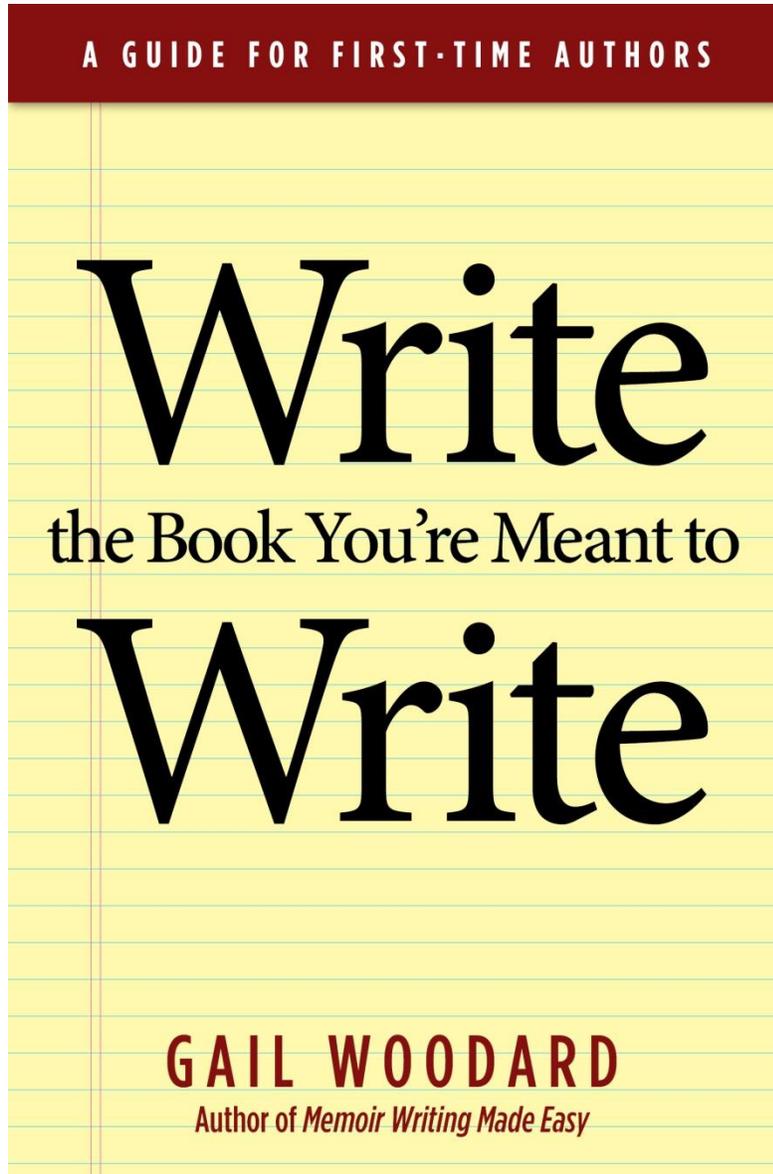




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Chapter 2.

Are You Ready to Write Your Book?

If you're not an experienced writer, you may wonder if you can get the job done. Most of our clients at Dudley Court Press are NOT primarily writers. We help them decide if they have the stamina, gumption, and foundation to successfully write and market their books. This chapter is designed to help YOU determine if YOU are ready to write your book.

How do you know if you've got what it takes?

When you feel that pull to share your story or knowledge through a book, how do you know if the pull is strong enough to see you through the entire journey? Here are three questions to ask. And there are no right or wrong answers. Know that *your* answers will help you understand where you are on the publishing path and how committed you are to your book project.



First: What is your WHY?

It's helpful to write your responses to these questions, especially if you're determined that *now* is the time to "fish or cut bait," as my dad used to say.

