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Academic Non-Fiction Crafting to Publishing

R. Sooryamoorthy

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Academic Non-Fiction

“The social sciences have benefited from the insights of French ‘deconstructive’ philosophy in its interpretation of ideological gaps and silences. But have the social sciences benefited from the accompanying philosophical language, in which theories and abstractions can obfuscate the human dimension of the issue under investigation? This book offers academics and senior students a language of clarity that avoids simplification while imbuing analysis with the resonance of human subjectivity at the core of the issue.”

—Professor Michael Chapman, *Research Fellow, University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology, South Africa*

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To Prem Padmanabhan

PREFACE

This book is so dear to my heart. I distilled what I read, learned and wrote in my life to write this book. I wanted to share my experience in writing with the others. This is my first book on writing. I hope that the readers find it resourceful, practical and worth emulating.

I have a special word of thanks for Sarah Hills, my commissioning editor at Palgrave, who was the first to see value in this manuscript. She took particular care in this project and steered through its fruition. My gratitude also goes to the production team, who did a wonderful job in production. I am so grateful to the anonymous reviewers who offered constructive comments on the book. Thanks to my friend Vanessa-Neophytou for her excellent copyediting. She was my first beta reader of the book as well. Her highly professional approach taught me many things. My family—my wife Renjini, son Dakshin, daughter-in-law Hinako, and our cat, Zeus—lent the support the way they could. Zeus was my alarm who wouldn't allow me to overstay in my bed. And finally, to you, my readers, for choosing to read this book.

I met Prem upon his return from overseas. It was immediately after my master's. He hired me as an investigator for a survey. We continued our relationship even after the survey until today. My association with him oriented me to a different way of life, and I inculcated many things during this period. He stood by me in the difficult times. I dedicate this book to him to acknowledge his sincerity.

Durban, South Africa

R. Sooryamoorthy

ABOUT THE BOOK

Academic Nonfiction addresses a gap in crafting and publishing nonfiction, dealing with the challenge of making nonfiction enriched with facts, data and information captivating for a broader readership. The central argument in the book is that nonfiction need not be dull and exclusive, as is often the case. Breaking free from the stereotype of dry and exclusive academic nonfiction, the book provides practical methods for bringing nonfiction projects to fruition. Aiming to guide aspiring and seasoned writers, the book unveils techniques usually kept under wraps, emphasising that academic nonfiction can be both compelling and accessible. Covering essential aspects such as idea generation, time management, writing techniques, technology utilisation including AI, proposal writing, peer reviewing and more, it caters to a diverse readership, including general readers, specialised enthusiasts, students, educators, practitioners, policymakers and academic leaders. The book, designed for easy reading with short chapters, provides a toolkit for anyone interested in fact-based nonfiction writing.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ChatGPT	Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer
IMRAD	Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion
KDP	Kindle Direct Publishing
LLM	Large Language Model
ORCID	Open Researcher and Contributor ID
OUP	Oxford University Press
PM	Palgrave Macmillan

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PART I

Foundations of Writing Non-Fiction



CHAPTER 1

Nonfiction Horizons

Abstract The nonfiction genre encompasses various forms, with information-based, also known as fact-, data- or research-based, standing out as a prominent category. Typically, this form caters to a limited readership, comprised of specialists interested in the specific themes explored within these titles. This chapter contends that nonfiction titles can be written engagingly to attract a broader readership beyond specialists. Surprisingly, many do not consider seriously making nonfiction enjoyable by incorporating features commonly found in fiction. Drawing from illustrative examples found in successful nonfiction titles, this chapter demonstrates the imperative of rendering research-based nonfiction more engaging and appealing to general readers. It delineates the necessity for a book to guide making nonfiction captivating and elucidates the purposes behind the themes explored in the book. The chapter establishes the context for unravelling the mysteries surrounding the creation of research-based nonfiction, as well as introducing techniques to master the art of writing nonfiction.

Keywords Nonfiction • Fiction • Research-based nonfiction • Crafting nonfiction • Academic writing

About 13.5 billion years ago, matter, energy, time and space came into being in what is known as the Big Bang. The story of these fundamental features of our universe is called physics.

About 300,000 years after their appearance, matter and energy started to coalesce into complex structures, called atoms, which then combined into molecules. The story of atoms, molecules and their interactions is called chemistry.

About 3.8 billion years ago, on a planet called Earth, certain molecules combined to form particularly large and intricate structures called organisms. The story of organisms is called biology.

You just read the initial paragraphs of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* written by Yuval Noah Harari (2014). Through a blend of lucid prose and clear exposition, Harari navigates the reader from one scientific concept to the next in plain language. His book is a treasure of facts and narratives recounting the fascinating evolution of the human species. As you flip through the pages, absorbing knowledge becomes an immersive experience, like enjoying a gripping tale.

Turn the pages of the book to view the images. You will see the caption of a handprint from approximately 30,000 years ago. It reads, ‘Somebody tried to say, “I was here!”’ A thoughtful one! Explore the section titles in the book: Skeletons in the Closet, A Race of Cooks and Our Brothers’ Keepers—quite intriguing.

Unsurprisingly, this book transcended borders to become an international bestseller—it turns the journey of human history into a narrative adventure. This is a nonfiction title filled with facts and stories. But it reads like a novel.

Harari prompts us to question why nonfiction, based on facts, couldn’t adopt his approach—readable, enjoyable and accessible. Many predecessors and contemporaries, both before and after him, have demonstrated that it’s possible: Carl Sagan (*Cosmos*, 2013 for instance), Richard Feynman (2011) who conveyed complex ideas with simplicity and humour, Stephen Hawking (*A Brief History of Time*, 2011), Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*, 2002), Oliver Sacks (*The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, 1998), Jared Diamond (*Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 1997) and many more.

There are titles I couldn’t complete reading, not even halfway through. Why don’t writers take a leaf from the authors who elevated nonfiction to a new level?

The inspiration for this book on writing nonfiction focused on research-based narratives sprang from pondering such thoughts. How can we make research-rich nonfiction more accessible to a broader readership, breaking free from the confines of specialised audiences? Why should exploring facts and information in nonfiction be associated with dryness, lifelessness and boredom? Research-based nonfiction needn't be dry and monotonous, which is the case with many titles. It shouldn't cater exclusively to specialised readers either.

Writing has given rise to a flourishing publishing industry. The 2022 report of the American Association of Publishers recorded a revenue of \$28.1 billion from publishing.¹ The industry grew by 11 per cent during 2018–2022. About 4 million books are released every year by traditional and self-publishers. These figures amount to 11,000 titles a day and 457 titles per hour.² Steven Piersanti, citing the Bowker, the organisation responsible for assigning International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN), reported that 2.3 million books were self-published in the USA in 2021. The 50 largest publishing groups worldwide made a combined revenue of 51 billion euros in 2017 (Clark & Phillips, 2020). Astonishing statistics!

Do these figures convey a message to us? Yes, of course. There's space for everyone to become a writer. The opportunity is there. What is required is the desire and the resolve to write.

Years ago, on a spring day, a new colleague joined my department. An imposing and composed figure, he carried himself with quiet, unwavering confidence. His impeccable attire caught my attention—a stark contrast to some of my peers who displayed a penchant for shorts and faded turtle-neck tees.

I was given the task of being his mentor, guiding him through the intricate web of life within the department and the labyrinthine structures of the institution. Often, we would visit the grand multistorey library, with its walls adorned in darkly tinted Italian glass. The library was a mere

¹The American Association of Publishers represents the leading book and journal publishers in the USA. For breakdown of the figures check <https://publishers.org/news/aap-statshot-annual-report-publishing-revenues-totaled-28-10-billion-for-2022/#:~:text=Estimated%20Industry%20Revenue%20for%202022,in%20terms%20of%20estimated%20revenue> (accessed 7 September 2023).

²<https://wordsrated.com/number-of-books-published-per-year-2021/>. Accessed 7 September 2023.

stone's throw away from our offices. We strolled along the stone-paved path leading to it, being careful to steer clear of the prickly tips of the age-old yet short Cypresses.

As we walked through the main entrance and past the turnstiles, our gaze was drawn to three imposing display stands, each angled for optimal visibility before anyone could see the front desk a few yards ahead. The stands played host to the library's latest acquisitions in a vibrant array of colours and sizes.

My colleague had a unique ritual. He would reach out to these fresh arrivals, his fingers gently caressing their covers. His eyes would light up. Our library mostly stocked print copies. E-books hadn't become common yet. With a sense of reverence, he would draw them close to his chest. He would then turn the book over to look at the back cover before even glimpsing at the front. I would be right there beside him, not as absorbed in the new arrivals as he was but in silent companionship.

Then, he would turn back the book to reveal its front cover.

I observed his peculiar habit; he seemed more entranced by the books' exteriors than what lay within their pages. His eyes seldom past the covers. I hesitated to ask his predilection for the book jackets as we were still getting to know each other. One day, my curiosity got the better of me, and I asked.

What's it you seek within those covers?

He glanced at me with a hint of timidity in his eyes, then, gesturing to the writer's biography on the back cover, he replied.

I want to be like this one day.

His reply was immediate, showing me the profile of the author on the cover.

I would like to see my name in print, on a book cover like this.

His eyes filled with aspiration. After a brief silence, he declared, 'One day, I will write my own.' His tone resonated with conviction, and he continued.

I want the world to know my thoughts. But I don't know how to do this. When I see volumes like this, I can't help but wonder how these authors have managed to write so many pages.

People are drawn to books for many reasons. For my colleague, it was for his self-actualisation.

We've two broad genres: fiction and nonfiction. Nonfiction was relatively overlooked (Wray & Lewis, 1996), but its landscape has, however, transformed. The rapid proliferation of information and the generation of knowledge has increased the production of research-based nonfiction works. Scholarly nonfiction has become an integral aspect of contemporary knowledge-based societies, where information and knowledge serve as foundational elements driving economic growth and development. So we've the scope and prospects to become writers of nonfiction.

There's no shortage of books about writing and publishing, for both fiction and nonfiction. A distinctive void nonetheless exists.

In my study, I have 19 books that I collected for my reading on writing, nonfiction and general writing. These include great works like Stephen King's (2000) *On Writing: The Memoir of the Craft* and William Zinsser's (1976 [2005]) *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. I have the book by Joli Jensen (2017), *Write No Matter What: Advice for Academics*, Joanna Penn's (2018) *How to Write Non-Fiction: Turn Your Knowledge into Words*, John Warner's (2019) *The Writer's Practice: Building Confidence in Your Nonfiction Writing*, Howard Becker's (2020) *Writing for Social Scientists* and other handbooks for writing such as the *Handbook of Writing Research* (edited by Charles A. MacArthur et al., 2006) and Sally Hayward's (2015) *Writing for the Academic Disciplines*. These are valuable resources to learn the art of writing.

I'm yet to find a book that aids writers in crafting nonfiction enriched with facts, data and information. More glaring is the absence of resources that encourage us to make scholarly nonfiction engaging and captivating.

This book aims to address the specific gap. The intention is to show prospective and established writers how to write in the research-based nonfiction genre that attracts both general and specialised readers. It's about writing in a compelling way to make the information and presentation engaging. That's where the future of this genre lies—not isolated from readers. The market for research-based nonfiction is expanding.

Gathering and presenting the information required for the fact-based book isn't easy. A further hurdle lies in rendering them appealing and accessible to readers, particularly the general readership. It's rare for readers to peruse content densely packed with data and information. While specialised readers may find such content useful, it limits the book's appeal to a narrower audience.

Several topics the writers covered in research-based nonfiction have failed to reach a diverse audience. This was my central concern: how to make research-based nonfiction transcend its boundaries of specialists to a wider spectrum of readers.

Accomplished fiction writers share insights into their writing styles, practices and experiences, offering tips for aspiring writers. Some have posted online lessons and created videos on how to approach fiction writing. The collective wisdom of such seasoned writers lends invaluable benefits to would-be writers, providing hints that can be emulated.³

In contrast, research-based nonfiction writers are less inclined to engage in similar practices. Rarely do they take the initiative to publicise their writing experiences or suggest approaches to writing. As Pyne (2009) asserts, nonfiction, except memoirs, isn't taught in writing workshops; its standards aren't discussed on freelancer listservs and aren't typically included in the professional training provided by academic guilds. Perhaps this disparity is because many don't have a substantial record of publishing multiple books, unlike in fiction. I've seen calls for training and workshops that are intended for writing articles, chapters or theses. But none on research-based nonfiction book writing.

This book reveals methods which writers are reluctant to divulge. These methods have paid off well for me, as my book projects have seen the light through peer reviewers and reputable publishers in the last 30 years. This book elaborates on research-based writing, focusing on information, research and data-driven narratives—terms used interchangeably throughout the book. This genre has witnessed growth due to demand from diverse readers, general readers, specialised enthusiasts, students, educators, practitioners, policymakers, leaders, managers and more. This book goes into effective writing habits. And about revealing the mysteries that envelop nonfiction.

³Jerry Jenkins (<https://jerryjenkins.com>); Anne Lamott (<https://www.annelamott.com/lander>); William Zinsser (<https://www.williamzinsserwriter.com>); and Margaret Atwood (<https://margaretatwood.ca>), for example.

Writing nonfiction is not an unattainable task, as many of us think. Writers may require guidance on how to initiate, sustain and successfully conclude nonfiction book projects. Writing nonfiction is an achievable job and not exclusive to established writers alone. Individuals without any academic background have published nonfiction books. Prior achievements are not a determinant of success in this field. The question is whether we must adhere to the conventional format for such scholarly books. We know that academia typically serves as a primary source of research-based books. The format of such scholarly works, also falling under research-based nonfiction, hasn't changed much.

What is this academic writing anyway?

is text that is written by members of the academic community *for other* academics in the same scholarly areas who create new knowledge and expand on existing knowledge ... The basic premise of all academic writing is clarity and a sustained thoughtful engagement with the material or ideas that the writer is working with. It uses logical, reasoned responses and it aims to make connections with the ideas and research of other academics by recognising, building on and expanding these ideas so that a communal interactive body of knowledge about a certain topic grows and develops. (Hayward, 2015, p. 22)

Agreed—it creates new knowledge and it's logical. What about the style that limits its scope? This is what we should know. Research-based nonfiction differs from other genres within nonfiction. It warrants an approach that melds one's writing skills with research.

This book aims to assist writers in crafting research-based nonfiction. It's designed for those with expertise in the hard or soft sciences and for individuals lacking such a background yet possessing an interest in research-based nonfiction. Whether you're an academic accustomed to this form of writing or a non-specialist looking to venture into nonfiction, you'll find the chapters in this book useful and adaptable.

Two objectives influenced me while writing this book: how to successfully write research-based nonfiction and make it interesting and engaging to a wider readership. Let me take you through the mysteries shrouding nonfiction and the techniques to master the craft of nonfiction writing in the following pages.

In research-based nonfiction peer reviewing is an integral phase. This book opens up several peer-reviewing practices that remain unfamiliar to

the writer until they submit their work to a publisher and receive feedback from the peer reviewers. Publishers don't disclose their specific submission criteria in advance. Therefore, we can't write a book tailored to their preferences and criteria. Instead, we submit the work and await their review. If we had known their criteria beforehand, we could have drafted the type-script accordingly, addressing any gaps to increase the chances of acceptance. Unfortunately, we can't inquire about their submission preferences. Understanding this aspect is crucial to being a successful writer. For those who haven't yet written a book, these insights give glimpses into the inner workings of the publishing world. In this book, I've included peer-review questions that reputable international publishers ask—a resource not usually found in other publications that teach you how to write nonfiction. The book presents insider perspectives on the peer review and strategies for addressing reviewer comments. To make your creative efforts fruitful.

Finding and approaching a publisher is a major step. Whether you want to go to a traditional publisher, directly or through an agent, or to self-publish, research-based nonfiction needs a well-structured proposal. A proposal is the design of the book. We usually look for a publisher and attempt to reach out to them after finishing the book. Until then, a new book writer doesn't know what a publisher asks for in a proposal. Publishers only send us their proposal template if our book idea piques their interest. Had we known about it earlier, it would have been helpful during writing. We could focus on the areas the publisher seeks and incorporate content that could strengthen the book and increase the potential for getting accepted. Based on several international book publishers' templates, I've gathered the contents of the proposals, which remain absent in nonfiction writing resources. They lend insights into the parameters publishers use. The production process section in the book provides writers with a better knowledge of the various stages.

The audience of this book is all those interested in research-based non-fiction writing, regardless of their background. The book covers essential aspects—idea generation, efficient time management, effective writing techniques, artificial intelligence, utilising technology, gathering material, constructing content (including data-laden chapters), presenting information in an accessible style, making nonfiction engaging for both specialised and general readers, approaching a publisher, responding to reviewers' comments and navigating the production process. It caters to a diverse audience, including students, teachers, researchers and, of course, writers as well. The chapters are short and designed for quick reading. Enjoy reading!

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CHAPTER 2

Fading Boundaries

Abstract This chapter provides a background on the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, demonstrating that certain features of fiction can be applied and adaptable to nonfiction. In research-based nonfiction, where information and data dominate, readability is a challenge to achieve. The approach in nonfiction can transform a dry, data-based subject into an engaging narrative. This transformation has the potential to turn seemingly dull nonfiction into a compelling read. Numerous writers have successfully incorporated the methods, styles and elements of fiction in their nonfiction books. The boundaries between fiction and nonfiction appear to be increasingly blurred, offering advantages for both genres. Supported by illustrative cases, the chapter encourages nonfiction writers to explore options that can make their work interesting and appealing to a wider audience. The examples of successful fiction and nonfiction titles given in this chapter, which have unhesitatingly borrowed elements from each other, are encouraging.

Keywords Fiction • Nonfiction • Research-based nonfiction • Academic trade • Blending fiction and nonfiction

Let's take a moment to see the fundamentals of fiction and nonfiction before we look at how they influence each other.

Fiction is a product of creative construction, adhering to constructed narratives. It can be based on real events. Because it has elements of characters, plot, situations, actions, drama and climax, fiction isn't a reflection of actual events but rather an artful synthesis. It's fuelled by imagination, embodying a narrative with a discernible beginning, middle and end.

The term 'fiction' has its roots in the Latin word *fictio*, encompassing the acts of fashioning, shaping and feigning. In line with the concept of feigning, fiction is invented, forged and wholly made up (Bowkett, 2009). It takes the forms of novels, plays, short stories, science fiction and satire, among others.

On the other end, we have the world of nonfiction. They are literary works that present factual information, real events or actual people. Characterised by its presence of verifiable facts and accuracy, nonfiction aims to convey knowledge. The standard definitions emphasise its factual content. Fact is the core element in nonfiction. The genre includes biographies (auto or non-auto), memoirs, history, journalistic pieces, scientific literature, health, wellness and personal development, self-help, travelogues, cuisine books, business and finance and scholarly works. Creative nonfiction is also part of it as creativity isn't the sole province of fiction (Brown & Krog, 2011; Dowling, 1985).

Nonfiction draws its life from sources of history, arts, music, culture, science, technology and many others. Apart from the variety in the contents, differences in the style and approach among these can be expected. Take the case of writing in hard and soft sciences. A clear distinction between writing in the sciences and the humanities exists; the former focuses more on fact than argumentation compared to the latter (Hayward, 2015).

Research-based nonfiction is a major genre in nonfiction, also referred to as scholarly, academic, narrative, informative, empirical, historical and scientific nonfiction. Its content relies on research, information and data. No plot is its part but only a structure; no climax but conclusions; and no protagonist but the topic. Scenes that captivate readers with suspense, dramatic events and emotionally charged moments aren't typical in nonfiction.

Research-based nonfiction is known for its objectivity and is crafted mainly by experts in specialised subjects and topics. While thought-provoking, it doesn't whisk readers away to imaginary worlds; rather it immerses them in reality. Nonfiction informs, educates and inspires readers through real-life experiences and insights presented in structured and logical ways. Unlike fiction, it adopts a linear structure, eschewing the

traditional narrative with a distinct beginning, middle and end. It features an introduction and conclusion, with the main content organised into chapters that encompass data, analysis and discussions. The IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) format is found in titles exploring subjects in the hard sciences and occasionally in some soft sciences.

A logical progression of themes is conspicuous in research-based non-fiction. Depending on the subject matter, the organisation of themes is adapted and modified. It isn't bound to maintain the common features of different fiction genres but assumes a form that goes with the flow of human thought and established principles of knowledge and wisdom. Dissimilar to the meticulously crafted tales and characters in fiction, non-fiction offers a realism that can withstand scrutiny, as its content is firmly grounded in facts which can be tested and verified. It's about truth. As Mark Twain ([1897 \[2022\]](#)) said, 'Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't.'

