

HOW TO WRITE A “HOW TO” BOOK

“How to” books are always popular; especially if what they are demonstrating is currently trending. People love the promise of a book that is magically and instantly going to simplify something complex (or that they find complex)... a book that will act like a patient tutor and walk them through to success.

You need to plan your “How to” book especially carefully so that your structure feels and chapter breaks feel logical and consistent.

Decide in advance if you need:

- ☐ Photos
- ☐ Diagrams
- ☐ Just text instructions

Decide in advance on the fonts, font sizes, colors and weight for your elements. For example, are you going to use:

a) The alphabet in your point indicators?

Or.

1. Numerals?

Also ask yourself the following questions:

- ☐ How big will your Sub-Heads be?
- ☐ Will you leave room for notes, if your reader wants to transfer the book to her computer or buy a hard copy version of it?
- ☐ Is what you're demonstrating too small to be accurately shown?
- ☐ Exactly who are you going to teach? What do they want to know? What level are they at?

This last line in the list above contains the most important questions you need to answer.

Break things down so that you are demonstrating no more than one unit of anything per chapter. E.g. one way of hemming a pant leg in Chapter One; another method in Chapter Two.

The only exception to this is if you are writing a comparison; in which case each method would be presented and demonstrated in exactly the same fashion.

Simplify everything down to its basic essentials. If you find yourself going off on a tangent or demonstrating an alternate method, remove that section and put it in another document for another day.

1. Start out with a Foreword, Introduction or Introductory paragraph or two.
2. Explain what your reader is going to be able to do, after finishing your book
3. Tell the reader why this will be beneficial. In other words, **what they will get out of your book.**
4. Finish with any **general instructions** you want them to know up front.
5. Start each chapter by telling the reader what she is going to learn in that chapter
6. Remember that any graphics or diagrams you include will be viewed on a small mobile reader. Make sure they are as simple, uncluttered and large as possible. (Go for the ultimate close up!)

When you have finished demonstrating your topic, finish by summarizing what they learned and confirming how it will benefit them. Congratulate them on their good sense in using your book and learning easily, and let them know where they can get more of your books.