- WHY do you want to write a book now?
 - Do you sense that a book is the right tool to help you establish a new career at this stage of your life?
 - Do you want to share your wisdom or tell an important story while you still can?
 - Do you have another reason unique to you?
- Do you have the time, energy, and money to invest in a book project now? How many resources do you think it will require?
- What impact do you hope your book will have?
- What's the payoff for you if you write and publish this book?
- Is this payoff sufficient for you to dedicate the time, energy, and money to make your book all you want it to be?

If your answer to this last question is "no," then stop here. Find another way to spend your time.

Your WHY contains the emotional reasons that will sustain you when the writing gets tough or the publishing process frustrates you or the marketing feels unending. Your WHY underlies your answer to the call.



Your WHY must be strong enough to keep you going through the challenges inherent in the process of writing and publishing a book.

If your WHY doesn't feel strong enough to carry you through the project, simply give yourself permission to let it go. Here's an example of a client who consciously changed direction.

A woman felt she should write a book about a business software process for users for which she was an acknowledged expert. She knew a strong written resource for those users didn't exist. After gaining a clear picture of what was involved in writing, publishing, and marketing a book successfully, she decided it just wasn't right for her. She acknowledged she was tired of the corporate world and wanted a change, so she decided to follow a long-time dream of renovating houses.

Second: Do you feel a strong emotional attachment?

If your WHY is strong, continue to answer the following questions to beef up your motivation while strengthening your emotional attachment to getting the book done.

- What will it feel like to you to hold your book in your hands, finally? (Take time to imagine this feeling. You might even make a mock-up of a book with your title and name on the front. See what THAT does to your motivation!)



- What do you imagine your life will be like when you've completed your book?
- How will it be different from your life now?
- How will YOU be different?

Imagining the future you want is the first step to getting there, so take time to think about how a published book will affect you and your life. Will it take you to a place you want to be?

Of course, it's helpful to hold a realistic vision. From time to time, we have to explain that the dream of sitting-on-the-beach-drinking-Pina-Coladas-while-the-publisher-sends-royalty-checks is fantasy, not vision.

Better to imagine yourself speaking to audiences about your story or cause. Maybe you'll do radio interviews or Skype sessions with library patrons and book clubs. Maybe you'll teach courses or workshops. (Of course, you could always organize a workshop near the beach. . . .)

Whether your answer to the call to write a book is a strong "Yes!" or even "Maybe" or "I'm not sure," you'll want to know more about how to proceed to write, publish, and market a book in today's world. There's much to learn so you can confidently write the right book that fulfills your goals and supports your personal vision.

Third: Do you know your weaknesses and strengths?

Dig deeper to understand your weaknesses and strengths as they relate to writing your book. As you meet yourself honestly by answering these questions, you'll be clearing



your own path. You'll learn more about your fears or beliefs, and you'll start to grasp the ways you can take action, if that's what you really want to do. So, again, take time to reflect and jot down your answers to these questions. Then consider what options you've identified to help you move forward.

- Why haven't you written and published your book yet? What's held you back?
 - Do you lack time or resources?
 - Do you fear the unknown?
 - Are you confused or overwhelmed at all the options today?
 - Do you feel insecure or anxious about doing it all wrong?
 - Haven't you found guidance you trust?
- Do you think you can write decently?
 - If you're not a good writer, are you willing and able to hire a ghostwriter or work intensively with a professional editor so your book meets editorial quality standards?
- Even if you (think you) are a good writer, are you willing to work with a professional editor to ensure your book meets editorial quality standards?
- What are your qualifications that permit you to write the book you envision?
- Do you have the time, energy, and determination to write a 20,000- to 80,000-word book at this time in your life?
- Do you know how long YOUR book should be to meet your goals and fit the market?



- Do you have the time, energy, and resources to market your book once it's published?
- Do you have a defined, established audience for your book?

Knowing what you *don't* know is a common challenge for first-time authors. So often, they don't think about who will buy and read their book until after they've finished their manuscripts. It's natural but unfortunate, for much time and money can be saved by having the proper strategy in place early in the process.

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Here's a story about a client who illustrates the message in this chapter and the next. It points out the importance of knowing the *right* book to write.