What is the style that's more appropriate for research-based nonfiction? It's formal, most of the time. Formal for referring to ideas, no use of personal pronouns, no short themes, phrases and words, less likely the way individuals converse and use of passive voice ([Bowkett, 2009](#)). Authors tend to have a mix of styles to make it more readable and acceptable. Some prefer an informal and descriptive style that suits well while dealing with complex themes. They combine with stories and histories to make it more conversational.

As seen, fiction and nonfiction are distinct, each possessing unique traits and features that differentiate them. Does this distinction apply to those who produce as well? Not actually. Writers who create both fiction and nonfiction aren't a rare breed. They produce works that fall under these two categories and have demonstrated proficiency in both. We have George Orwell, Stephen King, Salman Rushdie, Jerry Jenkins and many others on this list.

During the 1960s, nonfiction writers began to incorporate techniques associated with fiction, such as dialogue, vivid scene-setting, the infusion of dramatic tension and even a touch of mind-reading ([Schulman, 2016](#)). This trend has breathed new life into nonfiction, bestowing it with a fresh and vibrant image. The distinction between fiction and nonfiction has become blurred. Modern nonfiction has dispelled its former reputation for being tedious and unidimensional ([Schulman, 2016](#)). Nonfiction writers are encouraged to use certain fiction techniques in their works (Berman,

1997). The use of age-old techniques of the spinner of tales to get a sense of reality in nonfiction is allowed (Hearon, 2008). This is advantageous for nonfiction.

In the subgenre of data-based nonfiction, incorporating fiction elements has not yet gained prominence. Many accomplished writers have, however, effectively integrated them into their nonfiction.

Rebecca Skloot's (2010) *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* is a *New York Times* bestseller. She begins her book:

This is a work of nonfiction...While writing this book I conducted more than a thousand hours of interviews with family and friends of Henrietta Lacks, as well as lawyers, ethicists, scientists and journalists ... I also relied on extensive archival photos and documents, scientific and historical research and the personal journals of Henrietta's daughter, Deborah Lacks. (p. ix)

It's a narrative that fiction writers usually use to portray their characters. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* has the feel of a novel.

Lab Girl by Hope Jahren (2016) is based on the author's scientific journey as a geobiologist. It blends elements of personal storytelling, making it a more engaging and relatable read. Simon Winchester (1998) combines historical research and a gripping narrative to tell the story of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the book, *The Professor and the Madman* which involves the lives of two remarkable men and their strange relationship.

Millions of copies of *Water for Elephants* were sold, and it's now a motion picture. This novel by Sarah Gruen (2006) is set in the circus world that melds facts with fiction. In writing this book, Gruen infused research into fiction. According to her (2007), fiction is knowing what to leave out and considering using photographs in fiction. *In Cold Blood* (Capote, 1966 [2013]) is a true account of multiple murders and is known as a nonfiction novel.

Many more like these abound in fiction and nonfiction, giving hope to nonfiction writers to make them widely read pieces of creation.

Pyne (2009) describes a genre called academic trade. These are books based on solid scholarship that attract readers beyond the circle of specialists. They hover between university presses and trade publishers. Owing to their factual content, they are research-based nonfiction. Why are they not so popular beyond the circle of specialised or interested readers?

The answer is that scholarly books should also satisfy everyone else. Why is it not the case? What is wrong with data-based nonfiction for its poor visibility and the lack of success among other genres?

With an insider's insight, Whalin (2021), as an acquisitions editor, acknowledges that every reader approaches nonfiction books intending to acquire knowledge and extract valuable insights from their reading. He says the content should be presented engagingly, and each sentence should be crafted with the reader's experience in mind. Peter Conners (2009), who wrote *Growing up Dead*, urges creating a beautiful book to read, effectively conveying the messages to the reader. So, should it be both engaging and good quality? Yes, that's where the issue is.

As in the previous examples, writers have experienced the integration of elements from fiction into research-based nonfiction and vice versa. They are used in a way that doesn't compromise the integrity of truth, facts and the overall tone. The objective isn't to erase the boundary between research-based nonfiction and fiction but rather to enhance engagement.

In blending fiction with nonfiction, Pyne (2009) reminds us that there are two non-negotiable rules in nonfiction: Rule 1 dictates that we can't make anything up, and Rule 2 mandates that we must include everything that matters. Rule 1 is an unyielding principle, a bedrock for every writer in research-based nonfiction where truth is paramount and there's no room for compromise. Rule 2 should allow for a degree of flexibility.

The commitment to the readers can't be overlooked. Nonfiction commits its readers that it will impart valuable knowledge (Rachlin, 2009). When done effectively, nonfiction books can become essential resources for readers in their everyday lives or present a subject in a captivating manner. The challenge is still how to make informative nonfiction accessible to both scholarly and general readers.

Numerous books dealing with profound subjects have attained best-seller status. They accomplish this by presenting their content in an easy-to-understand manner.

Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman (2011) got into the list of *New York Times* bestsellers. Kahneman travels into the intricacies of human thought processes and behaviour. Reviewers lauded the book as a masterpiece and one of the greatest and most engaging collections of insights into the human mind. It's branded as a treasure trove of wisdom accumulated over five decades of rigorous scientific work, presented with humility and brilliance.

Books like these have made their mark. Their success can be attributed to the writers' ability to break down complex ideas into simpler concepts, making them easier for readers to digest. It isn't easy for all nonfiction writers. Zinsser (1976 [2005]) understands this better when he looks at fiction and nonfiction closely. He says that fiction authors,

are writing about a world of their invention, often in an allusive style that they have also invented ... we have no right to tell them, 'That's wrong.' We can only say, 'It doesn't work for me.' Nonfiction writers get no such break. They are infinitely accountable: to the facts, to the people they interviewed, to the locale of their story and to the events that happened there. They are also accountable to their craft and its perils of excess and disorder: losing the readers, confusing the reader, boring the reader, and not keeping the reader engaged from beginning to end. (p. 246)

A lively writing style attracts readers, departing from the dry and matter-of-fact tone associated with scientific subjects. Formal and technical styles suit articles better. When we write a sentence, we should devise a style that will only draw, not scare, readers. A personalised style is the best way to engage readers. That's why nonfiction authors spice up their content with stories, real or created, and humour to make the reading experience more enjoyable and accessible. This approach need not dilute the seriousness of the subject or sacrifice its rigour, provided we are aware of what we are doing in our writing.

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CHAPTER 3

It's About Discipline, and More

Abstract Crafting nonfiction necessitates effective organisation. This chapter discusses writing as a whole, concentrating on the essential skills and training required by writers. Beyond being merely a skill, writing should be cultivated as a habit, ideally becoming a daily practice in due course. Cultivating writing as a habit requires regularity, making it a daily commitment. The chapter emphasises that writing is not just a skill or habit but also an attitude. Successful writers possess qualities such as sustained curiosity about their surroundings, creativity for producing original works, empathy towards others and a sense of responsibility to their society. This chapter encourages readers to try the techniques to become successful writers. The chapter provides insights into developing and enhancing writing, recommending techniques like free writing and open writing.

Keywords Writing discipline • Writing skills • Writing habits • Creativity • Freewriting • Open-ended writing • Writing time

Is crafting nonfiction less challenging than creating fiction? The obstacle of writing nonfiction is not hard to remove though. Lacking is the interest, not the ability; it's the motivation, not the availability of time, and it's the determination to complete, not other responsibilities. There are no

insurmountable difficulties. Rather, it's a matter of not knowing how to organise the writing life. It's about a disciplined writing life.

One needs to be quite creative in turning around the circumstances in their favour to carry on with their writing projects. A solid work in the form of a book remains in the knowledge domain forever, even after the writer has vanished from this world. A book will have a lasting effect on the writer, much more than the effect an article can produce.

Writing is a skill, no question about it, but it can be developed as a habit, like reading. Writing as a skill cannot be picked up as easily as, say, driving. It's something that's cultivated, often unknowingly, within us. Human habits are cultivated through repetition and reinforcement, whereby a specific behaviour or routine is consistently performed. Repetition sustains a habit. Any activity should be repeated regularly to be ingrained in us as a habit. A habit is reinforced when it gives gratification.

As a habit, writing can be developed and nurtured. Writers write regularly. They are in touch with words all the time. Everything else becomes secondary to them. Writing is like muscles; regular use makes them flexible, while neglect leads to stiffness. Regularity is the feature of writing. Leo Tolstoy wrote every day not to get out of his routine. Mark Twain would write after his breakfast until dinner, continuously for several hours.

Writers belong to a unique and gifted creed. They've an inherent talent that they carry with them, cherishing it over time or hidden until the right moment arrives to embrace it fully. Learning writing doesn't happen at once but appears in a lifetime bred through a multitude of experiences (Becker, 2020).

The path writers have travelled is seldom like a walk in the park. They persevere through difficulties, fully aware that establishing as a writer that can sustain their livelihood is a formidable task. Writing is a calling too, a vocation that requires dedication and willingness to work hard. A Chilean writer, Isabel Angélica Allende Llona, writes about the ecstasy of writing:

What I have learned in time, in 34 years of writing, is that it's a lot of work and if I just show up and I work and work, there is a moment, at some point, when it gives. And then you don't need the effort anymore, It's like dancing. I think that's the moment of writing when the book starts to happen. From that point on, it's all joy. At the beginning, it's work. (*The Writer, 2022*, p. 38)

Writing isn't just putting words on paper or computer; it also relates to one's attitude. According to Warner (2019), attitude, skill, habit and knowledge are interconnected elements in writing. Attitude encompasses a writer's beliefs and values about their work, while skill relates to their abilities, the habit of mind reflects their thought processes and knowledge represents what they understand (Warner, 2019). Apart from all these, writers have certain qualities.

Warner (2019) values qualities that writers should embody, including curiosity, openness, creativity, ethical conduct, responsibility, empathy, obsessiveness and a willingness to learn from experience. A proficient writer should possess the skills to conceive, draft, revise, edit and refine their work and critical thinking. Critical thinking is vital for understanding how ideas impact readers and crafting sentences that effectively serve their purpose. These are fundamental to writing, and a writer should excel in each of them. If any of these are lacking, they can be developed through practice.

Are you now feeling motivated to write? If you've knowledge about a subject and a background in it and are eager to write, nonfiction is an ideal path to pursue. Do not hesitate. Zinsser (1976 [2005]) affirms,

Writing is thinking on paper. Anyone who thinks clearly can write clearly, about anything at all. Science, demystified, is just another nonfiction subject. Writing, demystified, is just another way for scientists to transmit what they know. (pp. 148–149)

Learning the skills commences during the early years of academic training. When we were students, we submitted assignments and teachers marked them as guiding areas that needed improvement. While we all might not have had aspirations to become a writer then, this training instilled in us the principles of writing. Even though many budding non-fiction writers may not immediately realise the value of these lessons, they become aware as they start writing.

Writers who work on research-based nonfiction grapple with a writing style when addressing scientific topics. The conventional academic writing style is not the best choice in the nonfiction we are discussing here, as it can deter many non-specialised readers. The primary audience for specialised subjects is readers within the field or those with a keen interest in it. While dealing with a specialised theme, the aim should be to reach a

broader readership. We want to break the barriers to sales and make our book accessible. Academic style should make necessary adaptations to succeed in this.

Ready to start? Writers who are novices and want to enter the writing world try freewriting techniques. It's like an athlete who does their daily physical practice. Elbow (1998a) writes:

Try, then, to write words on paper to permit an interaction between you and not you. You are building someone to talk to. This means two stages: first put out words on paper as freely as possible, trying to be so fully involved that you don't even think about it and don't experience any gap between you and the words: just talk onto the paper. But then, in the second stage, stand back and make as large a gap as you can between you and the words: set them aside and then pick them up and try to read them as though they came out of someone else. Learn to interact with them, and react to them. Learn to let them produce a new reaction or response in you. (pp. 55–56)

Freewriting results in writing that are better than most slow and careful compositions that take a lot of time (Elbow, 1998a). Elbow describes free-writing as automatic writing, babbling or jabbering, which is an effective method for improving writing. The technique involves writing continuously for 10 minutes initially but can be extended to 15 or 20 minutes. During this time, you write without looking back, not correcting spelling mistakes, not pausing to search for words, and do so quickly. In freewriting, there's no time for editing. Elbow emphasises:

It is an exercise in bringing together the process of producing words and putting them down on the page. Practised regularly, it undoes the ingrained habit of editing at the same time you are trying to produce. It will make writing less blocked because words will come more easily. (p. 6)

In freewriting, give your thoughts complete freedom and don't censor yourself, even if it leads to the use of strong language. Leave your concern with logical flow for now; let it be irrational. It's simply an exercise. Freewriting is a powerful tool when you find yourself facing obstacles like writer's block and procrastination. Regard it as a strategy to break through those obstacles.

Open-ended writing is another method to get used to writing habits. Elbow (1998b) finds it a technique for thinking, seeing and feeling new things and giving birth to an unknown, unthought-of piece of writing.

According to him, this is ideal for situations when you've something to write but you don't know what. He says:

[O]pen-ended writing process as a voyage in two stages: a sea voyage and a coming to new land. For the sea voyage you are trying to lose sight of land—the place you began. Getting lost is the best source of new material. In coming to a new land you develop a new conception of what you are writing about—a new idea or vision—and then you gradually reshape your material to fit this new vision. (pp. 50–51)

The technique asks you to do uninterrupted writing for 10–20 minutes, continuing until you've exhausted all your immediate thoughts. Once done, pause writing. Take a moment to review what you've written to identify the central point or theme. Condense this insight into a single sentence. The distilled sentence may reveal the main idea or a new, emerging concept. Use the initial sentence as a springboard for a fresh, unbroken session of writing. Keep writing wherever your thoughts lead you. Over time, it's common to lose sight of your original starting point. If that happens, pause, refocus and write down a new central sentence. Repeat this cycle until you reach the desired outcome.

Open-ended writing is effective when you sense you've something to convey but aren't entirely certain what it is. It requires a willingness to embrace both time and chaos as your thoughts evolve (Elbow, 1998b). Those who attempt research-based nonfiction writing might discover that open-ended writing proves effective for at least some, if not all, of their writing.

Writing is an enjoyable act done in solitude. The happiness it brings is immense. This is why people aspire to be writers, as a means to find fulfillment and meaning in life. They find happiness in every sentence they manage to craft, regardless of the effort and suffering it may entail. They know it can be a challenging and painstaking effort, yet they can't resist its rewards. It's like eating a gooseberry, initially sour, but as you continue to chew, you'll discover its sweetness, which is enhanced when you take a sip of water. You don't want to throw away the gooseberry because it's sour. Sweetness is not far from sour.

Writing is like a regular dedicated physical exercise for an athlete. Good writing relies on practice; the more you practice, the more efficiently you perform (Bell, 2019). Whether in fiction or nonfiction writing may not be a nine-to-five job for many writers. Write regularly; even a page a day can accumulate into pages and pages and eventually a book.

Is there an ideal time for writing? For some, morning is the right time, like Virginia Woolf. Some choose to write between midnight and 2 a.m., like Douglas Coupland, a Canadian novelist famous for his bestseller *Generation X*. Some full-time writers write 4–6 hours a day or put in about 30 hours per week. Others set a target of words, ranging from 500 to 2000 or a certain number of pages every day. Stephen King, who published over 50 books, most of which were best sellers, had the habit of writing 2000 words a day. Haruki Murakami gets up at 4 a.m. to work for 5–6 hours daily. Ernest Hemingway preferred to write in the mornings when there was no one to disturb him. Simon de Beauvoir, the French thinker and writer, wrote from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and resumed at 5 p.m. to finish at 9 p.m.

What suits you is the best time. It'll depend on one's personality, capacity, energy, motivation, interest and several other things. Writers find what works well and what doesn't serve them for effective writing. This may take some time to realise, like knowing the self. Try for a few days to see the best time for your productive writing. You can always change until you discover the right time. But never wait for a time to arrive. It doesn't come that way.

See the oft-repeated quote of E. B. White: 'A writer who waits for ideal conditions under which to work will die without putting a word on paper' (Plimpton & Crowther, 1969). Stephen King (2000) suggests writers should strive to write to the best of their abilities. He advises constructing our toolbox and then building the necessary skills to carry it with us. There's no such thing as an ideal condition. Nothing will wait for us to put our ideas on the page. We must make our conditions perfect as much as possible. We've to create time for it, whether it's 15 minutes or 2 hours. Get used to it; make it a habit, part of the daily routine. Gradually, it'll integrate into your life, and you'll find it difficult to pass a day without writing something.

Writers should have one thing in common: the zest to write. Many of them nourished the desire to write. They were making their effort through reading, observing, jotting down and thinking all their life. The motivation to write comes from within. Nobody forced them to write. They knew that one day they would make it. These writers are propelled by an insatiable love for words and an intense need to share their stories with the world. The drive to become a writer can happen at any time. There's no age for writing.

Frank McCourt, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author, penned *Angela's Ashes* after retiring. Harriet Huntington Doerr at the age of 73 published her debut novel. Mary Wesley, an English novelist, achieved fame at the age of 70 with her first novel, *Jumping the Queue*. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, an English novelist, wrote her science fiction novel *Frankenstein* at the age of 18. Annelies Marie Frank, known for her famous diary, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, wrote it while she was in hiding during World War II, starting at the age of 13. Susan Eloise Hinton, an American writer, published her novel *The Outsiders*, which became a classic in young adult literature when she was 16 years old. Christopher James Paolini, writer and screenwriter, was 15 years old when he wrote his first novel, *Eragon*. Any age is good, young or old.

Aspiring writers develop their writing skills. It starts with a love for learning—Cook and Hunt (2021) wrote. The passion for acquiring new knowledge with an open mind can take us a long way. This newfound knowledge is not limited to writing skills alone. In the digital age, formal education is not required to acquire new knowledge and become successful. Success is possible without the support of formal or higher education. Examples abound: Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, Oprah Winfrey, Walt Disney and Rachael Ray.

The fringe benefit of learning new things is that you can integrate this knowledge into your writing. In research-based nonfiction writing, upgrading your knowledge and skills transforms what you write and what you publish.

Writers exhibit relentless dedication in their pursuit of the written word, investing countless hours and making sacrifices to nurture their talent. They willingly burn the midnight oil (in fact, electricity) to pour their hearts and souls into their work. Going above and beyond, they traverse the extra mile to chase their lifelong dream. This unwavering determination persists even when writers juggle responsibilities as students or employees.

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CHAPTER 4

The Gauntlet

Abstract Becoming a writer is a long way for many. Writing is a self-fulfilling activity. It requires motivation and consistent effort over an extended period before achieving success. While it brings intrinsic benefits to the writer, it is undeniably laborious. On the journey to be a writer, individuals encounter certain challenging stages. Doubts about abilities can affect the confidence that may persist in the mind. Hurdles like procrastination and writer's block may impede progress towards achieving the writing goals. Overcoming these hurdles is crucial for writers. Such challenges can arise at any point in a writer's career, and this chapter encourages writers to be mindful of these obstacles while providing practical strategies for overcoming them. The chapter asks writers to be self-motivated and determined to achieve successful writing.

Keywords Procrastination • Writer's block • Writing career

Writing is a profoundly serious undertaking, yet it's equally self-fulfilling. For those on the path of becoming a writer, the journey extends throughout a lifetime, marked by inevitable obstacles that are par for the course. As a cognitive activity, writing is intricately linked to thoughts, motivation, interests and the rewards it offers.

Amid the writing process, writers may experience a waning of interest, leading them to abandon a project altogether. Some may succumb to procrastination, delaying their writing when confronted with difficulties. The notorious writer's block is a known hurdle encountered by many.

The trust in the ability to write must be sustained from the moment aspiration is oozing from within you. It's the confidence that Zinsser ([1976 \[2005\]](#)) and many established writers have stressed. You might be familiar with the imposter syndrome, which is writers' persistent inability to believe that writing success is deserved and has been legitimately achieved through their efforts. Even when evidence of success is manifested in published works and positive reviews, writers tend to believe that their success was purely due to luck and that they didn't genuinely deserve it ([Cook & Hunt, 2021](#)).

If you're writing your first book, you might worry about your confidence to complete the work you've begun. Don't give in. While it might not be easy to overcome them completely, you can combat them by focusing more diligently on your work. Tell yourself repeatedly that you'll give it your best and finish it. Your brain will listen to it, the universe will hear that, and you'll be able to continue with your work.

Writers generally began their journeys in the same way, commencing with the creation of their first book and gradually developing confidence and self-assurance. Each new piece of work continues to build their confidence.

