

WELCOME TO NO STARCH PRESS!

We're excited to have you on board and to welcome you to our list of carefully selected books and authors. We're very picky about the authors we sign and we know that you're picky too. Thank you for choosing to publish your book with us.

Authors commonly ask us if we have style guidelines. We do have a style template, which we ask you to use when formatting your chapters (you'll see some details below), and we have some very basic guidelines for how to prepare your chapters when submitting them to us. But overall, our goal is to publish the best book, so unless your book is to fit into something like our "Wicked Cool" or "Steal This" series, it should be the book that it needs to be—or whatever you and the acquisitions editor (probably Bill) have decided. If you're not sure, please check in with Bill.

Please read these guidelines at the beginning of your project. By knowing what to expect and by following these recommendations your project will move along smoothly.

Bill's Basics about Computer Book Writing

Here are some tips that Bill offers to our authors, in no particular order. He's probably got plenty more, but have a look at these.

- Don't stack headings. That means, don't write a level 1 heading then follow it with a level 2; include text in-between. For one thing, stacked heads just look ugly. But for another, it's kind of like pick a heading level and stick with it—if you're dropping down a level, just drop down and stay there.

- Describe and discuss your figures, code, or illustrations. Don't just plop them in and figure your readers will figure them out. Why make them work to figure out what you're trying to tell them? Tell them. We call this "clearing your visuals." A picture can be worth a thousand words, but you need to tell your reader what to get from your picture.
- Along the same lines, use figure captions and reference your figures in text: "... as shown in Figure 23-1," or "see Figure 23-1." And please use a chapter numbering scheme for figures rather than descriptions. That is, name your TIF *mybook23-1.tif*, rather than *sillyscreenshot.tif*. It's much easier to track.
- Get to the point and when you've made your point, move on. If you blather, we'll probably just cut the blather anyway.
- The first sentence in each paragraph should describe what's in your paragraph. Want a quick check to make sure that your chapters hold together? You should be able to read the first sentence of each paragraph only, throughout each chapter, and be able to follow the chapter.
- Speak to your reader and keep them in mind as you write. Imagine that you're speaking to them, and do speak to them. (I call this profiling your reader.) After all, only one person is likely to be reading what you write at any one time. Speak to them.
- Keep chapters somewhere between say 10 and 25 pages or so. Avoid monster chapters and really tiny ones. Monsters are really hard to slog through and seem to never end. Really short ones, like two or three pages or so, are jarring and seem out of place when most chapters average around 25 or so. There's no hard and fast rule here, but keep your reader in mind.

Some Writing Tools

The vast majority of our books are delivered in either Word (published by the Evil Empire), or OpenOffice.org. We've done books using other tools, but it's a lot trickier for us to edit books in things like LaTeX and ASCII. If you're not a Microsoft fan, OpenOffice.org works, although not quite as well as Word. Sorry, it just doesn't.

At the beginning of your project we'll send you the following documents.

Word Users

Word template (nsp_au_template.dot) Attach this to your Word documents to make the styles available.

Template instructions (WordTemplateInstructions.doc) Learn how to attach nsp_au_template.dot and apply our styles to your document.

Sample chapter (NSP_SampleChapter.doc) So that you can see how the styles are used.

Image guidelines (NSP_ImageGuide.pdf) These are pretty straightforward; we include this for reference.

House style sheet (NSP_StyleSheet.pdf) If you have questions about how to capitalize something and so on.

OpenOffice.org Users

You get basically the same thing, only with some different extensions. Please see above.

OpenOffice.org template (nsp_au_template.ott)

Template instructions (OOoTemplateInstructions.odt)

Sample chapter (NSP_SampleChapter.odt)

Image guidelines (NSP_ImageGuide.pdf)

House style sheet (NSP_StyleSheet.pdf)

Using the Templates

Please attach the template and use it when writing chapters. As you write, please do your best to style elements correctly, referring to the sample chapter, quick style guidelines, and house style sheet when needed. Styling things correctly as you write saves the whole team a lot of time and ultimately will make your project move quicker. If you have styling questions, please contact someone at No Starch or insert a note, styled Production Directive, in the chapter.

What to Expect from the Editing Process

The following sections break down the editing process into the various stages: development, editorial, and production.

Here's one thing to keep in mind: Once you submit a chapter to us, we consider that chapter "frozen." That means, unless we are told otherwise by you, that that chapter will move through the editorial process, and you should not make any more changes to that chapter until you receive it back in the next stage. If you're not ready to freeze a chapter, please don't send it in unless you let us know that it's still a work in process. This will reduce the chances of multiple versions floating around, which can lead to confusion and wasted time.