One Veterinarian's Dream

One client came to us with a desire to write a book of stories (in the tradition of James Herriot) about the pets she'd cared for as a veterinarian. During our Strategy Session, it became clear she had an even stronger desire to spread her message of death experiences that were peaceful for both pets and their owners.



As a result of our Strategy Session, she set aside the pet stories book for now to focus on her professional message of peaceful pet transitions. However, she wasn't ready to write that book because the process had only been used in her own practice.

She followed our recommendations to build her credibility and expert status by implementing a training program for veterinarians. In it, she teaches her methods and the economic benefits of employing them for peaceful pet transitions. Over time, she has partnered with individuals and institutions to teach these methods, gain valuable feedback, and develop case studies.

As a result, her eventual book on this subject will be rich and authoritative because of the experience and data she's gathering beyond her own practice. Her book of pet stories, which she still intends to write, will then have a larger audience because she's building a base with her trainings. Her pet stories book will then support that business.

Every Author Today = Writer + Marketer

By the way, many authors are dismayed to learn that *writing* a book is the easy part. To be a successful author today, you not only need to write your book but you need to *market* it deliberately and consistently. *This is true regardless of the publishing route you take.*

So the question goes beyond “Am I ready to write my book?” You also need to ask, “Am I ready to market my book?” Chapter 10 begins an explanation of book marketing. However, the best initial marketing is built into your book—its title, subtitle, cover design, description, category selection, and other metadata elements.

Your first and best marketing starts now—and never ends. Getting professional guidance is a wise step!



Chapter 3.

What's the Right Book to Write?

Millions of new books are published every year, yet most never sell more than 100 copies.

Certainly, many people write books they never intend to sell in the commercial marketplace. In fact, at Dudley Court Press, in addition to publishing commercial fiction and nonfiction books, we frequently publish memoirs strictly for private use. We enjoy helping those clients produce books they can proudly deliver to friends and family.

However, many authors unwittingly write and publish books that have no promise of any acceptance in any marketplace at all. *Don't be one of them.*

Many authors unwittingly write and publish books with no promise of acceptance in any marketplace. Don't be one of them!



How can you know?

Let's start by pointing out characteristics of what we might call "unexceptional" authors. They are people who:

- Fail to educate themselves sufficiently before diving in.
- Think "everyone" will love their book or "should" read it.
- Assume that because they know how to read a book, they also know how to write and publish one!
- Do little market research to identify and find likely readers.
- Have limited understanding of the economics of publishing.

Online as well as in-person study groups are well populated with aspiring but usually disappointed, frustrated, and often whiny authors. But if you're reading *this* book, chances are you aren't one of those whiny authors. *Smart authors realize that navigating the complex world of publishing today can be daunting. They opt for professional guidance.*

What are your goals?

At Dudley Court Press, we start by assessing the viability of the book concept in terms of the author's self-proclaimed goals. We help our clients understand how their books fit into a broader picture. An example is the veterinarian noted in the previous chapter.

Here's another example of how we help our clients figure out the right book to write.



Memoir to Fact-Based Book to Memoir

When Paul Golden, M.D., first came to Dudley Court Press, he'd spent the year after his retirement writing his memoir. During our Strategy Session, when probed about why he wanted to publish his memoir, he said that if someday someone found his memoir on a shelf at Barnes & Noble and it was helpful to that person, he would be happy. His comment opened the door to a broad discussion about his potential role as an advocate and speaker—a role he had never considered.

*Ultimately, we helped Dr. Golden write a small, fact-based educational book titled **An Insider's View of Bipolar Disease**. This established him as an authority and helped generate media interest and speaking engagements.*

*A year after his first book was published, we published his memoir, **Bipolar MD: My Life As a Physician with Bipolar Disorder**. By then, he had a ready audience and could bolster his appeal as a speaker, interview subject, and authority.*

The memoir alone would not have positioned him as an expert. But paired with his first book, it now serves him well. You can find out more about Dr. Golden at www.mdgolden.com.