Even writers with numerous publications aren't immune to occasional self-doubt. They wonder whether their ideas will echo with an audience or if there'll be any interest in their work. No writer, regardless of their standing, can be sure how their work will be received until it's published. This constant pressure stays with them until their creations are released. Not all works by even the most celebrated writers achieve the same level of popularity.

Thoughts might cross your mind while engaged in writing. You may be doubting your ability to achieve the goal. Don't let such thoughts affect you. One thing is certain: no one, not even you, can predict whether the book you're writing will be a hit or not. The book is incomplete and hasn't taken its final form yet. Believe in the capacity to create something that can be long cherished. An unflinching faith in the belief that success is attainable can help you persevere through the challenges of writing.

Writing a book is a long-term endeavour, and maintaining one's interest in both the book and the act of writing may not be easy. It's deeply

intertwined with an individual's nature and personality. People exhibit varied traits in their behaviour. Some possess strong determination, while others may be indecisive. Determined individuals show perseverance, persisting through difficulties and setbacks. Let's explore some of these obstacles and strategies to overcome them.

Start with procrastination. Psychologists regard procrastination as a consequence of adverse pre-existing personality characteristics and life experiences, and it's an instance in which people fail to pursue their interests efficiently and productively (Milgram, 1991). Procrastination represents a dysfunction of human abilities that's crucial for coping with numerous tasks (Milgram, 1991). As Klingsieck (2013) noted, procrastination is a common behaviour exhibited by individuals in several aspects of their lives. Not typical for writers.

Writers procrastinate for a variety of reasons. As Zinsser (1976 [2005]) points out, writers may do anything to avoid writing. Their motivation to write a book might wane along the way, leading to a loss of interest in the project, which they then set aside in favour of other tasks.

People work more effectively and efficiently when they get tangible rewards for their efforts. They favour rewards that offer immediate gratification and tasks that demand less sustained effort over those that aren't immediate and necessitate prolonged exertion.

Excuses are put forward for not writing—finding the task boring, not progressing with expectations, and the weight of other pressing work commitments and responsibilities. If you examine these reasons closely, many are mere justifications for evading writing. They are trivial excuses to evade the drudgery of writing.

The most effective approach to addressing the tendency to procrastinate is to recognise it in one's life. When you're aware of this habit within yourself, make an honest effort to overcome it. Not neglect it. Focus on putting in your best work within the constraints of time, resources and abilities. Remind yourself that the task at hand is a major undertaking, and it has the potential to bring you long-lasting benefits. Books survive even after we pass on.

Procrastination is deeply interlaced with our core values. People tend to excel when they receive recognition from their peers, friends and family. This recognition isn't easily attainable; it's rooted in an individual's qualities. If an individual values reliability, for which they've previously received recognition, they're likely to keep their reputation as a dependable person and consistently seek the approval of others. Sticking to this value may

manifest in their dedication to meeting deadlines and honouring their word. Failing to meet deadlines for assigned tasks is inconceivable for them. They can't bear the thought of facing criticism for not fulfilling their commitments. It's a matter of their credibility, which they don't want to sacrifice.

Perseverance in the pursuit of your goal of finishing the book is prime. More than a task, make it an integral part of your life. Recognise the personal obstacles that may hinder progress and address them earnestly. The key isn't to defer writing. Inculcate a sense of discipline within you. As you encounter obstacles, confront them head-on without procrastination and let the pursuit of your aim become an ingrained part of your existence. Over time, this dedication will lead to notable strides in achieving your aspirations.

Jesus told His followers: 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:62). The point is the commitment to one's faith and mission. The metaphor of placing one's hand on the plough and refraining from looking back conveys the notion that once an individual has committed, they should follow it with resolute diligence, not allowing distraction or temptation to waver in their faith.

Writers vividly picture the day they hold the published book in their hands, its cover bearing their names. In these moments of visualisation, they focus solely on the finished product. During his long years in prison, Nelson Mandela ([1995](#)) envisioned the day when he would regain his freedom, travel through the rural outskirts and savour the taste of liberty as a free man.

There's another challenge—the writer's block. Writers might encounter this in their writing. It can be expected at any point during the writing, regardless of the experience and fame of the writer. Both novices and experienced writers face writer's block ([Mammadova, 2022](#)).

Writer's block is the inability to start or maintain writing, not stemming from a lack of fundamental skill or dedication but rather arising from specific emotional and behavioural factors like anxiety, frustration, anger and confusion ([Rose, 1984](#)). For Ernest Hemingway, the best way is always to stop when doing good and when he knows what will happen next. If you do that every day when you're writing, you'll never be stuck. Stephen Hawking ([2011](#)) experienced writer's block when he was writing his ground-breaking work on the history of time.

Writer's block can have manifestations such as not writing despite being intellectually capable, and suffering because they aren't writing (Flaherty, 2004). Writer's block, which means different things to different writers, kicks in when the ability to manage writing, self-belief, optimism or resilience fall (Thomas, 2015). Writer's block hits you when self-doubt creeps in, causing you to question your confidence to write. You may be dissatisfied with what you've already written, wondering if it's worth or of quality. J. K. Rowling, while writing her Harry Potter series, had difficulties at times and found ways of overcoming them.

Some writers engage in endless contemplation without putting their thoughts on paper, postponing the process because they feel their ideas haven't fully blossomed. The best way to address this situation is to write, write and write. No shortcut. Stay motivated and stick to your schedule and deadlines no matter what. Take regular, inspiring breaks to revitalise your creativity and enthusiasm. Consider relaxation techniques like mindfulness or meditation. Keep your central theme at the forefront of your mind. Don't let the block paralyse your writing.

Alexandra Diaz, the author of several books, including *The Only Road*, *The Crossroads*, *Santiago's Road Home* and *Farewell Cuba, Mi Isla*, tells us:

There is no formula [for] how to write a book and everyone works differently, so you have to figure out what works for you. (*The Writer*, 2022, p. 40)

Cory Doctorow, author of *With a Little Help* suggests:

Write every day. Anything you do every day gets easier. If you're insanely busy, make the amount that you write every day small (100 words? 250 words?) but do it every day. Write even when the mood isn't right. You can't tell if what you're writing is good or bad while you're writing it. Write when the book [stinks] and it isn't going anywhere. Just keep writing. Write even when the world is chaotic. You don't need a cigarette, silence, music, a comfortable chair or inner peace to write. You just need 10 minutes and a writing implement. (cited in Silberman, 2012, pp. 3–4)

When you're stuck and unable to move forward, remind yourself that you aspire to be an accomplished writer. To reach there, you need to consistently engage in the act of writing and immerse yourself in reading. Simply focus on the task and labour without being overly attached to the anticipated results. The *Bhagavad Gita* reminds us to work without attachment to the outcomes. It says (in Sanskrit) *karmanyे vadhikaraste ma*

phaleshu kadachana, closely translated as ‘your right is to perform your duty only, but never to its fruits. Let not the fruits of action be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction.’ The rewards will naturally follow. The only solution to overcome the hurdles is to work, and work.

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CHAPTER 5

What Subject?

Abstract Nonfiction writers tussle with the issue of selecting the right subject for their works. Numerous factors come into play when choosing an appropriate and marketable topic for nonfiction. This chapter explores the process involved in selecting a topic that can attract a broader readership. As outlined in the chapter, writers should keep their eyes and ears open to observe events in both their immediate and distant surroundings. These observations serve as sources for suitable topics that can become the central themes of nonfiction works. The writer's interest, knowledge and expertise in a specific field are equally crucial factors. These elements, when combined with market potential and the opportunity for a wider readership, contribute to the creation of engaging nonfiction. The chapter offers guidance on pinpointing subjects that can be developed into comprehensive nonfiction works.

Keywords Writing subjects • Fiction writers • Research-based nonfiction • Reading for writing

What subject should be considered for a nonfiction book? A question that perplexes many. Innumerable subjects are around us.

Writing a book just because you've expertise in a subject may not always work out. It's not wise as certain factors need to be considered before

finalising a topic. How do we know that there'll be readers for the book on the subject in which you're experienced and knowledgeable? This should be the first concern.

A book aims to reach readers, and of course, it should sell well. You don't want to write about something just to showcase your expertise or because you've a deep interest in the subject. Readers think differently. They look for something when they buy a book. What is this 'something' that the readers are looking for? This 'something' can't be predicted, either by a writer or by a publisher.

Writers must be aware of what is happening locally, nationally and internationally. Books are produced not just to cater to the local population. Publishers want to sell them worldwide. Publishing has embraced an international scope, especially in research-based nonfiction. Knowing the market for a book idea is the initial step for writers venturing into publishing. Lacking this information makes all other aspects of book writing futile.

Publishers are more discerning than writers. They wouldn't readily accept a typescript that doesn't have the market appeal. They have a sense of what will work with readers and what won't. Within publishing houses, the marketing team holds the expertise to assess the market pulse for a new book. It leverages advanced tools and skills to render well-informed judgements on a book's prospects. Marketing advisers are the ultimate gatekeepers; if they don't endorse a proposal, even a meticulously crafted one with substantial knowledge contributions, editors may shy away from it.

Poynter (2005) asks writers to be aware of the market for their books. Is the market large enough for the book? Are there enough readers to support you? It's not worth spending resources, energy and time on writing a book that will not attract readers. It's worth spending some time researching the market for an idea. You don't want to write the same one and reinvent the wheel. Novelty has its value. New perspectives are better than the old, overused views and standpoints. Strive for something fresh or something that offers room for a unique viewpoint. This enhances the likelihood of garnering interest from publishers, gaining acceptance from editors and reviewers, and selling the book. Readers are also discerning. They look for perspectives or content presented from an unusual angle.

Select a subject, idea or theme you feel comfortable working in that you've essential knowledge or information about, even if you're not an expert. Look at whether there's a demand for the subject in the contemporary nonfiction market.

Fiction writers draw from their personal experiences or use others' experiences they're familiar with. This approach provides authenticity to the narrative, a rich source of emotions to draw upon, and creates a story that readers can relate to. In nonfiction, the availability of knowledge or the willingness to acquire new knowledge should be the primary considerations.

The task of research-based nonfiction writers is to expose the gaps in the existing knowledge and make an argument for what needs to be done (Hayward, 2015). In this genre, the process of selecting a topic demands the utmost attention. Considerable effort and time are invested during this initial preparation phase, and the entire outcome relies on the theme you finally choose to explore and write.

Your chosen theme should, first and foremost, connect to your interests and evoke a sense of comfort, perhaps because of your prior knowledge or familiarity with it. If not, it's highly unlikely that the project will happen.

In the same way that a researcher diligently identifies gaps in the existing knowledge within their field, a writer remains observant of the world around them, always on the lookout for workable themes and topics. The moment may arrive unexpectedly, and when it does, seize it. In research-based nonfiction, just as in any other genre, extensive reading is indispensable. Reading isn't merely sustenance for thought; it nourishes your imagination, fosters visionary thinking and cultivates the germination of original ideas.

Stephen King (2000) says, 'If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time to write. Simple as that.' 'Read everything—trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. Read! You'll absorb it' (Faulkner, 1956, cited in Stein, 1956). Samuel Johnson believed that 'the greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading, to write; a man will turn over half a library to make one book' (Boswell, 1791 [2023]).

Start your research on the theme. Has anything been written about it? Are any books published on this or a closely related theme? Search everywhere you can, including library catalogues, the WorldCat website, book-sellers, databases such as the Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar and sources you can access. Do some searches on Amazon and Google Books to check this out. Ask artificial intelligence (AI) to give you the prospect report for a topic you're contemplating. There may be other similar books about the same subject. Make sure there's a glaring gap that can be filled with your idea and that there's room for a book. If not, go back to the drawing board and wait for new themes that appeal to you.

Joanna Penn (2018), in her book *How to Write Non-fiction*, discusses two distinct approaches to selecting a book topic: the top-down and bottom-up. The top-down approach entails first identifying a subject you're passionate about and then considering your target readers. Here, your interest takes precedence over your audience. In contrast, the bottom-up approach examines the market or the existing audience and then chooses a topic that caters to the specific readership and market demands. The topic can still connect to your interests or expertise. While it may be hard to embrace either method, adopt a dual approach simultaneously.

Nonfiction writers delineate the steps to follow in the development of an idea for a nonfiction book (Rachlin, 2009). Some of them are adaptable.

- Write down everything you can think of about your idea.
- Determine the merits of the idea by self-critiquing.
- Check the originality of your idea.
- Make a file folder of your idea.
- Gather research materials.

A good idea can lead to a good proposal. Publishers and agents always say, 'I want a book proposal that shows me the writer is passionate about his idea' (DeMuth, 2008, p. 2). Look for that.

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PART II

Crafting and Developing Content



CHAPTER 6

Readers First

Abstract This chapter elaborates on the underlying reasons that shape the rationale of nonfiction writing. A critical factor which writers should not overlook is the commitment to the readers for whom the book is intended. Established authors know their dedication and responsibilities to the readers. Neglecting these aspects can result in the writer falling short in their endeavours. To maintain focus on readers, the writer should consider the style, purpose and audience throughout the writing process. The chapter proposes techniques for these three elements in nonfiction writing. A conscientious effort by the writer to incorporate these aspects into their writing can lead to the creation of engaging nonfiction that garners wider acceptance, extending beyond the boundaries of specialist readers interested solely in the subject matter.

Keywords Research-based nonfiction • Readership • Writing style • Audience

A book is written for several reasons. One of them is to make it accessible to the intended readers. Readers come first, with the writer following suit. It's natural that nonfiction writers lose their focus and deviate from the original purpose. The responsibilities and commitment to the audience remain the core of writing.

Rendering research-based nonfiction accessible to a broader readership is always a challenge. Bowkett ([2009](#)) reminds nonfiction writers always to keep three things in mind: style, purpose and audience. It's not minimalistic to reduce the necessary components of nonfiction to these three elements. They are of value for creating good nonfiction.

When writers lose sight of the book's purpose and their target audience, failing to select the appropriate style for their writing, they risk diminishing its appeal. Writers may occasionally divert their attention from their target audience while writing, prioritising their deep dive into the subject rather than addressing the needs of their readers. This tendency arises when writers knowingly or unknowingly stray from their initial vision of catering to their audience, leaving them midway through their work. As a consequence, the book goes unnoticed when published, with readers hesitant to pick it up in bookstores.

Style refers to the type of language the writer is using, and the purpose is the reason for using the kind of language. The audience is your readers for whom you're writing. A variety of styles is available for nonfiction writers: persuading, instructing, reporting, explaining, recounting and discussing (Bowkett, [2009](#)). How can these or new styles be relevant for research-based nonfiction?

Specific styles of writing are considered acceptable in research-based nonfiction, following scientific conventions tailored to natural or social sciences. While the style can be more technical in the natural sciences, simplicity and clarity should prevail, even when dealing with complex subject matter. Writers should maintain a consistent style aligned with the intended purpose, as deviations can frustrate readers and hinder their engagement with the material.

Research-based nonfiction literature isn't meant for those in higher education institutions alone; it can also serve as educational material for school-aged children. A book on a relevant subject matter may be useful for both specialised readers and general readers. Adapting a writing style to match the intended audience is necessary for successful nonfiction writing. Keeping in mind a wider audience for the book is a more advantageous choice for both its acceptance and sales potential. Publishers would like to see the typescripts they receive have the potential for a wider readership than those limited to a specific group.

Get hold of a few books that have become popular in your area to see their style. There are books in specialised fields that have sold thousands of copies. Look at their style, format, presentation and approach to the

book's theme. They may be adaptable to your book. Aristotle's concept of mimesis states that imitation is a fundamental aspect of artistic creation.

After you've decided on a purposeful writing style and you're convinced of its suitability, shift your focus to the remaining two critical elements purpose and audience. Maintain consistency in purpose to cater to the specific needs and preferences of the chosen audience, whether they're children, adults or distinct groups like students, teachers or researchers. If a book is intended for children, the content should be crafted in a style that suits young readers.

Creative nonfiction writers add a flavour to writing on complicated subjects. A style that resonates well with its intended audience. Andy Field's celebrated book, *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*, has gone through several editions since it was first published in 2000. He subtitled it as *And Sex and Drugs and Rock 'N' Roll*. Field (2024) adopted a unique style in making statistics simple and accessible to even those who hate statistics. Humorous in presentation, he introduced characters who speak about statistical tests, their applicability, their use in research and the presentation of their results.

It's natural for writers to lose track of the style, purpose and audience when immersed in writing. A note containing the three elements of style, purpose and audience stuck on your computer screen will remind you about the trio. The short form for style, purpose and audience is a single word, SPA. It's easy to remember if you make a conscious effort while writing. If SPA rings at the back of your mind when you write every word, the first part of writing is covered. You begin to perceive every word as being crafted specifically for the intended reader rather than for yourself.

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CHAPTER 7

Time, Space, Schedule

Abstract There are some critical elements to successful writing. This chapter presents essential components to make writing successful. They are identifying productive time, creating a comfortable writing environment and maintaining a regular schedule. This chapter shows that the issue is not the absence of time for writing but it's a matter of priority. Writers wait for the perfect moment to write. Instead, they must proactively allocate time regularly to ensure the timely completion of their work. The chapter advocates for writers to find a distraction-free environment for regular writing, following a practical daily schedule, which will lead to the timely completion of the writing projects. The chapter illustrates how accomplished writers have incorporated these practices into their writing lives.

Keywords Successful writing • Writing time • Writing space • Writing schedule • Research-based nonfiction

A common refrain from writers is the difficulty of finding time. It's rarely not a lack of time but rather not having the skills to manage and optimise their time for writing. It's about preference and priorities.

Let's take the case of academics who produce research-based nonfiction. Jensen (2017) compares writing by academics to a non-urgent but

important task that's often put on the back burner. In academic nonfiction, therefore, writing is typically the first thing to get side-tracked due to the pressures of teaching, university service or unexpected tasks that arise from time to time. And there are many more excuses.

Mahatma Gandhi emphasised the wise use of time, saying that for him, the future depends on who you are today. When time is wisely used for your writing, the benefits are immense. Benjamin Franklin said that lost time is never found again. Stephen Covey ([1997](#)), in his influential book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, introduces the concept of putting first things first. The key is not to prioritise what's on your schedule but to schedule your priorities, he suggests.

Time is the very essence of the writing process. Forget about the pressures that take a toll on your 24-hour day. There's always time if you have a will. Writers make time to do their writing. Grumbling about time is the manifestation of procrastination. When a tiny part of the time, say about 10 per cent of the day, is used regularly and economically, it's enough to turn you into a nonfiction writer.

Suzan-Lori Parks, a Pulitzer Prize-winning American writer, couldn't emphasise the importance of time more. She says, 'The one constant that produces "success" is putting in the time. That is constant ... You have to get in the habit of showing up' (*The Writer*, [2022](#), p. 38).

Research-based nonfiction demands the best of our abilities to manage whatever time we have at our disposal. The success of a writing project relies on the time you invest in it, as the value of a product is determined by the labour dedicated to its creation, as Karl Marx ([1867 \[2009\]](#)) argued. The quality of time you spend on it is more important than the amount of time needed. Success isn't solely about the quality of the work produced but also about completing the project within the planned timeframe. Someone elsewhere in the world might be working on a book on a similar topic, and if their work is published before you complete yours, your book may become redundant. You can't work on a project indefinitely.

You need to spend your best time writing and make the most of it. The optimal time for your writing is when your mind is alert, your brain is fresh, and you can effectively generate ideas and words. Thomas ([2015](#)) asks us to allocate quality time for difficult and complex writing tasks and break down the available time into slots. Your mental state should be steady, calm and free from stress or, at the very least, controlled during writing sessions. You should be able to pinpoint the time when you're mentally alert, fresh, active and less susceptible to distractions.

Writing consumes many aspects of our lives, much like a sponge. It absorbs a considerable amount of the time, not visibly altering its shape. It demands sacrifices, such as bidding adieu to hobbies, leisure and pleasures. All for the sake of writing? Yes. But not completely or forever. Some of these are essential to rejuvenate the writing energy.

To fully immerse in the activity of writing, you'll forego the enjoyments you once relished. Watching movies, travelling, spending time with friends and other activities will take a back seat. Understand that these aspects aren't permanently removed from your life. The time you once spent on these activities is now redirected towards your current mission. At the same time, once you're deeply engrossed in writing, you may find it hard to derive the same level of enjoyment from the activities you once cherished. Concentrating on watching a movie, for example, might be difficult as your mind is preoccupied with writing-related thoughts. Even pleasurable trips may not give you the same satisfaction they used to produce. It's a sign that you're fully involved in your work on the book, which is excellent.

Set your deadline, taking into account your personal and professional commitments. Make it realistic. Hold on to it as if it were a sacred and unchangeable commitment, except in the case of unavoidable situations.