Development

Not every one of our books goes through a lengthy development process, though many do. We'll decide whether we think that yours should go through development once we've had a chance to read through some of your chapters. If your book will not be going through development, it will probably go right through to copyedit.

If your book will be developed, the developmental editor will read and edit your chapters, making comments on general organization, specific chapter organization, style, and structure. She may edit line-by-line or overall, and may have lots of questions for you—or not.

Once you receive a chapter back from developmental editing, please review all changes and questions, accept or reject changes, and respond to queries. Then resubmit your chapter and we'll have a look at it again.

Technical Review

Your technical reviewer should go through and test any of your code or programs, read chapters carefully for errors or omissions, and give you some general feedback. If you have a tech reviewer that you trust and that you'd like to use, please let us know. We'll pay them but we could use your help in finding someone good.

Copyediting

Your copyeditor will do a line edit of your chapters. She'll read your chapters word by word, making sure your sentences are grammatically correct, typo-free, clear, concise, and readable. She'll insert her edits using revision marks so you'll be able to see everything she's done.

Composition

Our compositor (page layout person) will lay out chapters and create a PDF, which she will send to you and a proofreader. We'll return a PDF of your chapters to you as they're ready, for you to read and make sure there are no technical errors or layout gaffs, and that everything that's supposed to be in your chapter is actually in there. This should be a quick read and not another in-depth editing/rewriting pass. We'll also send the chapter to a proofreader at the same time. Please submit any corrections in one of three ways: in the body of an email, by annotating the PDF, or by submitting a Word or OpenOffice.org document listing changes.

Final Pages

Our compositor will make your changes (author corrections) and any changes marked by the proofreader and then send the next round of pages (which we call *final pages*) to you for your review. Final pages are your last chance to have a look at the pages before we ship them to the printer.

When Will I See My Book in Print?

Once a book has shipped to the printer, it will take about three weeks for the book to be bound and another two weeks for the books to be in bookstores.

Who We Are

Well, here's just about everyone, in relative order of appearance.

Bill Pollock, big fish (bill@nostarch.com) Bill founded No Starch Press in 1994. He acquires and develops books (fewer these days than he used to because we have more people), manages much of the business, and fixes our computers when they break. Either he or another editor will perform the development pass on your book.

Tyler Ortman, Editor (tyler@nostarch.com) Tyler assists Bill with book acquisition and develops books. He will be in touch to finalize your contract and help you set a submission schedule.

Megan Dunchak, Production Editor (megan@nostarch.com) Megan shepherds chapters through the various stages of editing and review, and she will be your main contact during copyediting, layout, and proofreading. Megan may assist with the layout of your book, and, after your book comes off the presses, she will help you register it with the US Copyright Office.

Kathleen Mish, Production Assistant (kathleen@nostarch.com) On a daily basis, Kathleen keeps the No Starch production department running smoothly. She will help if you have problems or questions at any phase of the project, or if you have scheduling concerns. Kathleen also assists with layout and serves as liaison with our cover designer and printers.

Riley Hoffman, Senior Compositor (riley@nostarch.com) Riley oversees layout with the help of the other production team members. She might send you laid-out chapters for review or contact you with questions regarding the styling of your chapters. She also renders some illustrations and can help with questions about images.

Leigh Poehler, Sales Manager (leigh@nostarch.com) Leigh manages sales and marketing for No Starch. Her responsibilities include selling translation rights, working with international and US distributors, monitoring sales trends and inventory levels, booking trade show attendance, and producing sales and marketing materials (tip sheets, catalogs, t-shirts, and so on). She is also your contact for accounts payable and royalties.

Travis Peterson, Sales and Marketing Assistant (travis@nostarch.com) Travis works on many aspects of sales and marketing for No Starch, including writing copy and keeping book details up to date online. He creates press releases, interfaces with media, and arranges review copies and author interviews. Travis also manages the logistics for trade shows and international sales.

Frequently Asked Questions

You may have many more questions. Please ask.

Where should I send initial chapter submissions?

Send initial chapter submissions (text file with art embedded and separate art files) to Bill, your developmental editor, and Megan.

Should I submit chapters in batches or one at a time?

As you finish writing individual chapters, send them to us piecemeal. That way we can start sending chapters to the technical and developmental editors and we can provide you with feedback before you've written the entire book.

How many times will I see the chapters?

Typically you will have a chance to review your chapters four times after submitting the initial chapter: after development/tech review, after copyedit, after layout, and when the book is final (before going to the printer). If you need to make corrections, please try to make them at the beginning of the process rather than at the end, when it's much easier for us to make changes. Once you receive laid-out pages, you typically should not be rewriting or moving paragraphs, deleting or adding art, and so on.

What should I do if I will miss my dates?

Contact Megan or Kathleen and provide a new final submission date. She will update the schedule accordingly.