What's your book about?

To answer this question, distilling the central message of your book down to a 25-word blurb is one of the most challenging but *productive* exercises you can do as a writer. Having that short description is like have a target in front of you as you sit down to write each day.



To help you get clear about the target, review these questions:

- What do you want to write about?
 - Do you have a significant collection of wisdom and knowledge that you don't want to see disappear with you and feel passionate to share?
 - Or do you have a story to tell that celebrates the achievements of others you know well?
 - Or do you believe that your own story, well told, will inspire or help others who face the challenges you have faced?
- Can you summarize the topic of your book in 200 words in a way that will attract potential readers?
- Next, can you do that in 25 words?
- Do you have an outline of your book? (Craft a detailed Table of Contents to serve as a roadmap during the writing stage.)
- Who is the audience for your book?
 - Why will they want to read your book?
 - What value will it bring to them?
- Does your book provide information, inspiration, or entertainment?
- Is your book designed so your readers will understand its relevance to them right away? (If it's confusing, it's not meaningful.)
- What four or five books are similar to yours? How is yours different?

Sometimes, a book makes more economic or commercial sense if split into more than one volume. Other times, it will fare better in the marketplace written as fiction rather



than nonfiction. Maybe the right book is just a sliver of the knowledge an author would like to share. Each circumstance depends on where he or she strives to be, and where the ideal book audience can be found.

Who is your book for?

Understand your reasons for writing and publishing your book early so you can make wise choices as you move along the publishing path. If you intend to use it to further your career or enhance your professional status, you must understand that the quality of your book—content and production— should be high. After all, this book represents *you* and your message to the world. On the other hand, if your book is primarily for your family and close friends, you have more leeway in terms of choices.

If your book is related to your professional status in any way, get clear on how you'll use it and with whom so it effectively serves your career. For example, if you intend to use your book to establish your professional credibility with executives in boardroom settings, your book likely should be produced as a hardcover. It may be a good idea for the cover to include an impressive photo of you as well.

If your book is related to your professional status in any way, get clear on how you'll use it and with whom so it effectively serves your career.



By comparison, if your audience is high school students or people with low reading levels, a thin paperback with lots of illustrations or cartoons will help you reach your audience more effectively than a dense, 300-page book.

Not only do we see clients whose initial book ideas fail to serve their broader goals, but we also encounter book projects that, as presented, don't make economic sense. In some cases, we think it would work better as fiction rather than nonfiction. Helping our clients determine the best book for them to write is one of our first goals. Make sure the book *you* are writing will, indeed, fulfill your goals.

Are you considering the self-publishing route?

As mentioned earlier, I believe we're fortunate to live in an age when writers can finally hold in their hands a properly bound edition of the book they've spent so much effort to create without working with a traditional publisher. It's a satisfying feeling.

But remember this: Don't confuse the *availability of the technology* to create a complete, bound book with any assurance of market viability. Not every person who auditions for America's Got Talent makes an appearance on the live show.

If you simply want to get your book designed and encased with a cover, you can do that quickly and easily through many of the online publishing vendors or even at a local print shop. Do be aware that your book will be well received *only* by your family and friends who love you. It's unlikely to find an audience beyond your close circle, no matter how much you think *everybody* will love it or needs it. (Please read this blog post before



you go too far with the big online “self-publishing” companies so you don’t get caught in their traps: <https://www.dudleycourtpress.com/author-solutions-be-warned>)

Is your book idea viable?

If you are wondering if your book idea is the *right* book for *you* to write, please talk with a professional—a book coach, a literary agent, a developmental editor, or consider investing in a Strategy Session at Dudley Court Press—*before* you go further with your project. Whether you are writing fiction or nonfiction, strategic planning and a clear understanding of how your book fits your overall goals is important to your book’s eventual success.

You can learn more about a Dudley Court Press Strategy Session can at this link:
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