The basic idea is that there's time for anything and everything. It's a matter of choice and allocation. There are writers who, on average, publish a book every year while also juggling other responsibilities, just like many who aren't full-time writers. The issue isn't necessarily about the amount of time available but rather about maximising the time one can carve out amidst life and work. Otherwise, millions of books already written, with more being added as more individuals join the ranks of writers, wouldn't have happened. They used their time productively and wisely.

Daniel Levitin (2014), in his book, *The Organized Mind*, writes that for individuals who are engaged in any kind of creative pursuit (remember, writing nonfiction is also a creative enterprise), one of the goals in organising time is to maximise their creativity. Creative individuals organise their lives to optimise the likelihood of experiencing flow periods and maintaining them. To achieve this, individuals need to use methods or develop systems that encourage them to stick to the work they're committed to. Quite important is the view of Levitin (2014) in assessing the worth of time. Just see whether it's worth cleaning the garden or asking someone to do that to save you time for fruitful writing.

How do we manage and invest time creatively and constructively? Efficient time management, as described by Levitin (2014), a behavioural

scientist himself, primarily revolves around avoiding distractions. They can be internal or external. Levitin's mind-clearing exercise is meant to get rid of internal extractions. Then, manage your external distractions.

Maintaining focus is a cognitive process. To keep focus, the role of physical fitness and health is no less significant. For the sake of finding time to write, don't ever abandon your daily physical exercises. A healthy body hosts an attentive mind. Continue to walk, run or exercise in the gym, which stimulates you in distinctive ways. Many writers have acknowledged the role of walking in improving their creativity. Walking stimulates your thought process, leading to fascinating ideas that can be utilised in writing. Friedrich Nietzsche said that all truly great thoughts are conceived while walking. The philosopher David Thoreau wrote that the moment his legs begin to move, his thoughts begin to flow. Charles Dickens was known for his penchant for long walks.

A major external distraction is the Internet tools around us and the modern gadgets. Social media, the Internet and cell phones have become essentials, like air and water. The influence of these has become powerful, and human brains are habituated to their frequent use. But these must be detached from a writer for the duration of the writing time. One must be determined to guard against these tools while writing progresses. Still better maybe cut down on their use for the entire writing phase of your book to allow for more thinking and concentration on the themes of the book you're working on.

Interruptions have destructive disadvantages. Intermittent email pop-ups and frequent website hopping lower your productivity. The focused attention of the mind is diverted by the email alerts on the writing device that tempt you to check it quickly. The content of the email may put you off and make you address the matter immediately, setting aside writing. The tendency to visit websites while writing, even if it's to find some facts, is to be avoided. Checking sites for information doesn't help either. The presence of the cell phone is another huge distraction. The best way is to keep the switched-off phone away from you while you're in your writing space.

Software programs are helpful. Freedom (<https://freedom.to/> freedom-for-writers) is one. It can block the diversions you don't want to interfere with your writing, and you can be shielded from apps, websites, notifications, emails and social media during the time you want. Writing sessions can be scheduled to avoid these distractions; at the end, you can see how much of your time has been saved productively.

A working space is a basic thing. It doesn't matter whether it's just a table and a chair, a spacious room, or the corner of a coffee shop—a space where you feel comfortable working without distractions. Jerry Jenkins, the author of about 200 books of fiction and nonfiction, began his writing career seated on a couch facing a typewriter placed on a wooden plank suspended by two kitchen chairs placed next to each other. Agatha Christie wrote many novels in public places, including train stations and coffee shops. Ernest Hemingway wrote in cafés and bars in Paris and even while standing at a bar. J. K. Rowling crafted a significant portion of the early Harry Porter series in cafes. George Orwell found solace in writing in a makeshift shed in his garden. Maya Angelou opted for hotel rooms as her writing sanctuaries.

Make the place, wherever it is, your haven for the entire duration of your writing. It might turn out to be your permanent writing space for the rest of your life. Choose a location that's free from noise, voices or other interference, especially if you prefer a quiet environment, not like my friend who wrote better by the ocean. If it's a space within your office, make sure that it's insulated from visitors.

You're now scheduling. Mammadova (2022) wants writers to schedule every day and establish short- and long-term goals. Before a block of writing time is earmarked, think about the deadline you want to set for the book. It can be from a few months to a year or even more. Take a year if you're a beginner. You've 365 days in 52 weeks. Although all the days are to be seen as a block, the days for breaks, holidays and other unexpected contingencies are to be factored in. Leaving 5 weeks for all these, you get 47 weeks or 329 days in the year to work on the book project. Say you choose a 6-day work per week instead of a 7-day one. It's understandable to have a day off in a week to unwind and refresh. You get 282 days. Save 60 per cent of it, which is 169 days, for the first completed draft. The remaining 40 per cent is for two purposes. Take the 25 per cent, i.e. 71 days, for collection and review of the material, statistical analysis and other non-writing tasks, as the book is research-based. Revising the first draft through the final draft can take the last 15 per cent of the time—42 days.

To begin with, have a low count of 2 hours per day, exclusively for writing and not for any other activities such as collecting material, analysing data, constructing tables if they're required in the book, drawing diagrams and charts if used, and for any other tasks to complete the book. They're mechanical tasks which don't need as much attention as needed for writing. Calculate the number of words, say 500 words, that can be written in

2 hours every day. Divide 80,000 by the number of words required to complete the book, i.e. 500 words per day. It's 160 days. From the calculation, you've 282 working days in the year to work on the book.

The question is whether you'll be able to write 500 words in the allocated 2 hours. Try and see how it's moving in the first two weeks. If it is hard to reach the target, increase your working time by 2.5 hours a day. The human brain doesn't work always in the same rhythm. You may write more or less of the targeted words every day. Monitor it for a week and see whether it meets your goal.

The estimation of 2 hours is a modest figure. Note that you're spending only 564 hours in the year (2 hours X 6 days X 47 weeks) for the book. This is not a big deal for a lasting achievement. You might also consider increasing your daily writing hours as momentum builds up, which is the effect of immersed writing. Embrace it.

Grab every second and utilise it for the book, which has multiple components of literature, data, analysis, discussion, theory, tables, charts, formatting and organising. Don't limit the work to the originally allocated 2 hours you've scheduled. Then it becomes a mechanical process, thinking about the book only when your appointed time arrives. If a few additional minutes are available during the day, make use of them to collect literature or data or construct tables and charts. Allow the project to reside within you, breathe life into it and water its growth.

You've now carefully thought through and established your daily writing routine. Reflect on whether it works constructively for you, accommodating all your personal or professional commitments, especially if you're juggling work. If you've got the flexibility of ample time, setting aside workable blocks of dedicated writing time is essential. Finalise the specific days and times for your writing sessions. Mark them in your digital calendar and set reminders on your devices. This serves as a daily prompt, at least during the initial one or two weeks, until this routine becomes a part of your daily life. This writing regime is sacred. It should persist, regardless of other demands on your time. Plan your life around it and avoid any disruptions to this routine. Breaks can lead to a diminished interest in the book project, jeopardising writing enthusiasm. In that case, your project stalls, and you struggle to revive it, or perhaps it even meets a natural end.

The planning is now done. The writing space is ready, time is found, and the schedule is prepared. The work can now begin. But wait.

When do you want to spend the 2 hours for writing? Do you think the time of the day or night is more productive for you? As mentioned earlier, the ideal writing time varies from person to person. No two individuals are the same, more so when spending their most productive time in a day. Some prefer mornings, while others excel during late-night work sessions. Some feel better doing it in the early hours of the day when the world around them is still silent. They work effectively after having a sleep of seven hours or so and when the brain is alert. This is up to the writers to decide and try the best time for them to work on the project. The common denominator is when the brain operates optimally and when it's not fatigued from a full day's work.

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CHAPTER 8

On Target

Abstract This chapter goes into the concept of writing targets. Establishing a writing target proves beneficial for nonfiction writers, enabling them to monitor their progress and complete their book projects successfully within set timelines. Given that a typical nonfiction work encompasses around 80,000 words, a formidable goal for many, this chapter introduces techniques for setting realistic targets. It demonstrates how writers need not feel overwhelmed by the prospect of completing such an extensive word count. The chapter provides a model monitoring sheet to assist writers in tracking their writing pace and effectively managing their set targets. Recognising that writing demands the total engagement of the writer, at least for the duration of the writing project, the chapter shows the importance of keeping thoughts alive and capturing them during the writing process.

Keywords Writing target • Nonfiction book • Monitoring writing

A book that runs into several thousand words takes time to finish, perhaps a year or more. On the face of it, it looks like Herculean. You're not sure

whether you could reach the end of the tunnel or when. But there's a way to do it by not being intimidated by the length of the work you plan to write.

How can you go about writing your book? There's no universally right way or wrong way. It's your way that suits you best. Still, you need to think about it and plan for it.

A writer should have a target to aim for. A nonfiction book is usually in the range of 70,000–90,000 words. It will be around 200–250 pages if there aren't too many tables and charts. It's quite handy and good in size. The publisher can price it appropriately.

Let's set a target of 80,000 words. Aiming for 80,000 words can be quite daunting initially. It will take at least 160 days or more than five months to complete if 500 words are written a day on average, as we calculated in the previous chapter. This is just to finish the first rough draft—the clay. More days will be spent on several drafts before a polished product is ready to show the world.

One way to make the target less overwhelming is to start with a small number of word lengths. John Steinbeck, a Nobel laureate, advises us to abandon the idea that we are ever going to finish a book.¹ Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page for each day, which helps. Then when it is finished, we're always surprised.

Initially set it at 50,000 words. Mark this figure in your Excel spreadsheet (Fig. 8.1) where you monitor the daily progress of writing. Daily 500 words mean it's a matter of 100 days or about three months. As the writing gathers speed, you'll find that there's more to write beyond the set limit of 50,000 words. The initial fear and doubt about achieving the target are no longer there. Once you've done about 20,000 words, your impetus to write is increased, which accelerates further, giving you the drive to write more intensely. Closer to 50,000 words, stretch the target to 60,000 and then to 70,000. Carry on the same until you set 80,000 words.

By now, you should be writing more than 500 words a day and you're in the right spirit, provided everything else, such as the time you spend on

¹ https://dangerousminds.net/comments/abandon_the_idea_that_you_are_ever_going_to_finish_john_steinbeck

Book Writing	
Started date	
Total target in words	
Daily target in words	
Count of words	
Chapter 1	
Chapter 2	
Chapter 3	
Chapter 4	
Chapter 5	
Chapter 6	
Chapter 7	
References	
Tables (No. and words)	
Figures (No.)	
Prelims	
Total number of words written	
Total number of words to be written	
Written today	

Fig. 8.1 Monitoring spreadsheet

it, unsatiated desire, flow of energy, health, no distraction from other commitments and of course your determination and self-motivation are the same. Stay inspired and determined, which takes you forward with your writing. As days and weeks pass, the goal of reaching 80,000 words draws nearer and nearer. It's a different feeling when you have only completed a thousand words out of a target of 80,000.

A spreadsheet is handy to monitor writing, as shown in Fig. 8.1. Fill in the figures. The starting date is to know how long it took to complete it.

Against the count of words in the spreadsheet, chapters and other sections of the book are entered. When writing is finished for the day, or any part of the writing segment of the day, enter the total words, which is shown in the bottom left corner of your Word document. In a single day, you might work on different chapters and other sections like References (good to have a separate document although you'll later need to organise references by chapter), prelims which include the table of contents, list of figures, tables, maps, acronyms and abbreviations, acknowledgements and preface. If the tables are in a separate document and not part of the chapters, count both the number of tables and the total words of the tables. Enter the figures against them in the spreadsheet. In the cell next to the total number of words written, use the SUM function of Excel to add the numbers for your chapters, references, prelims and tables. Excel will automatically count the figures when the figures are changed. Deducting the number of words written from the target words gives you the remaining words to be written—just to see how close you're to the finish, which is an encouragement to go further on your way.

Track the writing pace. Put your figures in the spreadsheet after every session. Expect dry days in your writing process. Some days you may not be able to reach the 500 words aimed at. Other days you may not be able to write a single word. Don't be disappointed. Some days are filled with sunshine. There are also days with overcast. There'll be days you might finish about 1000 words. Never stop even if you exceed the 500-word limit when you still have the allocated time left before the scheduled session ends.

At times you wait too long to write even a single word. Quite normal. In the final minutes before the allocated time for the day expires, you may notice ideas tickling in your brain and words flowing through your fingertips. At last, ideas and words come out in shape after longing for too long and only a few minutes left. You've planned the day after the writing hours. A schedule to comply. What to do?

If there's nothing urgent and life can go without you, don't leave the room. Hold on to your chair. Stopping the train of thought abruptly is disastrous. They may not come back tomorrow when you're ready to resume writing. Catch the moment of inspiration, thoughts, ideas and words. It's your priority after you've decided to write a book. Persist until

every idea has been exhausted and transferred to your paper or computer. Depart the room with a sense of contentment as peace and fulfilment envelope you.

One day, a colleague of mine proudly showed me his first book. I flipped through the pages, admired his hard work and even noted that the book was published by a top publisher.

As I was about to leave him after appreciating his hard work, he sadly added,

My wife has left me.

I didn't know which one was important for him—the book or the wife.

Keeping the topic alive in the mind is the best way to produce thoughts in words. Some writers write first in their mind before they sit in front of the computer. It becomes quicker to transfer ideas to paper. You no longer wait for ideas and words to emerge; they flow organically because you've contemplated them while not actively writing.

Accomplished writers have recommended taking notes when new ideas come to you, wherever you are. Have a pen and paper or a gadget with you always. Apps such as Evernote or OneNote work on your phone that you can carry always and everywhere. The tide never returns, much like our thoughts and ideas. As one departs, a new one takes shape. The first ones disappear. Never lose them.

The following is the introduction of a nonfiction, *Climbing Up*. It's about the story of an organisation of palm workers in southern India.

A morning in the winter days of December at Cheruvarakonam in Parassala, bordering the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. A young protestant priest was preparing himself for the Holy Eucharist. Buttoning up the spotless cassock, he peeped through the wooden window panes of his room. The Sun was shining bright. The lush green vegetation around wore a stimulating look amidst the shower of sun rays. Gentle breeze with refreshing coolness rattled palm leaves in the height. It is a pleasant day, the priest thought. He felt himself unusually energetic and enthusiastic.

While standing close to the window, appreciating the beauty of nature in one of its rare moments, he saw three men rushing towards the vestry. Partially clad in loin clothes, they stopped just in front of the door and called

“*Achho*” (father). The priest went up to them. Drops of sweat were dripping down their chests. He looked at their eyes and understood the meaning of *Achho*. After a pause, he uttered only a single word:

“*Aaara?*” (who?).

“Chellan,” came the reply in chorus.

The priest went in and settled himself in his armchair. The group left walking slowly. For the next few seconds, things flashed through the mind of the priest. He thought about the ramifications of the news the group brought to him; yes, the things that were going to be followed after the fall. The fall of a tapper.

I wrote it while waiting at the train station for my wife to be picked up (Sooryamoorthy, 2000).

REFERENCE

Sooryamoorthy, R. (2000). *Climbing up: The story of Palmyra Worker's Development Society*. PWDS.



CHAPTER 9

Tech-Savvy

Abstract This chapter focuses on technical proficiency in creating nonfiction. Nonfiction demands applying technological tools to optimise efficiency and ensure the typescript's technical integrity. The chapter introduces writers to valuable tools, including software programs that can be adapted into the writing process. Research-based nonfiction often necessitates programs for data management, data analysis and the creation of charts and images. Similarly, a user-friendly software program is essential for organising references. The chapter introduces a commonly used reference management program and provides a step-by-step guide. In nonfiction, an index is another component.

Keywords Technology • Research-based nonfiction • Technological tools • Software programs • SPSS • EndNote • Referencing • Indexing

The tools for writing have come a long way, evolving from handwriting with a pen or pencil on paper to the typewriter and, finally, the computer. One can dictate their thoughts to a computer if typing is troublesome. Modern technology can convert spoken words into written text, which can then be edited and revised. AI has made things much easier on our technological tools.

Some write first on paper before typing into a computer or dictating to the computer programs. Technology has made writing a fast and better option for writers. Adopting suitable tools for writing doesn't harm writing or your thinking process. Tools help you work smarter. With such tools, revising your drafts becomes easier and less time-consuming compared to writing on paper and using a typewriter.

Taking advantage of the features of technology for research-based non-fiction brings benefits to writers. For a writer, the tools are meant to cover aspects of data-based nonfiction. They include but aren't limited to word processing software (Microsoft Word, Google Docs or LaTeX), note-taking apps (Evernote or OneNote), reference management software (EndNote, Zotero, Mendeley, BibTex, BibLaTeX or RefWorks), databases of relevant data and literature (Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Google Scholar or specific databases), mind mapping software (MindMeister or XMind), graphics and visualisation tools (Tableau, Power BI, Adobe Illustrator, Inkscape or GIMP), data management software (SPSS, R, SAS, Stata, NVivo or ATLAS.ti), style guides (*The Chicago Manual of Style*, *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* called APA style, or *Modern Language Association (MLA) Handbook*), grammar and spell checkers (Grammarly or ProWritingAid) and screen capturing and recording tools.

A writer should be quite comfortable with any chosen word processing software. If not all, at least the basic features of the word processor should be familiar to the writer. It would help a writer know advanced word processing functions such as track changes, layout, table construction, combining documents, inserting special characters, footnotes or endnotes and other essential features necessary to create a professional-looking typescript.

Scrivener is a software program used by many nonfiction writers. The program provides a structured but flexible environment for writing projects. An entire project can be broken down into smaller sections, chapters and parts that can be reorganised when required. Writers can create and arrange virtual index cards in its corkboard view, representing a section, chapter or parts of the book. An outline of an entire project can be created before writing it. Nonfiction requires a great deal of information gathered through research. This may be in the form of data files, PDFs of research papers, or images that can be stored and accessed in Scrivener. Features to assist in full-screen writing, multiple views, customised formatting, exporting, compiling, automatic saving and connecting to the community are available in the program.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Statistical Analysis System (SAS), Stata, R, Excel, NVivo, ATLAS.ti and MaxQDA are popular data management programs for quantitative and qualitative data. Tableau, Power BI, MATLAB and Quantum GIS can create attractive charts and maps for you. Writers need some of these, depending on the demand of the work.

Let us see an example of a commonly used data management program: SPSS. This software comes in handy when quantitative data are to be analysed. As in Microsoft Excel, it provides a spreadsheet to enter the data. You can use this program if you're using digital data drawn from databases or any other data from primary or secondary sources.

The first step is to list the variables on which data is available. SPSS, as in Fig. 9.1, has a variable view window. Here, you enter the aspects of your variables. The data for this purpose was mined from a citation index, Web of Science. You can see the variables entered in the figure, such as respondent ID, year of publication, type of document, name of the journal and so on. ‘Name’ is where you put the short form of your variable, ‘Label’ is for a description of the variables, and ‘Values’ is where you enter the classes for categorical variables. SPSS accepts only digits; therefore, categorical

Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align
1 id	Numeric	8	0	respondentid	None	None	8	Right
2 yepub	Numeric	8	0	Year of publication	None	None	7	Right
3 yepubgr	Numeric	8	0	Year of publication grouped	[1, 2000...]	None	10	Right
4 doc	Numeric	8	0	Type of document	(1, Article)...	None	8	Right
5 docre	Numeric	8	0	Type of document recoded (1=Articles, 0=Chapters)	(0, Chapter...)	None	10	Right
6 jnlname	Numeric	8	0	Name of the journal	(1, ACTA ...)	0	52	Right
7 jnlname10	Numeric	8	0	Name of Journal, top 10	(0, Others...)	0	11	Right
8 source	Numeric	8	0	Source of data	(1, WoS...)	None	8	Right
9 sourcer	Numeric	8	0	Source recoded	(1, WoS...)	None	10	Right
10 lang	Numeric	8	0	Language of the paper	(1, English...)	None	8	Right
11 numauth	Numeric	8	0	Number of authors	None	None	8	Right
12 singauth	Numeric	8	0	Single authored papers (0=no, 1=yes)	(0, No...)	None	10	Right
13 multauth	Numeric	8	0	Multiple authored papers (1=yes, 0=no)	(0, No...)	None	10	Right
14 degcolb	Numeric	8	0	Degree of collaboration (multauth/multauth+singauth)	None	None	10	Right
15 keyword1	Numeric	8	0	Keyword1 (DE)	(1, busine...)	None	8	Right
16 keyword2	Numeric	8	0	Keyword2 (DE)	(1, busine...)	None	8	Right
17 keyword3	Numeric	8	0	Keyword3 (DE)	(1, busine...)	None	8	Right

Fig. 9.1 SPSS window, variable view

variables are to be coded. As shown in Fig. 9.2, the names of journals are coded as 1 to 9. There were many, but only a page is shown in the figure. ‘Type’ denotes the numeric form of the variable, ‘Decimals’ are used when variables have fractions such as currency, length and height, and ‘Missing’ is used to organise missing values when you have no response to a question that refers to a variable.

