

One-Page Condensed Inspiration-to-Publication Writing Process

My objective: 8-12 months total elapsed time (your mileage may vary)

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1. Start with a vague but intriguing **story idea** (a sentence or two—no more)
2. Amass a draft list of “**what-if**” **questions** (dozens) around the story idea
3. **Light research** of story’s period/genre (essential) & whether over- or under-served (optional)
4. List photo/bullets of **major characters** (a few majors) & **settings** (one to a few dozen)
5. Considering #1-4 above, draft a **tight premise** (2-3 paragraphs, <200 words)
6. **Solicit comments** on the premise from beta (early pre-pub) readers. Interesting? Viable?
7. If so, list the story’s “**big moments**” (a few dozen) based on “what-if” questions in #2 above
8. More research & draft a **complete hook-to-wrap-up story summary** (2-10 pages)
9. Does this story still have “**good bones**?” If so, commit to it.
10. Choose an appropriate **story structure** for the genre and **fit big moments** into “beats”
11. Create your **character bible**. Interview & add characters, jotting down detailed observations of who they are, their role, goals/conflicts (internal, external) and relationships with other characters—1-2 pages for each character. Use as a reference while you write.
12. **Sequence early scenes** with meaningful titles from chosen beat structure (e.g., “sleuth’s journey” for mysteries) into a 3 act structure (ramp up, action, ramp down)
13. **Integrate** big moments & story summary **into** that beat-driven 3-act **structure**
14. **Flesh out setting and scene lists** within structure (title scene with a meaningful phrase)
15. **Write scenes** (pages each) using prose created while interviewing characters (cut ’n paste prose from character bible), listing (describing) settings, and **add scenes** if inspired to do so (make them **sensory** and **essential** to the story)
16. **Arrange scenes** (shuffle) & **consolidate into chapters** (target 500-2000-word chapters)
17. Eliminate **plot holes** & assure **timeline** continuity (consider using diagrams for reference)
18. Ensure **each chapter** starts with a bang and ends with a cliffhanger, and prose in between **rushes the story forward. Choose catchy/meaningful title.**
19. Run manuscript (MS) through **editing software** to check for grammar, diction, overused words, good sentence length (<30 words each, varied in length)...
20. Let MS (manuscript) “**marinate**” 1-4 weeks. Read/re-edit (flow & interest). Delete boring parts.
21. **Check again** for plot holes, timeline continuity and flow (final draft). Enhance soft spots.
22. **Format interior. Commit to book's title. Design cover.** Add front and back matter while your beta readers (brutally honest friends, other writers) read/comment on final draft of MS
23. **Incorporate** good constructive **criticism** into MS. Ignore the bad. Read like your ideal reader
24. Use your **tight** premise as the description for **book’s sales pages**, ISBN assignment, categories & keywords for channels and/or distributors/aggregators....
25. **Upload** formatted interior MS file (ePub?) and cover file (jpg or PDF?) in required file types
26. Set up **pre-order** with at least a few major sales channels (optional), Need a completion date.
27. Execute book **launch plan** (sell yourself, sell the book, amass reviews)
28. Upload & order a print “**proof copy.**” Read like a pro editor, make updates (content, format).
29. **Choose your channels/distributors & publish** the darn thing, already! Rake in the royalties.