Once all your variables have been entered in this window, you change the window view to ‘Data View’ by clicking the button at the bottom of the window. As shown in Fig. 9.3, it is where you enter your data by variables. In the row, the details of a respondent or document are entered, as seen in the first row, the ID is 2, the year of publication is 2020, the year of publication group is 2015–2020, the document type is a chapter, like

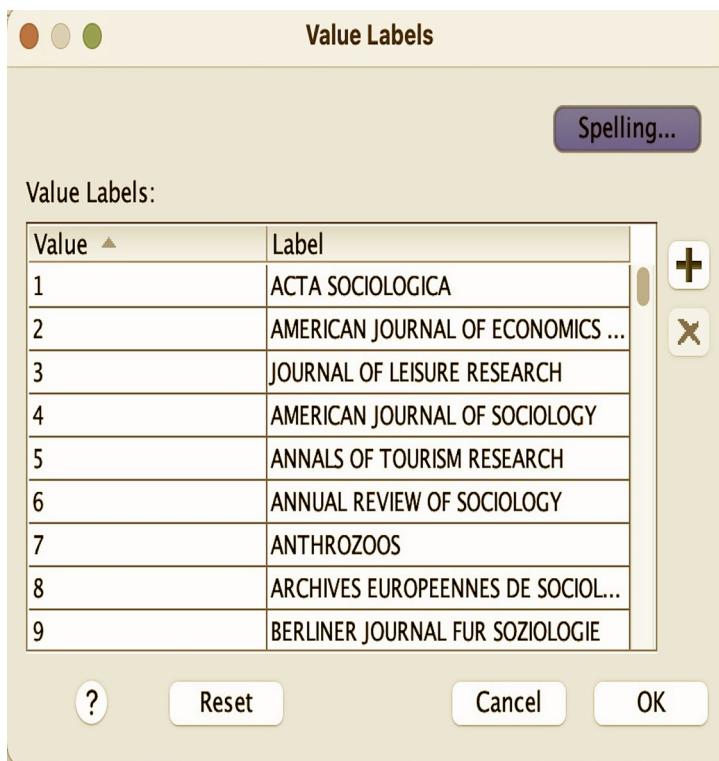


Fig. 9.2 Coded value labels

	id	yepub	yepubgr	doc	docre	jnlname	jnln
1	2	2020	2015-2020	Chapter	Chapters		0
2	271	2018	2015-2020	Article	Articles	CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY	
3	196	2014	2010-2014	Chapter	Chapters		0
4	1657	2015	2015-2020	Chapter	Chapters		-
5	1865	2019	2015-2020	Chapter	Chapters		-
6	999	2017	2015-2020	Chapter	Chapters		-
7	1663	2019	2015-2020	Article	Articles	DEVIANT BEHAVIOR	
8	1295	2016	2015-2020	Article	Articles	RATIONALITY AND SOCIETY	
9	1073	2013	2010-2014	Chapter	Chapters		-
10	1616	2019	2015-2020	Article	Articles	ANNALS OF TOURISM RESEARCH	Annals o
11	702	2018	2015-2020	Chapter	Chapters		-
12	1633	2018	2015-2020	Article	Articles	ANNALS OF TOURISM RESEARCH	Annals o
13	340	2016	2015-2020	Article	Articles	ANNALS OF TOURISM RESEARCH	Annals o
14	788	2001	2000-2004	Article	Articles	ANNALS OF TOURISM RESEARCH	Annals o
15	1457	2018	2015-2020	Article	Articles	ANNAIS DE LA RECHERCHE SUR LE TOURISME	Annals o

Fig. 9.3 SPSS window, data view

that. SPSS will produce new rows as you finish all the rows in the window. You can include the data for thousands of records and documents.

You can produce the analysis output after all data is entered and checked. Under the ‘Analyze’ option on the top drop-down menu bar, you choose the first stage of analysis, frequency distribution. Running frequency distribution helps clean the data and find errors in data entry. SPSS will open a new window to produce the results when you analyse, as shown in Fig. 9.4. The output shows a sample of a table showing the year of publication. Advanced inferential statistics can also be performed in SPSS. Many books have been written on SPSS (Field, 2024; Knapp, 2016) that are useful for navigating data analysis.

In research-based nonfiction, you’ll need to cite numerous works of other authors. References must be accurately captured, including authors’ names, year, title and other publication elements. Ensuring the correctness of citations, including author names, publication year, title and other elements, is non-negotiable. Manually typing each reference is time-consuming, especially as they must be formatted according to the referencing style prevalent in the subject area. Writers choose software programs to assist with this. One such program is EndNote, which can format

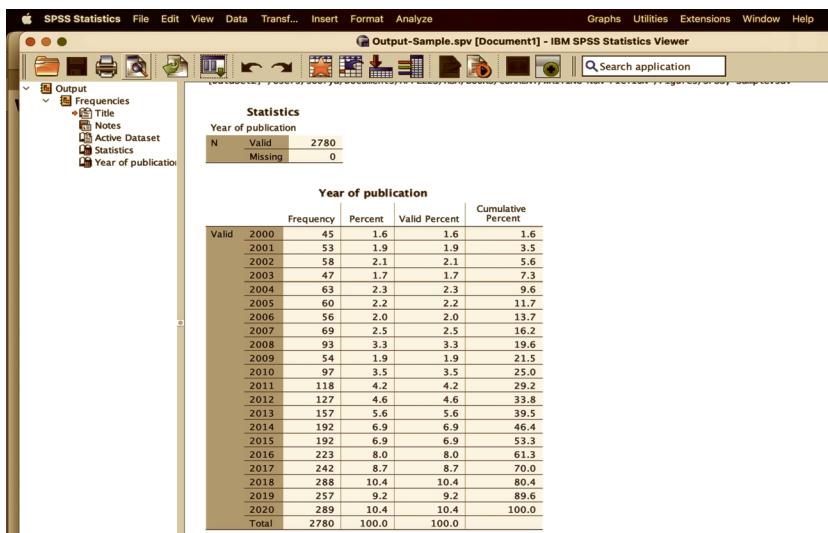


Fig. 9.4 SPSS output window

references in a wide range of styles that writers can select from. Let me provide you with an example.

Figure 9.5 shows the menu options in the EndNote opening window. In the left panel, the details of the file—EndNote calls a library—references are captured as in a catalogue in a library. Now, there are no references in this library. When the ‘New Reference’ is selected from the drop-down menu option or the + icon a window appears as in Fig. 9.6.

To start with ‘Reference Type’, there are options to select depending on the type of reference you want to enter. The options, among others, include artwork, book, book section, government document, interview, journal article, magazine article, music, newspaper article, pamphlet, personal communication, report, thesis and unpublished work. In Fig. 9.6, a journal article is chosen as the Reference Type. Below this, you’ll find boxes for Author, Year, Title, Journal, Volume, Issue, Pages ... ISSN and continues with DOI, ... Keywords, Abstract, ... URL, File Attachments, Author Address and Figure.

One of Robert Merton’s publications cited in this book is taken as an example. In Figs. 9.7 and 9.8, Merton’s reference is entered. Not all fields are necessary; hence, the fields of Author, Year, Title, Journal, Volume,

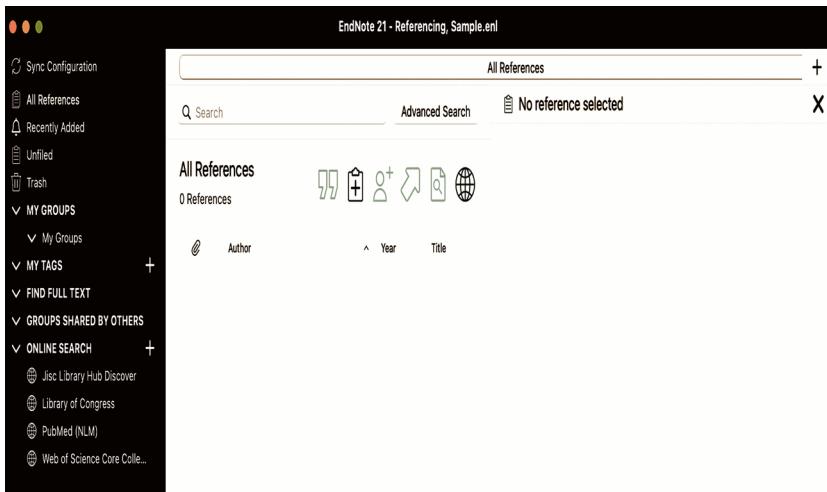


Fig. 9.5 EndNote opening window

Issue, Pages and DOI are used. If you've the article, you can attach it by clicking on Attach file button at the bottom. Then save it (the button on the top right). The reference is now saved to the library. Figure 9.9 shows the summary of the reference. Since the opted referencing style is APA (seventh edition), the reference is formatted accordingly, as shown in the lower part of the screen. This is the full reference of Merton (1968), which can be copied and pasted into your Word document where the chapter is written. This is done either by clicking the 'Copy' tab at the lower right or by selecting the reference in full and pasting it in a Word document. To change the referencing style to another form, for instance, the Chicago Style, you go to 'Tools' on the menu bar, 'Output Styles' and then 'Open Style Manager'. You'll find the styles you want to use there.

Never use the embedding option to directly input references into the Word document from a reference software program. It won't be easy to edit, and publishers don't accept that. Embedded references in a Word document restrict flexibility and complicate the process of switching to different referencing styles in case you want to change it later.

Splitting the writing window of your word program into two is helpful. Place the references cited in the text at the bottom of the chapter. To split

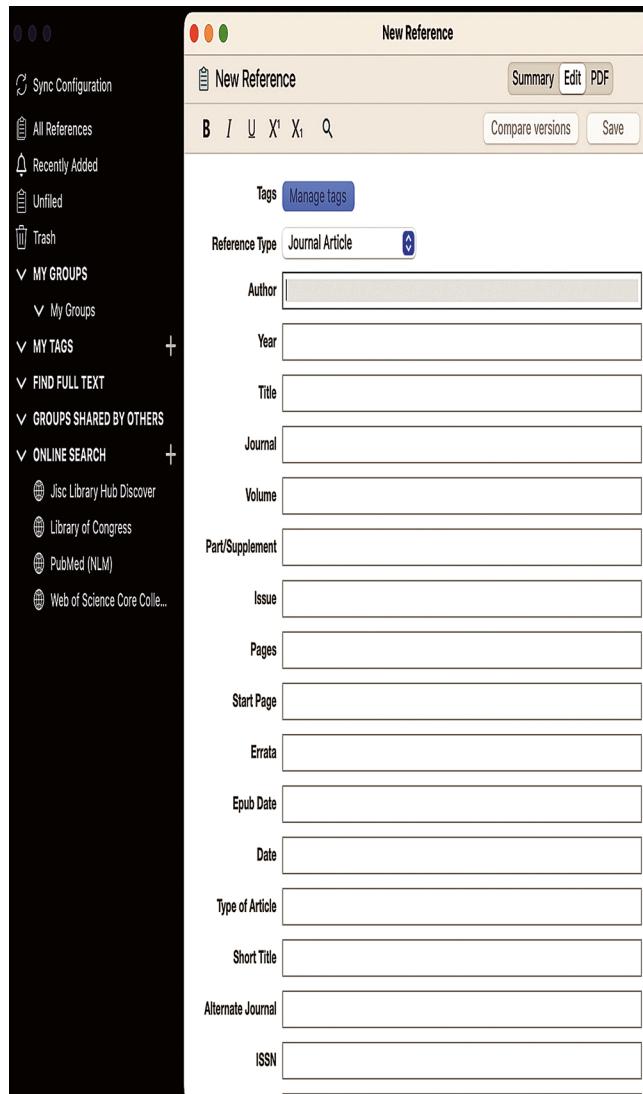


Fig. 9.6 EndNote New Reference

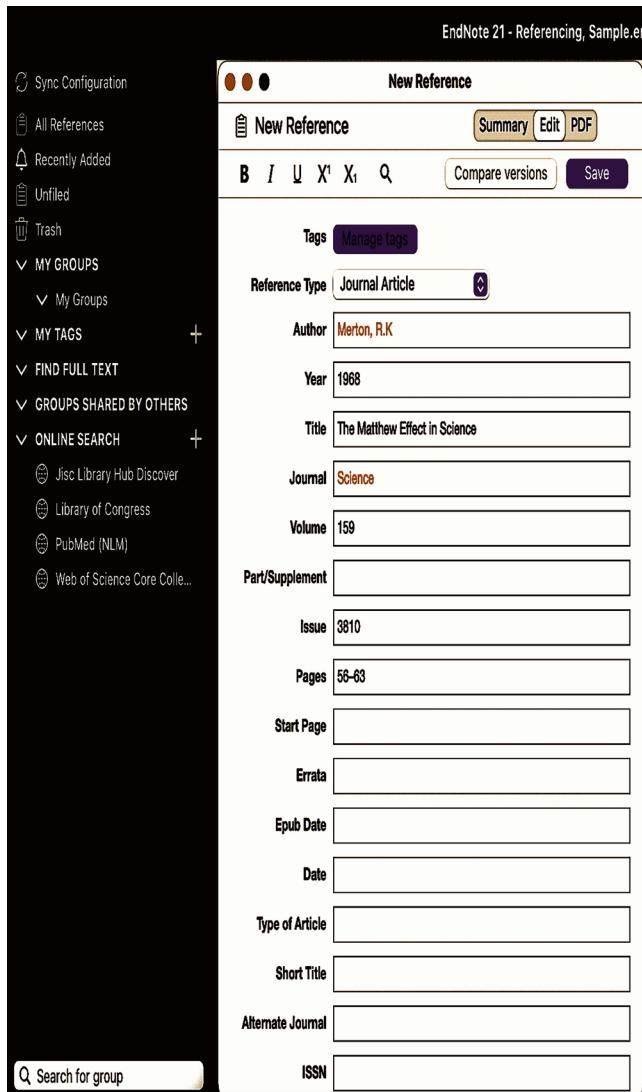


Fig. 9.7 Reference entered in EndNote

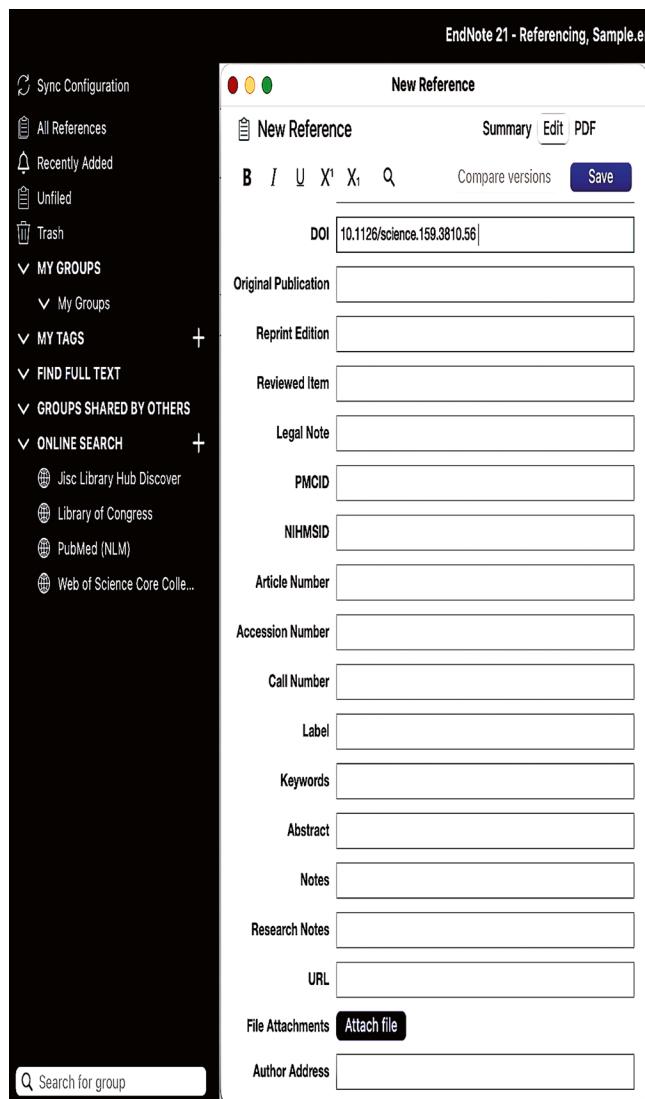


Fig. 9.8 Reference entered in EndNote2

The screenshot shows the EndNote software interface. At the top, there is a toolbar with a 'Summary' button, an 'Edit' button, a 'PDF' button, and a close button. Below the toolbar, the main area displays a reference entry:

All References

Merton, 1968 #1

Attach file

The Matthew Effect in Science

R. K. Merton

Science 1968 Vol. 159 Issue 3810 Pages 56–63

DOI: 10.1126/science.159.3810.56

Manage tags

APA 7th

Merton, R. K. (1968). The Matthew Effect in Science. *Science*, 159(3810), 56–63.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.159.3810.56>

Insert Copy

Fig. 9.9 Summary of the reference in EndNote

your word processor window, click View and then click Split. Now, you can simultaneously work on two different pages or two parts of the same page within the same document.

The Style Manager gives 499 styles in its latest version of EndNote 21, suitable for different disciplines and subjects ranging from Anthropology to Virology. But one should know the chosen referencing style for the book. For instance, in APA (seventh edition) (American Psychological Association, 2020), the article's title is formatted in sentence case. In the original article, the title may not be in sentence case. It must be changed into a sentence case while entering into EndNote. If the title is copied from the article, which is a safer way to avoid errors when typing, this can be changed to a sentence case by using the 'Change Case' option under the 'Edit' menu. Use en dash (–) and not hyphen (-) for the page ranges, as many incorrectly use it in their citations.

Look at the reference which the program has formatted to the desired style:

Merton, R. K. (1968). The Matthew Effect in science. *Science*, 159(3810), 56–63. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.159.3810.56>

All elements of the reference are included—a fully formatted one. If any of the elements weren't entered, it will be missing from the output. EndNote can't do it for you!

It's okay to type the references manually in a Word document without the help of any program. But it takes up a great deal of time. The possibility of making mistakes while typing can't be ruled out in that case. It's also possible that references are formatted inconsistently, and the font styles, periods and commas for all references are not kept the same way. EndNote can handle all these for you, provided you correctly keyed in the required elements of a citation. There are many other options in EndNote that can be explored, depending on your needs.

For any nonfiction, an index is a valuable part of the book. Looking at the index, a reader can quickly go to the content in which the reader is specifically interested. The index provides a list of keywords, concepts and topics. There are subject and name indexes or one that combines both. In the name index, the names of important people and places mentioned in the book are included. In the subject index, entries and subentries for each keyword, concept and topic are organised alphabetically with relevant page numbers in the book. An entry of 'nonfiction' can have a subentry of 'research-based' and 'biography'. A reader who's looking for the genre of research-based nonfiction can find where the topic is discussed in the book if the entry and subentry are indexed. See a part of a sample index at the end of this chapter, taken from *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Africa*.

Indexing is done late in production, although it is an indispensable part of a book. In the past, indexing was done manually. The indexer would read and write down the entries, subentries and page numbers on an index card, usually in the size of a postcard. At the end, the cards were sorted alphabetically and then typed. Now we've computer programs such as Cindex and SKY Index to do this for us.

A few hints for indexing may be given here. To construct a useful index, begin by selecting key terms from the substantive content of your chapters, excluding passing mentions, citations, notes and preliminary material that cover contents, preface, acknowledgements and the list of tables and figures. Produce a list of these terms in the order they appear in each chapter and keep this list, along with the highlighted typescript. Then, use the numbered proofs supplied by the publisher to insert page numbers alongside each term on your list, leveraging the 'Find' function to locate words in the PDF. As you work through each chapter, re-evaluate the selected entries, making any necessary additions or removals. Include subcategories where possible to make the entry easy to find. For instance, in the key term of 'development', there can be several subcategories under it—in the Global South, in Africa, poverty, indicators of GDP, comparison and the

like. This organisational approach simplifies the reader's ability to locate specific information within the index and in the book.

The completed index is then alphabetised and formatted. During this final step, ask yourself questions about each entry, such as whether it's necessary and likely to be sought by readers, if there are alternative terms that should be used in the typescript or cross-referenced, and whether the entry is sufficiently helpful. But indexing at the proofing stage isn't easy.

Microsoft Word has an indexing feature, widely used by writers and indexers. As the publisher's preference varies, indexing is done in the final typescript or the online proofing stage. While creating an index in Word, under the 'Insert' drop-down menu, select 'Index and Tables'. You get the window as in Fig. 9.10. Don't use the 'AutoMark', which will mark your terms in the entire text, including the ones you don't need to index. If the term is found in the References, the 'AutoMark' option will index it as well. Click on 'Mark Entry', and then 'OK' which takes you to the next box (Fig. 9.11), and enter the main entry and subentry to mark the index terms individually.

Anyone can prepare the index for a book, not necessarily the writer. The advantage of designing an index by the writer is that no prominent key terms, concepts or topics are omitted.

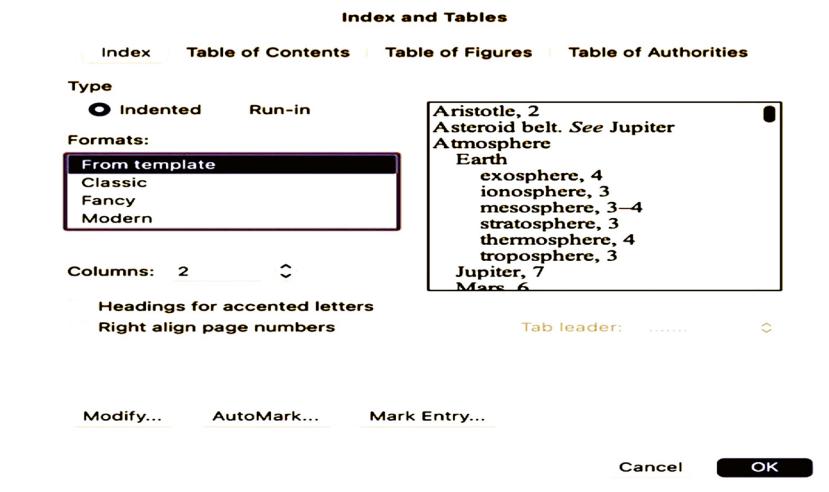


Fig. 9.10 Indexing step 1

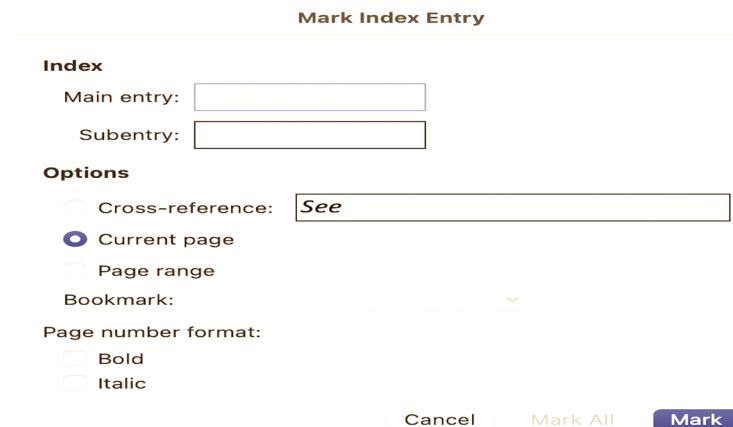


Fig. 9.11 Indexing step 2

Are the above technological tools challenging to learn? Not really. When you've a goal, such as writing a book, you can identify, find, source and utilise the necessary resources. For nonfiction writing, any investment in learning a skill, from word processing to accessing information to statistical skills, isn't a waste at all. But it contributes to the faster execution of book projects. You'll benefit from many of these in different stages of writing.

Technological requirements are subject-specific. In geography, the Geographic Information System software is a basic tool. More such tools like the Geography Learning Management Systems, ArcGIS or other geography mobile apps are helpful in different stages of learning and writing on the topic. Those in physics, engineering and mathematics need to use MATLAB for data analysis. LabVIEW is beneficial for experimental sciences. AutoCAD is used in engineering and architecture. Chemical modelling software, particle physics stimulators and Wolfram Mathematica have different uses in different disciplines. For biologists, bioinformatics tools, molecular biology and genetics software, molecular modelling and visualisation programs are part of their toolkits. In the social sciences, SPSS, Stata, SAS, NVivo, ATLAS.ti and EndNote are popular for data management and referencing purposes.

Excelling in the specific tools relevant to your discipline or subject is essential. When working with quantitative data in a book, invest time in learning a software program tailored to that purpose. Charts are crucial for a research-based nonfiction book. Develop the ability to create visuals that match your vision rather than relying on others to develop them for you. Dedicate a few hours to learning and practising as the effort pays off. Be selective in your choices; there's no need to master every program in your field. Focus on essential ones that align with your specialisation. Master them. Apply them in your book.

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CHAPTER 10

Material: Quality Matters

Abstract In any nonfiction, incorporating material written by other authors is indispensable. Called a review of relevant literature, this process is a crucial aspect of research-based nonfiction. The quality of one's book heavily depends on the material utilised in the book. Collecting appropriate material is a significant task that must be diligently undertaken. This chapter, with the support of examples, outlines methods for sourcing usable materials for the book, identifies the types of sources to be explored and provides guidance on how to search, collect and organise them effectively for the book with the optimal use of time.

Keywords Material collection • Material • Databases • Research-based nonfiction • Referencing

In contemporary publishing, millions of books and articles are produced every day. Collecting relevant material for research-based nonfiction is a huge but basic task that must be completed within a reasonable timeframe.

The issue is how to be selective in sourcing essential material with the optimal use of time. There is no quick solution for this. We can be as practical as possible by listing the criteria for collecting the material. Searching parameters such as the period, key sources and focused keywords should

be manageable for collecting relevant material for the book's contents. Time is a key factor, as we can't hang to writing a book forever!

The collection of relevant material for the nonfiction is a beginning step. But this is also the last step before the book is finalised for publication. Months would have passed between the start and end of writing. Even a few months between the two stages of beginning and winding up can make a difference in collecting and using relevant material necessary for the book. The collection is, therefore, an ongoing process, accumulating new material on new developments in the field from time to time until the typescript is in final shape. Writers don't want to miss out on some key work produced in their area of inquiry.

The quality of a book is, to a large extent, determined by the material the writer has been able to collect and use. Well-read and well-researched writers produce well-recognised books. It doesn't mean that a writer should have read *all* the previous work in the field, which is impossible for anyone in a lifetime. Any research which is fundamental in nonfiction writing reveals only a fraction of the reality or phenomena that are dealt with in it. It's only the tip of the iceberg. So don't be too concerned if you've been unable to collect all the materials on the subject of your book or if you couldn't use them in your book.

A writer must be familiar with databases relevant to the topic. Databases for published papers, books and documents are numerous. The major ones include EBSCOhost, American Physical Society, Business Source Complete, Google Scholar, JSTOR, OrthoMedia, OrthoSearch, ProQuest, PubMed, Royal Society of Chemistry, Scopus, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Web of Science and the Wiley Online Library. Getting access to them is another matter, as many require paid subscription. Don't overlook the time factor. Set the target and deadline to complete this stage of your writing.

A few helpful tips for doing an effective material collection are provided here.

A research-based nonfiction book is the end product of research. At the time of research, many previous works might have been collected and stored. This requires updating. Gather the material you already have. Copy them to the literature folder under your main book writing folder. If any thematic or chronological order is possible, do it and sort them under the literature folder that has been divided into 'closely related' and 'not closely related'. A research project is usually broad in its scope and coverage. The subject chosen for your book might only be part of this broader

project. The focus is narrowed down to suit the contents of the book you're planning to write. Separate the themes from the research project to suit the subject matter of the book. After determining the focus, reorganise the material you already have and move it to the folders of your book project. Then search for new material that has come out recently to do the updating.

The successful collection of material demands unambiguous key terms and their combinations that closely apply to the book project. Be specific in listing highly relevant key terms for the search. Repeat this exercise of listing key terms until you're satisfied with the final list that covers all the required themes for the book. Group the key terms into primary, secondary and tertiary in the order of importance to the subject. Using the listed key terms start searching one key term at a time until all the material for the key term has been collected and you've exhausted your sources. This is the saturation point. Search database by database pertinent to the subject for each identified key term. Write down the database searched against each key term and the date accessed. Create as many subfolders as required for grouped material, making retrieval easy when needed at the time of reading and writing. A better organisation saves a great deal of time and eliminates frustration.

A crucial step in the search process is filtering. Imagine entering a search term into a search engine; it could yield thousands of items related to the topic. As shown in Fig. 10.1, a search for the term 'crime' on Google Scholar returned 3.16 million results. It is impractical to read or browse through all of them. You need to filter these results before selecting. The search platform provides options to filter by time, relevance and type, allowing you to narrow the results to a manageable number.

Find time for your search while writing is in progress. There may be times during the writing when you encounter obstacles, if not a full-blown case of writer's block. Because writing is an intensively concentrated activity involving both the mind and brain, it has pauses. Make use of such stagnated phases for less intensive activities like the collection of material. With faster Internet speed, it becomes faster, too. If resources permit, consider hiring assistants to source the material. Although soft copies are more common these days, some old but essential works are available only in print format. This can be searched through the catalogue of the libraries you access or WorldCat at www.worldcat.org, which shows where the item is available. The WorldCat contains recent titles too.

The screenshot shows a Google Scholar search results page for the query "Crime". The search bar at the top contains the word "Crime". Below the search bar, there are filters on the left: "Articles" selected, "Any time", "Sort by relevance" (selected), "Sort by date", "Any type", "Review articles", and checkboxes for "include patents" (unchecked), "include citations" (checked), and "Create alert" (unchecked). The search results list several academic papers:

- The economics of crime**
RB Freeman - Handbook of labor economics, 1999 - Elsevier
... of reducing crime through incapacitation: when the elasticity of supply to crime is high, one criminal replaces another in the market; and thus the importance of deterring crime by altering ...
☆ Save 59 Cite Cited by 827 Related articles All 7 versions
- Crime places in crime theory**
J Eck, DL Weisburd - Crime and place: Crime prevention studies, 2015 - papers.ssrn.com
... while place level explanations emphasize crime events, ... crime: rational choice; routine activity theory; and crime pattern ... and crime pattern theory provide different explanations for crime ...
☆ Save 59 Cite Cited by 919 Related articles All 11 versions
- Age and crime**
DP Farrington - Crime and justice, 1986 - journals.uchicago.edu
... Also, how far does the agecrime curve seen in official criminal statistics reflect ... to crime, as opposed to variations in crimes committed? Would the same curve be obtained if crime rates ...
☆ Save 59 Cite Cited by 2448 Related articles All 5 versions
- ppor Those who discourage crime**
M Felson - Crime and place, 1995 - live-copp.ws.asu.edu
... an even more central role in crime and its prevention. The "capable guardian" against crime serves by simple presence to prevent crime, and by absence to make crime more likely. For ...
☆ Save 59 Cite Cited by 695 Related articles All 9 versions

Fig. 10.1 Search items on crime

Expand the search beyond databases and catalogues. Valuable insights can be obtained from unconventional sources such as newspaper articles, periodicals, magazines, government documents and blogs.

Once, I met a senior scholar and accomplished author who was visiting our institution for a sabbatical. While jogging with him in the evenings, I saw him picking up the papers he found on his way. I thought that he wanted the street to be clean. But he wasn't picking up everything. He passed empty cartons and cigarette butts.

Close to his stay, I had the chance to meet him in his room. It was filled with strewn pamphlets, bills, notices and whatnot. Among these were those he collected from the street. I paused for a moment. Oh, he reads them as food for his thought. These materials spark thinking and generate ideas that may eventually be found in articles or books.

Neglecting to maintain a record of the search and collection will be troublesome. Note how the search was carried out, what sources were used and when. This will save time by not repeating the exact search you've completed already. You won't remember whether a particular piece

has been collected until you read the collected material. Keep a register in a Word document.

How much previous work or relevant literature is needed for a nonfiction title? This is a perplexing question and there is no single answer. But for sure, there is no need to have a volume of material equal to what is usually found in a PhD dissertation. The number of citations used or required in research-based nonfiction titles depends. The size of the book is one determining factor. A smaller book of about 150 pages may not need that many citations compared to a book of 300 pages. My count of a sample of works found about 15–20 printed pages of references, which might run into 300–400 references in a substantial nonfiction title.

Here we look at the efficient use of some of the databases for the collection of pertinent material. Many databases carry valuable resources. They contain peer-reviewed articles, chapters, books, reviews, theses, conference presentations, images and several other forms of documents that can be used in nonfiction. Some of them are really huge in terms of their storage. JSTOR stocks over 12 million journal articles, books, images and primary sources from 75 disciplines. These are sourced from 2800 or more scholarly journals in the humanities, social sciences and sciences and over 100,000 e-books from over 250 publishers.¹ You can search the database for the content you are looking for by subject, title, author or publisher. Searched items can be refined according to academic content (journals or chapters), date or subject, language and access type (open or subscribed). JSTOR offers some advanced interactive AI-powered tools for easy search and collection. Its Text Analyzer helps you find new content on the database by uploading your document. It will collect the documents from its warehouse on the topic of the document you uploaded to it. This makes your search easier.

ProQuest carries audio and videos, along with journal articles, books, theses, reports, working papers, newspapers, magazines, blogs, podcasts, wire feeds and pamphlets. Searched items using keywords can be sorted by subjects varying from science to social sciences, language or publisher.² It is available in libraries in over 150 countries, provides access to about 130 million users and has teamed up with over 9000 publishers and content providers. You can choose their databases of ProQuest Central, ProQuest

¹ As of 17 December 2024. <https://about.jstor.org>

² <https://www.proquest.com>

One Education, ProQuest One Academic, ProQuest One Business, ProQuest One Psychology, ProQuest Black Studies, Publicly Available Content Database, Research Library, Health and Medical Collection and so on. Both basic and advanced searches can be performed using its drop-down menu based on subjects such as arts, business, health and medicine, history and social change, interdisciplinary, literature, science and technology, or social sciences.

Taylor & Francis³ has over five million articles in its collection. The subjects covered include humanities, medicine, dentistry, nursing, allied health, engineering and technology, behavioural sciences, social sciences, economics, finance, business and industry, education bioscience, politics and international relations, and area studies. Searched items can be organised into alphabetical order. Its advanced search options provide search by title, author, keywords, abstract, affiliation, funder or anywhere, date or journal.

The search for relevant documents from all these databases requires meticulous planning in terms of fine-tuned keywords, period, type of documents and the approximate number of documents you need for your book, depending on the size and content of your book. Be highly selective while collecting the material. The tendency to gather as much as possible, like a candy shop child, should be restrained.

Unlike the above subscription-based databases, some free-access platforms help write nonfiction. Google Scholar is a user-friendly free search engine that provides information about articles, chapters, books, theses and conference proceedings. It includes not just peer-reviewed ones but also other grey literature. Links to some full-text documents are given. Inputting your key terms into it will return records that can be sorted by time (as shown in Fig. 10.1), date, relevance or type. It is a basic and initial source for finding citations that can be collected from elsewhere if links are not available.

ResearchGate is another free platform on which to access academic material.⁴ It covers academic articles, chapters, conference papers, conference presentations, workshops or seminars, and preprints of articles. Scholars registered on this platform update their profiles with publication news and upload versions of their papers that are not available freely. It

³<https://www.tandfonline.com>

⁴<https://www.researchgate.net>

allows you to request a PDF if you find some articles of interest. The author may respond, and you may receive a free copy.

This chapter exclusively covered the processes of searching for and collecting material. In the next chapter, we'll explore how these methods can be applied to your work.



CHAPTER 11

AI: Boon or Bane?

Abstract Like in many other realms of human activity, Generative AI has spread its tentacles to writing and publishing. Authors find it tempting to use the Large Language Models of chatbots in their creation. AI-assisted writing in nonfiction has become unavoidable. This chapter discusses the applications and challenges of chatbots in writing and what publishers expect from authors regarding their use in submissions. The purpose of the chapter is to make authors think about the concerns AI raises when it's used beyond improving the language, style and tone. Becoming aware of the potential and challenges of chatbots upfront helps authors make the right choice at the time of writing, not after the writing is done. The chapter invites authors' attention to these complexities that emerged with the introduction of chatbots.

Keywords Artificial intelligence • Chatbots • AI-assisted writing • ChatGPT • AI policies • Publishers • Creative writing

Artificial Intelligence (AI) took us by storm when ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer) was introduced on 30 November 2022 by Open AI. Since then, many similar chatbots have been introduced—ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Claude, NovelAI, Jasper AI and the like.

AI is omnipresent, affecting human lives directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly. It doesn't matter whether we like or hate it. It's in the cell phones we use, the computers and tablets we use, the tools of communication we now have at our fingertips, the vehicles we travel, in medicine and surgery, or any technology we use in our daily lives. AI can carry out activities that humans are good at. It's up to us to take advantage of it to improve productivity and creativity (Chavez et al., 2023), but responsibly.

Chatbot users have grown exponentially. According to Sam Altman, the chief of Open AI, ChatGPT draws 100 million users weekly, and it currently has over 180.5 million users and receives 1.6 billion visits monthly (Mortensen, 2024). The potential for writers using chatbots is immense. They've engulfed the life of writers, and it's not easy to be unaffected by it. On the other hand, it raises some challenges for writers.

Chatbots use AI-based automated language processing models. They are trained to have human-like conversations using natural language processing. AI's large language model (LLM) is the most relevant for writers. LLM mimics the statistical patterns of language from massive databases. The language models have led to non-human writing. Prompts are responded to as requests and questions, enough for the AI to produce a story, poem or nonfiction. Whether reviewing the literature for your book, identifying and revising the research questions of your research on which the book is written, or providing information about the subject, the application of chatbots is astonishing. The language tools of AI are capable of improving vocabulary and grammar too.

You might like this story. It's about a person who found the use of AI in his life.

In a small town nestled between rolling hills, there lived a man named Arthur. Arthur was a kind-hearted soul known for his gentle demeanour and warm smile. However, he had one significant flaw: he struggled with words. Whether it was writing a simple thank-you note or a heartfelt letter to his estranged brother, Arthur found himself at a loss.

One day, while browsing the internet in search of writing tips, he stumbled upon an advertisement for an AI writing assistant called 'LetterGenie'. Intrigued, Arthur decided to give it a try. After all, he had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

He downloaded the app and was greeted by a friendly interface. ‘Welcome, Arthur! How can I assist you today?’ it chimed. With a mix of excitement and apprehension, Arthur typed in his first request: a thank-you letter to his neighbour, Mrs Thompson, for her kindness during a recent illness.

...

In the end, Arthur learned that while technology could enhance his abilities, the true magic of writing came from within. The AI had been a catalyst for his growth, but it was his own journey of self-discovery that genuinely transformed him into an expert letter writer. And so, with each letter he penned, he communicated and connected, weaving a tapestry of words that brought people closer together.

You read the unedited first three and last paragraphs of a story generated by ChatPDF (chatpdf.com), a subscription-based tool of ChatGPT. I gave a single-line prompt in the conversation box, ‘Please write a story about someone using AI to write letters.’ This request was sufficient for the AI to write a 596-word story. I could ask the chatbot to rewrite the same story in the way I want.

Someone who reads this can’t say whether it’s a human or AI creation.

AI helps academic writing in many ways (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024). It facilitates idea generation, research design, structuring and improving content, supporting literature review, enhancing data analysis, and improving editing. Many of these are components of nonfiction.

AI can quickly get you the information you want, much better and faster than many other search engines, saving you valuable time and resources. For academic nonfiction writers, chatbots such as AskYourPDF, ChatPDF, ExtractPDF, PDF Analyzer AI, Pop Ai, TextMaster AI or UPDF can help extract the extended summary of the documents going beyond just abstracts provided in a paragraph or two.¹ It makes reading pages and pages of documents easier. A writer would otherwise need days and weeks to finish the reading material required for a book. Chatbots now simplify this for you. Still more.

¹The sites include <https://updf.com>; <https://askyourpdf.com>; <https://www.extractpdf.com>; and <https://chatpdf.com>; <https://popai.pro>

You can ask the AI to summarise a particular aspect of a document you want to read or paraphrase. Say, for instance, the methodology of the study used in the document, the theories applied or data analysis and findings. Upload the document to the chatbot, it'll work for you the way you command. This is a great timesaver, particularly for your literature review section, which demands enormous quantities of documents to be read and synthesised. Sorry, chatbots can't synthesise the material for you beyond summarising or paraphrasing it. Synthesis is an organic process that takes place in the cells of the human mind, requiring analytical and presentation skills.

AI becomes handy when you gather the citations of a paper, chapter or book. Ask the chatbot to extract the citation from a PDF and format it in the style you want—APA, Harvard, CSE, Vancouver or whatever. A great time saver indeed for technical tasks like these. It can analyse data for you as well. You can't skip verifying whether the machine output is correct for every citation element.

Scholars use AI for writing papers. Macdonald et al. (2023) show us how to write a scientific paper by prompting the chatbot to draft an abstract, find papers for literature review, write the results section and discuss and analyse. They, however, warn to have human oversight to check the accuracy of what chatbots produce and be aware of ethical issues.

If you're not happy with your writing, ask AI to revise a sentence or paragraph. Instruct AI to produce it in your chosen tone—informal, formal, academic, non-academic or fictional. You get it straight away. Go over the versions it generates for you. Or request AI to develop an idea that you have in mind. It'll expand it for you. You can even ask AI to write full nonfiction in parts and pieces, as many of them have word limits for every request. Images can be drawn. You only need to give clear instructions for the AI to generate.

Look at the picture below (Fig. 11.1).

OpenArt AI drew this after several iterations I requested. I asked the AI to draw a black-and-white caricature of a woman author who is busy writing, books and papers strewn around, a clock and pictures on the wall, a table in the room and a cat supervising her. It's like an original cartoon produced in just a few minutes. No need for a cartoonist. The image it produced looks so real. One wouldn't know whether it is drawn by a human or an AI. You can improvise it with a human touch by adding a bubble with text to indicate what's happening in the woman's mind. Or lay over other images on to it.



Fig. 11.1 An author busy writing in her study

Writing by humans is a creative enterprise. It's natural and organic. It has an emotional content in it. Machine writing is artificial creativity generated by mechanical means. AI-generated content dilutes the emotional resonance of it (Tsao & Nogues, 2024). A writer's creativity is unique; it's incomparable. Typical to the individual. Creativity is the source of imagination, which may go wild and take you to areas other writers haven't thought of. As Stojanovic et al. (2023) say, creativity is intricately linked to human thought and imagination, and AI lacks the capacity for abstract thought and imagination. AI can simulate human-level creativity and generate new ideas and content, but it entails the loss of authorial authenticity, as Stojanovic et al. point out.

When you've put your writing through chatbots to revise it, it gives something different, even altering the content and meaning you had in your original writing. Basic usage and grammar mistakes can be corrected, which are already present in many writing programs available now. While the spelling and grammar check is on in those writing programs, whatever you write will immediately be flagged with red and green lines or letters, and suggestions in blue will be shown for revision. It's entirely up to you to accept or dismiss the changes your writing program suggests. As opposed to this, you get a different product when your writing is ground down through the chatbot mill. If you're not cautious, it'll not be your idea or what you intended or wrote.

When you use a chatbot, even to improve your writing by revising or rephrasing, it retains both the content and the prompt commands you put into it. If your content has data or valuable insights, the chatbot will use it to train its system and produce similar content for somebody who uses it. If it was your original idea, that's the case when writing fiction; it's now waiting to be plagiarised by someone else who uses the chatbots. It will work in other ways too. Once a chatbot swallows your content and prompts, it stores into its deep girth. This may be regurgitated at similar prompts given by someone else. When it's reproduced at the instance of future requests, you lose the authorship of what you've uploaded into it. Anyway, it hasn't yet been identified, referred to or cited as yours because it hasn't been published yet in your name. If you use the revised content you put through the chatbot, it becomes plagiarised content for you and others who requested it after you. Do you really want to see your imagination, knowledge and expertise that led to some original ideas being stolen that way and lost to you forever?

Nigel Newton, the CEO of Bloomsbury Publishing, airs the threat of AI to the industry, as authors' works are being used in training generative AI programs (Thomas, 2023). Gilat and Cole (2023) remind us to use such tools only to compose any parts of scientific work once the AI tools are validated to be correct and accurate. As Altmäe et al. (2023) caution, when typescripts that use the help of chatbots are not revised, there's a high risk of producing incorrect information and non-existent references.

Plagiarism is a serious matter in writing. Maintaining academic integrity in writing nonfiction is another issue that needs to be taken care of while using AI tools. The only thing is how to use it responsibly without compromising originality, creativity and imagination, which are typical to individuals, not machines.

Integrity, accuracy and reliability, intellectual property rights and threats to the integrity of authorship are the central concerns of authors who rely on chatbots. AI-generated content's accuracy, correctness and credibility are inconsistent with academic standards. The accuracy of the citations that chatbots produce is questionable. Some of the chatbots are cranky and unreliable. You can't really count on them for accuracy.²

Publishers have formulated their AI policies, which vary from one another. Common to many of these policies is that they don't accept AI as an author. Authorship comes with accountability for the work produced. Authorship remains with human and their production. A US court last year pronounced that there is no copyright in an AI-generated work. Publishers unanimously agree about maintaining the accuracy and integrity of the content created by authors. It's well known that accuracy is an issue with AI-generated content, and it remains a task that is not easy to accomplish in writing. In a simulated study with ChatGPT, Altmäe et al. (2023) checked the references provided by ChatGPT which in most cases didn't exist at all!

Palgrave Macmillan (PM) requires authors to document the use of LLM in the methods or relevant sections of the submissions. PM allows AI-assisted improvements in wording and formatting but doesn't accept generative editorial work and autonomous content creation. It doesn't want authors to declare AI-assisted copyediting. Although AI-assisted

²<https://taylorandfrancis.com/our-policies/ai-policy/>

copyediting is meant to improve human-generated content for readability and style, PM's policy is that authors are bound to ensure such texts are free from grammar, spelling, punctuation and tone errors. This is usually the case when content is artificially generated—with mistakes of this kind. PM demands human accountability for the final version of the submitted text, and the edit should reflect the author's original work.³

It's incumbent on the authors to declare the use of AI in submissions to Cambridge University Press. They want the work of authors to be their own and not others. Authors shouldn't violate the plagiarism policy of the press and they expect authors to be accountable for their work's accuracy, integrity and originality.⁴ Chicago University Press, in its Generative AI Guidance, emphasises information security, privacy, compliance and academic integrity.⁵ Any typescripts submitted to the Oxford University Press (OUP) shouldn't be entered as a prompt or uploaded to any Generative AI tool or program. OUP authors should get permission from it to deliver AI-generated content as part of their submission and are obliged to replace AI-generated content with human-generated content.⁶

SAGE makes authors declare any AI-generated content, references, texts or images in their typescripts. No resources should be cited as Generative AI tools. Submissions to SAGE must indicate the LLM models used in the manuscript, verify the accuracy, validity and appropriateness of the content and citations, and be aware of the potential of plagiarism.⁷ Taylor & Francis (T&L), a publishing house of academic titles, supports the responsible use of AI that ensures high data security, confidentiality and copyright protection standards. The permitted uses can be for idea generation and exploration, language improvement and literature classification. T&L, however, doesn't permit using AI to create and manipulate images and figures or original research data. It reminds authors to be cautious about what chatbots they're using and acknowledge the use of generative AI in the book they submit.

³ <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/editorial-policies/artificial-intelligence%2D%2Dai-/25429434>

⁴ https://www.cambridge.org/authorhub/application/files/7617/2743/0832/AI_Policy_for_Content_Creators.pdf

⁵ <https://genai.uchicago.edu/about/generative-ai-guidance>

⁶ <https://academic.oup.com/pages/authoring/books/author-use-of-artificial-intelligence>

⁷ <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/artificial-intelligence-policy>

As is clear from a sample of publishers' approach to the use of AI, the use of chatbots by authors, particularly the LLM, which has crept into writing and publishing, is welcomed. Nevertheless, they insist on the responsible use of it. Publishers know there is no going back but want to have some control over its use in publishing to maintain ethical standards. Unlike some journal publishers, book publishers don't accept any chatbot as an author.

Some journals have already accepted ChatGPT as a co-author of publications. The editors of the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology* recommend using AI. They say, 'AI chatbots can be used not only by authors but also by reviewers and editors to provide clarity of feedback' (Vintzileos et al., 2024, p. 89). However, book publishers do not accept ChatGPT as a co-author.

The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) recommends that only humans can be authors and no chatbot authors; authors should provide information about how chatbots are used in their submissions; authors are responsible for the material supplied by the chatbots for appropriate attribution of sources (Zielinski et al., 2023)

A recent analysis of the use and acknowledgement of ChatGPT in academic publications is quite revealing. Kousha (2024) examined 1759 academic publications indexed by Scopus and Web of Science and came out with this: 80 per cent of acknowledgement of ChatGPT were about text editing and proofreading, about 5 per cent about data analysis, about 4 per cent for drafting sections of manuscripts; and a rise in the acknowledgement of ChatGPT in the recent months. The use of LLMs is becoming widespread in academic writing and is mostly in language improvement, Kousha concludes.

Too much reliance on AI for writing can disrupt a writer's authenticity and originality (Stojanovic et al., 2023). Human-AI collaboration may be an alternate route and a possible way forward in the era of Generative AI. Some believe, like Tsao and Nogues (2024), that creative collaborations with AI are promising to nurture innovative and critical skills. Yes, there's encouraging learning in writing and understanding the potential for creative writing. The problem arises when you substitute your creativity with AI and produce something different from yours. And when you're alienated by the AI output, far away from your original one.

In creative writing, the adaptability of AI is doubtful. We know our creativity is different and can't be artificially generated. It's really human. You can have fake products of the original, but they're not the same as the original. They'll never be.

Knowing that AI-generated content is not acceptable in publishing, attempts have been made to overcome this stigma. Write human chatbots have come to transform AI-generated content to make it look like it was written by humans. To deceive publishers?

Read this:

A man who resided in a humble little town bound by hills, was Arthur. He was a kind man who was very sweet and always managed to wear a smile. But he had one major problem: he could not articulate himself. Arthur had a difficult time penning anything down, be it a simple thank-you or letters written to an estranged brother.

One day, as he was looking for writing tips on the internet, he came across an advert for an application known as 'LetterGenie' that boasted of AI-aided writing. Out of curiosity, Arthur decided to try it. After all, he had nothing to lose and a lot to gain.

He proceeded to download the app, which turned out to be quite user-friendly. The screen offered warm greetings by saying, 'Welcome Arthur! How may I help you today?'—with a blend of nervousness and enthusiasm, he typed in his request, a note to his neighbour thanking her for helping him when he was sick.

These are the unedited first three paragraphs of the story you read earlier at the beginning of this chapter. Do they look similar? This is the way humans write, according to the WriteHuman chatbot (<https://writehuman.ai>). It converted the ChatPDF-produced text into this 'humanised' form.

Let's check this out. I checked this humanised version of the machine writing, and the results were obtained, as shown in Fig. 11.2. No plagiarism or AI text was detected. After scanning billions of databases, as claimed by the advanced version of Grammarly, I got this result. Actually, this is written by someone other than humans. AI humanised it. WriteHuman allows you to customise the output to standard, academic, casual, scientific, professional, creative or technical versions. It just changed

A man who resided in a humble little town bound by hills, was Arthur. He was very sweet and always managed to wear a smile. But he had trouble articulating his words clearly. Arthur had a difficult time penning any thank you or letters written to an estranged brother.

One day as he was looking for writing tips on the internet, he came across an application known as "LetterGenie" that boasted of AI aided writing. Arthur decided to try it. After all, he had nothing to lose and a lot to gain.

He proceeded to download the app, which turned out to be quite useful. It offered warm greetings, by saying, "Welcome Arthur! How may I help you today?" With a mix of nervousness and enthusiasm, he typed in his request; this was a letter of thanks to his estranged brother for helping him amidst his sickness.

The document is checked for plagiarism and AI text detection. The results show "No plagiarism or AI text detected" with a note that the document doesn't match anything in references or contain common AI text patterns. A button labeled "See all suggestions" is visible.

Fig. 11.2 Humanised version of AI-generated content

the words and sentences, so they don't look like the common LLM patterns of AI. In this 'humanised' form, meanings are changed, like words and sentences. There are many other write human chatbots. AskYourPDF is another one.

The choice is absolutely ours, just as the music of the consequences is!

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PART III

Writing, Refining and Polishing



CHAPTER 12

Read, Reflect, Synthesise

Abstract Sourced material for the book is to be used thoughtfully. This phase involves reading, reflecting, and synthesising, guiding writers to integrate collected material into their books. Given that this process differs from what is commonly found in articles or theses, specific techniques can be tailored for application in research-based nonfiction. This chapter shows how to accomplish this effectively and efficiently without much time loss. It outlines easily adaptable methods for reading, reflecting, synthesising and developing ideas that can enhance the content of your book. The emphasis of the chapter is on working smarter through this phase—reading quickly, selecting usable parts from the collected material and integrating them into the book. It's also important to know where to incorporate the material from other sources in the book.

Keywords Reading • Reviewing material • Synthesis • Creativity • Literature review • Material • References

The collected material now goes through processing. We call it reviewing. Many consider reviewing material for nonfiction to be tedious. It's uninteresting and monotonous. Reading hundreds of others' works is not a mean task. It can be disheartening, primarily when the material doesn't

provide anything particularly relevant to the book. However, this is a critical phase for writers seeking to develop original ideas.

The body of literature represents a reservoir of information; all sifted through the perspectives of the writers who wrote it. Through focused and concentrated reading, we can pull out the hidden ideas that lead to critical thinking and make use of these in our writing. Take this seriously. Thinking is writing. To think, we need to read.

Reviewing as a catalyst for creativity encourages unconventional thinking and the exploration of uncharted territory. When approached with concentration and focus, reviewing can be highly rewarding. Take this phase seriously because you never know when you'll stumble upon ground-breaking ideas. In the end, you'll realise how invaluable the process was in producing your book.

Like any reading, pursuing the reference material is a serious task. It involves intellectual participation and is as important as writing itself. Reviewing the literature, which comprises reading, reflecting and synthesising, helps identify gaps, inconsistencies and alternative viewpoints, all of which can spark new insights.

Let's see how we can do this effectively.

You've saved reference material and marked them as 'closely related material' and 'closely related material'; new references are being added to these as and when they have been found. The allocated prime time set aside for writing is to be used for this purpose. Browse through the files in the 'closely related' folder first. There may be hundreds of references in PDF, Word or other formats that you've saved for the book project. Start from the first file, which the computer has arranged alphabetically or according to the collection date in the folder. Go for reading it on the computer screen. Save trees as much as we can. We don't want to print hundreds of pages that cost money and take a toll on the environment. Get used to reading on the screen if they are available in soft copies.

Open the first paper, chapter or book in the 'closely related' literature folder. Read the abstract one more time. You've read it while collecting it. Determine whether it's worth using in your book. Even though it seemed closely related at the time of collecting, it might not come out so in the second reading.

Let the PDF remain open if it's still closely related to the subject. If not, close it and put it under a separate folder named 'read' or 'read later'. Move to the second item in the folder. Repeat the steps of reading the

abstract and deciding whether it's highly relevant or not. This time around, you found it valuable and appropriate for the book. Start reading it.

Meanwhile, load your reference manager program. Earlier in the previous chapter you learned the EndNote program for managing references. Create a new library in EndNote for the sole purpose of the book. Some prefer to keep a single main library for all the references they collect for their projects. If that works for you, keep it that way. Don't forget to save it in a location on your computer for easy retrieval, maybe in the main folder. EndNote saves its contents in different folders, not in a single folder. We'll see how we can organise the folders a bit later in Chap. 18.

Open a Word document to format the reference duly to your choice using EndNote. Give it the file name 'References' and save it in the right folder. Write down the location of the file in case you fail to recollect it later when required. As references are part of the chapter it's convenient to save the file of References under the chapters folder.

A literature review is a familiar research activity for many as it's part of the curriculum in higher studies. Methodologically speaking, there are different ways to fit it into your dissertation when you were a student. Teachers insisted on following them rather rigidly. But in book writing, the purpose is different, as is the use. We've flexibility in doing this for nonfiction. A literature review, as presented in a book, doesn't need to look like what's given in a dissertation. It needs to be short, brief and concise but highly relevant. Unless extremely necessary, it shouldn't include dated previous works but should cover the most recent material on the subject. Some old previous research, mostly about theories, might be pertinent. They may be classic works that cannot be omitted. Refer them.

How to use the material you've collected? In a typical literature review section in a master's or PhD dissertation, a work is reviewed in detail. It would include the objective, methodology and results of the cited work, with a critique of its strengths and gaps. A section or a chapter is set apart for the review in a dissertation. It's unavoidable in a dissertation for the student to show that relevant literature has been collected and reviewed. This is not the same in research-based nonfiction.

Presenting existing works in nonfiction in a format similar to a dissertation is the last thing a writer would want to do. Readers get bored quickly with the material. They'd rather skip the section or chapter dedicated to the review of prior research. They are reading a book, not a thesis. The best option is to spread the use of previous work throughout the book, not in a single section or chapter. Sprinkle it wherever it's needed. It might

be in the introductory chapter or chapters dealing with specific themes. It's to strengthen your views and arguments or to show how your evidence is similar or different from that of others. Identify precisely where prior research is required in the book. When engaging with a literary work, the emphasis should be on the sections that serve the book's specific needs rather than attempting to absorb the entire work. They should be brief to the core and not overwhelm your reader. The book is yours, and it should have more of your material than that of others, drawn from other works. Remember, the objective is to produce a compelling nonfiction. Yes, of course, you should know what has been happening in the field.

In the context, background or introduction parts of the book, not much material is necessary. Here, it's just to indicate that there are other similar studies or gaps to fill in. You rationalise the need for your book. A summary of the study in a few sentences will do in this section. It may take a different approach when previous works are cited in the discussion part. This is where the findings of other studies are compared to that of yours. The points of agreement or disagreement are elaborated and explained. Material obtained from existing research suits well in places where you want to put forward your argument. It supports your point of view from crumbling.

Spending extensive time reading the entire piece is practical. Even articles are long to read. You've set your deadlines for completing the book, and everything is planned to achieve that goal. Time is at a premium. A decisive factor. No luxury of several months to complete it. The book project is time-bound. Things might change if the project is delayed or stalled. The market is subjected to the influence of unexpected forces. The demand for the book will change. No one is waiting for your book to arrive in the market. You want to publish it as quickly as possible. Complete it as fast as you can.

In nonfiction titles, only a compressed form of reviewed material is called for. Compressed in the sense that in the review of existing literature, it's not elaborated as in a dissertation. Only a few sentences about a work that is highly pertinent to the book are presented. A single sentence, phrase or even a word will be enough to refer to a previous work in the area. It's concise and precise. There may be several works that refer to the same or similar ideas. You don't need to repeat them all. Club together all the works for the same idea in a sentence or two. Readers can explore the cited works in the book if they like to.

Writers adopt ways of reviewing the material. No hard and fast rules exist. Yes, there are procedures to follow in a dissertation. But not here. Adopt any style that works out well for you. Remember, this isn't like summarising works in a dissertation or writing a review in an article. You're writing a book. Any method of reviewing literature is acceptable, provided it's economical and professionally done. Standards should never be compromised. A count of references for every day is helpful to monitor the progress of your review. Set a target number of works for everyday review.

Two approaches for efficiently reviewing the literature can be suggested. The first approach involves reading every work that has been saved in a format that you can read and edit on the computer. As you read, mark the sections you find useful for your book. Read the marked sections again to determine their degree of importance for the book. Reflect on the content, rephrase it in your words and type it into the respective chapters. Switch back to the article, read and mark the next section that interests you. Continue this until you reach the end of the article. Some writers may find this method a bit distracting as it involves going back and forth between reading and writing, section by section, in bits and pieces. For them, this disrupts the flow of reading, thinking and writing.

Another approach is initially reading the entire article on the screen and identifying all sections that are applicable to the book. Proceed to the first marked section to read, reflect and synthesise it so that it can be inserted into appropriate chapters. This method doesn't involve working section by section; instead, you read and mark and then move on to writing. By following this approach, you maintain a continuous reading experience. The flow is not impeded. Then you enter the process of marking. Finally, you get to writing what you've reflected upon and synthesised. Just three straightforward steps follow one after the other. This method lends you an overall view of the article's content that can be adapted. In contrast to the first method, it avoids a fragmented reading and writing experience. Instead, you read the entire article first before commencing writing. This approach promotes writing continuity compared to the first method. Your brain works more effectively, and you have a smoother flow. Try both methods to discover which one suits you best.

For both methods, write the synthesised portions in the appropriate chapters. Some parts of the article you're reading fit well for Chap. 1. Take it there. If the borrowed idea gives you spontaneous thoughts, write them down immediately in the same chapter. Take time to elaborate and develop it further. That is when your creativity and imagination come to life. Your

mind is involved in the subject. Original ideas may emerge at this stage. Make use of every bit of it. Your brain has synthesised what you read, mingling with your thoughts and knowledge to take on another form. You might even write paragraph after paragraph based on a single work or idea you just read.

Go back to reading and continue where you left off. You find something that can be used in Chap. 3. Paste it there and do the same thing of paraphrasing and elaborating with your thoughts and explanations.

How to read the literature efficiently? Consider the ways of doing a literature review most effectively, spending the minimum time on it. No question of doing a shoddy job. This must be done professionally. Let's try some best practices that work for nonfiction writing.

A typical research article spans 6000–8000 words. But the information paraphrased for inclusion in the book usually amounts to less than 100 words or even shorter, condensed into a concise 20-word sentence. It's not good to rely only on a single source. Your time allocated for reading should correspond to this practice. This perspective should guide the entire review process, but realise that you won't read each source entirely. If a specific piece draws your interest due to its potential for a new technique or methodology, earmark it for future reference. You can go back to it for more deeper reading once your current book project is finished. Digression derails your time-sensitive book project.

In certain articles and book chapters, the abstract is organised into subsections, covering background, objectives, methods, results and conclusions. Start by skimming through the abstract to identify the relevant portion of the paper for your book. If you find the methodology section valuable, dig into that part and read it to determine if there's material suitable for inclusion in your book. Capture this material by paraphrasing it. If the article is particularly informative regarding its findings, prioritise that section over others. There is an additional method to organise information during the collection and saving phase. You can categorise the material into folders under methodology or findings, as the case may be, and save them in their respective folders. This method is a real time-saver from the organisation's point of view.

Consider typing the excerpts from the reference into a separate Word document for effectiveness. This document can be labelled 'Reviewed Material' and marked into sections such as Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion or Conclusion. Over time, you'll accumulate, review and synthesise literature from pieces of previous research, consolidating

them into a single document that can be distributed to your book in appropriate locations. The other option, as described earlier, is to write in the respective chapters instantly and not in a single document.

Suppose you've created an outline or structure for the project and clearly understand the necessary content for each chapter. In that case, you can assess the overall quality of the article you're reviewing. Let's now go beyond just reviewing it. Read it again. Mark the sections that appeal to you in the PDF with the highlight pen on the PDF reader. Reflect on the marked sections. Take notes. Connect the points you find interesting in your reading with your knowledge. Look for the ramifications and let the mind go wild. Collect your thoughts that've been triggered by the reading. Now you'll see how important the paper and the literature review phase are. It has stimulated you, provoked your thoughts and gave you insights into the subject. The originality of your ideas, arguments and viewpoints relies largely on your selection, collection and reading of previous works in the field. This makes your work unique from others.

While reviewing an article, chapter or book, you'll note other relevant materials cited in the works you're reviewing. Before closing the article you've reviewed, take a few minutes to peruse the references listed at the end of the article. By reading the titles of the works cited in the article, select a few references that could be useful for your work. Some of these may not have crossed your path or been collected yet. The easy way is to highlight those references in the PDF and copy and paste them into a Word document. Name it as 'References to be Collected' and save it as a subfolder under the References folder. This assists you in dispelling your concern about the adequate number of references for your book. This snowballing effect will finally take you to a collection that is more than enough for your book. Say you started with a single reference that led to five other works. These five citations together might lead to another 25 (5×5). These 25 will grow into 225 (25×25) citations and so on in a geometric progression. At the end of the search, you'll have enough reference material. If you get around 400 or so, as indicated earlier in terms of the topic and the total length of the book you plan to write, it would be sufficient. One stress is over.

Refrain from attempting to collect the marked references in the article you read. Leave that for later. This is your writing time, and it shouldn't be used for searching the Internet for those references. You should have disabled your Wi-Fi for the entire writing session; now is not the right

time for distractions by switching the Wi-Fi back on. There are still more articles, chapters and books that are waiting to be reviewed.

Earlier, we discussed the practice of entering references into the reference manager as each paper is opened for review. When you find a paper to be used in your book, begin by entering its details into the reference manager and then copying the references into your References document. This approach is to make sure that all the works you referred to are documented in the References section, preventing the challenge of hunting for a missing reference that may have been used in the book but omitted from the References list. Writers might neglect this while writing, even in the final draft. A vigilant copyeditor will spot such omissions and ask you for that. The responsibility falls on you to deal with this omission. It's more prudent to address these gaps during writing rather than leave them for later. Such proactive approaches reduce the likelihood of missing references and produce a more polished draft with fewer omissions when the final version is prepared. A professional approach.

Capturing references as you use them can disrupt the writing process, interrupting the course of your intellectual work with a more mechanical task. Reviewing is an intellectual activity involving thinking. Capturing references in the reference manager is just a mechanical activity which doesn't demand thinking but only attention not to make mistakes in the entry of the elements of references. An alternative approach for uninterrupted writing is to pre-enter all the references from the materials you've collected in the 'closely related' folder into your reference manager and then copy them into the References document. This upfront work might take a few days, especially if you've a substantial number of works of around 400 to capture. It serves well that you won't worry about references while you're actively reviewing, synthesising and writing. Then, go back to the readings one by one. So you're not doing two different tasks at the same time. The drawback of this method is that if you decide not to use a work from the 'closely related' folder, its reference will still be in the References document, and you'll have to locate and remove these unused references. Like the missing reference, you can't include a reference that isn't in the book. Finding those unused references already in the References will be another worry. You can find them using the 'Find' function in Word, which costs you additional time and effort. This is, however, generally less disruptive than entering each reference individually in the reference manager while actively writing. Experiment with both methods to decide which works best for your workflow.

Return to your Word document containing the compiled material for each section of your book after you've completed your review of all the collected works. Arrange them logically and transfer them to the corresponding sections of your respective book chapters. This method simplifies the process and also optimises your time.

The scheduled time for writing for the day is coming to an end. It's time for a quick retrospection. Reflect on the progress you've made over the last two or three hours, depending on your allocated writing time block. Navigate between different chapters and documents to assess your achievements. Check EndNote to see how many references you've added to the library. Are you content with your accomplishments for the day? Inspect the word count for each chapter and the number of references at the bottom of your Word files. Enter this data into your monitoring spreadsheet. Take note of the total number of words you've written today. As you wrap up for the day, remember to close each window one by one. Forgot to save the day's hard work? Never.

Have you lost interest after days of reviewing the literature? It's perfectly normal if you have. Sometimes, a change of direction is the solution. Redirect your work for the next few days, but all related to the book project. Perhaps do some data analysis and generate content for tables and charts. Data analysis also requires dedicated attention. After a brief diversion for a day or two, return to reviewing. You'll have a refreshed brain to read the works, reflect and synthesise them.

The use of references in your book is not finished yet. There is more to discuss, which we can address in the next chapter.



CHAPTER 13

Credit and Credibility

Abstract Acknowledging the works of others in nonfiction is a standard practice. But it's the most neglected part in many cases. This chapter presents the need for properly crediting the contributions of others in nonfiction. A source is referenced for purposes such as presenting ideas and providing supporting or opposing information for arguments. When citing in nonfiction, all the elements of a reference should be included. A writer should be aware of the wrong practices in referencing such as dumping references, lazy writer syndrome and the use of dated works. Following an accepted style of referencing is required for consistency. Proper and complete referencing enhances the credibility of writers and the value of their books and avoids the issue of plagiarism. The chapter enlightens writers on best practices in referencing while cautioning against unprofessional trends often found in nonfiction.

Keywords Referencing • Nonfiction • Citations • Self-citation • Lazy writer syndrome • Referencing styles

Acknowledging the works of others used in the book is giving credit to their ideas, arguments and information. It's called referencing. Providing honest acknowledgement and following the industry standards bring

credibility to the writer and the book they are writing. This cannot be compromised in research-based nonfiction at any cost.

Referencing in nonfiction is as important as the textual content of the book. It can't be separated from other parts of the books, namely, facts, analysis, tables and charts. Volume-wise, research-based nonfiction ranges typically from 250 to 300 printed pages. Any serious nonfiction will have about 400 references, each of which will be about 20–30 words long. These 400 references in 12,000 words will take about 30 printed pages. In a 300-page book, this is 10 per cent. One-tenth of a book isn't an insignificant matter to overlook.

Imagine a chapter in a book is written without a single citation to any other works that are related to the subject. What would the reader think about your book? Readers might question your research skills if proper referencing is lacking, as referencing is integral to research. It can shape impressions about the books as readers continue to read them, and these impressions may not be favourable. It doesn't matter if the chapter is entirely based on data and analysis. Still, a writer cannot give an excuse for the absence of citations.

Knowledge production relies on the foundation of previously produced knowledge. The citations you use in your work support your research and serve as a basis for future research. The meticulous handling of citations is for the advancement of scholarly work. This is a self-discipline measure that writers impose on themselves. It revolves around professional integrity and quality control, which are integral aspects of research-based nonfiction.

We need to be honest when we're referring to others' works. Nobody is supervising you here. Even the beta reader of your book may overlook incorrect referencing cited in your book. It's a matter of honesty and integrity.

The quality of referencing points to the integrity of the writer. The writer must acknowledge and give credit to the original writers whose ideas, information and data they borrowed. If this isn't done, your work can be accused of plagiarism. By clicking the provided link or URL, anyone can assess the credibility of your work and verify the accuracy of citations. Readers can even find out how a particular citation is used in your work, correctly or incorrectly. It's only a few clicks away from the readers. Any lapse in this might cause undesirable or negative comments on your work that can be posted on social media.

Referencing is about knowing when to cite and how to cite. Previous works are helpful in many ways. As any new research is new and isn't reinventing the wheel, the writer should be knowledgeable about most, if not all, of the previous research conducted on the subject. Suppose the nonfiction you're writing is based on primary empirical data, quantitative or qualitative. In that case, you'd want to compare your findings with those of others to strengthen your arguments and conclusions. Data used in previous research might also be helpful to adopt in your book. In all these instances, the cited writers should be acknowledged. We should be grateful to them, of course. That is why we say 'standing on the shoulders of giants'.

Publishers, before they finally accept your submission and offer you a contract, check for plagiarism using software programs. Turnitin is widely used to check plagiarised content in submissions. The program will scan for the sections in the work that have been adapted from other sources but without giving adequate credit and are presented as one's original idea and source. As we all know it's a serious offence and people have paid the price for it. Individuals, even in their late careers, have lost their jobs and their qualifying degrees withdrawn due to plagiarism. Some have been entangled in legal battles for the rest of their lives. No writer would want this to happen as it will cost their credibility.

A citation has some other purposes in nonfiction. Citing the works of prominent others, mainly the recent works, indicates the scholarship of the writer, who's familiar with the debates, discourses and developments in the subject matter. Readers become interested in your work and even they will look forward to your future works because they are impressed by the extensive research used in the book. They will trust what you write and accept your substantiated viewpoints and perspectives.

Writers adopt ways of using relevant works. Nonfiction titles intermittently quote sentences and paragraphs from other works. While this is acceptable, long quotes repeated now and then don't leave a good taste in a reader's mind. Why does the writer want to rely too much on others? Readers would think. In such borrowed sections there may be only one citation. The same author is cited again and again in every sentence, consecutively. Are there no other sources that can also be referred to, along with the most used ones in the book? This suggests, not favourably, that the writer is piggybacking on the ideas of a single source. This impacts negatively on the credibility and authenticity of the writer.

Quoting is the easiest way to go in a review of the material used in the book. Suppress the temptation to overquote others. Inserting an excessive number of quotes within a section is unprofessional. The best way in a nonfiction title is to present the borrowed idea, cite the reference, articulate it in your own words, expose your critical thoughts on it and show a synthesised version of it. It should be brief though. Your explanation and elaboration on the synthesis of the borrowed idea should be prominent. Instead of directly quoting other writers, paraphrase the idea you wish to borrow using your own words.

Some might use other works quite sparingly, which is enough for them in their books. They may quote only a phrase or a sentence when they are absolutely necessary.

A writer should be cautious about excessive self-citation. Listing all your published works in the book may come across as self-promotion. Be choosy in citing your previous works if you've any, use only if they're directly related to the work and are meaningful to strengthen your argument. Self-citation might be perceived as inserting citations merely to enhance your image. It's like cattle chewing the food they have eaten before.

The tendency to overuse citations to impress readers is to be avoided. It's called 'dumping references', referring to the practice of inserting many citations in a work without proper integration, context or meaningful discussion. Dumping is listing references without providing adequate explanation, analysis or synthesis of the cited sources in the work. Be familiar with some of the best citation practices in nonfiction.

Gavras (2002) cautions us about 'lazy writer syndrome', which means wrongfully attributing scientific findings to the writer of the latest review in the field rather than to the scientists who originally described the finding. This practice, common in the medical field, is due to writers searching for a reference to support a given statement. They look for the easiest way rather than reading the original research article.

Equally unacceptable is using references that are too outdated. While some classical works may be necessary, an excess of old citations is not taken lightly. Navigate from the most recent literature to older ones.

Some guidelines work well for writers. Harzing (2002) provides some advice:

- Reproduce the correct reference
- Refer to the correct publication
- Don't use 'empty' references

- Use reliable sources
- Use generalisable sources and generalised statements
- Don't misrepresent the content of the reference
- Check out the original
- Don't copy someone else's references
- Don't cite out-of-date references
- Actively search for counterevidence

Referencing styles are numerous, changing from discipline to discipline and publisher to publisher. Most research-based nonfiction publishers will accept any standard style that you used in the work, provided they are used consistently. A mix of styles in a single book is unjustifiable. Have one in mind at the beginning of the writing of the book and keep following it throughout. You can choose your style and ask your reference program to format it for you.

Which reference format do you want to follow? There are many, APA, MLA, Vancouver,¹ Harvard, Chicago and the like. Decide now so you don't have to reformat all your references later in a different style. Let's see some examples.

APA (7th edition)

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.

Becker, H. S. (2020). *Writing for social scientists* (3rd ed.). The University of Chicago Press.

Brown, D., & Krog, A. (2011). Creative non-fiction: A conversation. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, 23, 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1013929X.2011.572345>

Council of Science Editors (CSE)

American Psychological Association. 2020. Publication manual of the American Psychological Association. 7th ed. American Psychological Association.

Becker HS. Writing for social scientists. 3rd ed. The University of Chicago Press; 2020.

Brown D, Krog A. 2011. Creative non-fiction: a conversation. Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa 23: 57–70.

Chicago (17th edition)

¹See Patrias (2007), for Vancouver style.

American Psychological Association. 2020. Publication manual of the American Psychological Association. Seventh ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Becker HS. Writing for social scientists. Third ed.: Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press; 2020.

Brown, Duncan, and Antjie Krog. "Creative Non-Fiction: A Conversation." Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa 23 (2011): 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1013929X.2011.572345>.

MLA (9th edition)

American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 7th ed., American Psychological Association, 2020.

Becker, H. S. Writing for Social Scientists. Third ed., Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2020.

Brown, Duncan and Antjie Krog. "Creative Non-Fiction: A Conversation." Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa, vol. 23, 2011, pp. 57–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1013929X.2011.572345>.

Vancouver

American Psychological Association. Publication manual of the American Psychological Association. Seventh ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association; 2020.

Becker HS. Writing for social scientists. Third ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press; 2020.

Brown D, Krog A. Creative non-fiction: A conversation. Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa. 2011; 23:57–70.

Your choice depends on a few considerations.

One is the discipline of the subject matter of your book. MLA style is preferred in humanities disciplines, including literature and cultural studies. APA, the latest seventh edition, is popular in social science disciplines. In science disciplines, the commonly used referencing style is CSE. Vancouver, MLA and Chicago are also used in science subjects.

Two is the preferred style of the publisher. This is uncertain as you're unsure about the publisher you wish to approach. If you're unsuccessful with one publisher, you've to look for another one, which may prefer a different referencing style. Most nonfiction publishers are flexible. If you've already formatted in one style and approached a publisher, ask them whether you can stick to the formatted style. Most publishers would agree.

How careful should a writer be when listing the cited references? Extremely. Neglecting to verify and rectify the details of incorrect citations can be treated as a significant oversight and may leave a negative impression on your work. While reviewers of your book, once it is published, may identify some inconsistencies in citations, they will only catch some. It's the writer's absolute responsibility to provide accurate citations.

Don't forget that references are equally important just like the text in the book. The text can't exist without them, but not vice versa in academic nonfiction.

Let's now move on to data, the meat of research-based nonfiction in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 14

Tailoring Data

Abstract Nonfiction relies on facts and data, making them integral components of the genre. Knowing how to incorporate data is fundamental for a writer. Sources and types of data of various kinds have crucial roles in enriching nonfiction works. This chapter elaborates on the intricacies of spreading data in nonfiction and suggests effective ways of handling and incorporating data for the book without disrupting the flow of reading. The chapter gives techniques for customising data for nonfiction, covering primary and secondary sources. The chapter explores the process of cleaning data to ensure its readiness for robust analysis. The importance of data in enhancing the credibility and depth of nonfiction is explained. It guides the systematic and thoughtful use of data to improve the overall impact of the narrative.

Keywords Data in nonfiction • Fact-based nonfiction • Research-based nonfiction • Using data in nonfiction • Statistical tests • Tables • Charts

Most often, fact-based nonfiction originates from rigorous research. Research, an exploration for novel insights and new knowledge, invariably demands collecting and analysing primary data. Reanalysis of existing data, i.e. secondary data, is also a prevalent practice in research-based

nonfiction. Nonfiction needn't exclusively rely on primary or secondary data; theoretical material devoid of empirical data can also constitute a portion of scholarly literature and they too are products of extensive research efforts—historical nonfiction, for instance.

Data has certain functions in nonfiction. Mainly it gives a sense of distinctiveness, showing that the work is new and unparalleled. Data imparts immediacy and originality to the nonfiction piece that makes the content up-to-date and pertinent. The inclusion of data enhances credibility. Most importantly, data is a means of substantiating claims, arguments and assertions, whether by subjecting hypotheses to testing or by presenting robust evidence for a particular viewpoint. The originality of a work relies largely on the use of original data.

Research-based nonfiction writers are known for their firm convictions and perspectives, rarely yielding to viewpoints that oppose their own. These writers look for data to authenticate their arguments; without it, their validity is compromised. Unsupported arguments find few takers. Even when presenting counterarguments to refute others, data backup is equally indispensable.

Research findings presented in your book, based on data and experiments, require additional information to either corroborate or challenge findings presented in other studies. Imagine a nonfiction that exclusively presents the writer's findings, regardless of the data's foundation, without any reference to existing research or findings. Readers may not readily accept such works because they lack a comparative perspective with findings from other studies derived from data analysis. It's only a partial view of the reality. This one-sided perspective offers only a limited glimpse of the broader reality. The writer is either deliberately concealing the extensive body of work produced by other writers who've examined the same subject matter or perhaps unaware of these works, which could be seen as a deficiency in the writer's scholarship.

If you're thinking about spicing up your book with data and you're all zealous about using it as a major ingredient, do some pre-game planning. Don't save it for the last minute when you're in the thick of writing. When writing is in full swing and picking up pace, distractions such as collecting data can dampen the creative spirit of your writing. Unless your work requires additional data or further data analysis, prepare the data well in advance as part of planning. This can be done in a few successive stages.

Start by asking yourself, 'Is this the path I want to tread?' Take a hard look at your skills, knowledge and data-handling experience. Think if

you've got the heart for it—because diving into data can be a wild, thrilling ride and, of course, with some challenges. If you already have some data which has been collected, processed and analysed, use it. If you don't and still want to use data, look for other sources of secondary data that someone else has collected and you've access to it. When your book is based on data that comes from your recent research, it makes life easier for you.

You've the data, enough to fill the pages and chapters of the book you're planning to write. How to make use of it for the book? This might look a bit troublesome. As you know, it's different from conducting research for data. We call it tailoring data for nonfiction. Let's go through the stages.

Begin by identifying the type of data that can be extracted from the original research project or any other secondary sources you've in mind. Data can take the form of primary or secondary and may be quantitative or qualitative. Research projects, as a source of data, yield a substantial amount of information. But all of it's not necessarily relevant to your book's specific focus, which should be narrowed down to manageable themes that suit the book's content. A book isn't intended to replicate the features of a research report either. It's not based on an analysis one usually does with secondary data. They don't fit well for nonfiction. You don't want your book to bear any resemblance to a dry report. You need an engaging nonfiction, and the use of data shouldn't hinder the reading experience.

Exercise caution when selecting and transferring data for the book. Merely cutting the data presented in tables in a research report and pasting it to the book chapters won't transform it into a book. Instead, it will retain the characteristics of a report rather than a work of nonfiction. Publishers don't like to consider works that look more like a report than a monograph.

Review the report in your possession, the one you mean to use for your book. Read it through, diligently and thoughtfully. With each round of reading, your understanding of which sections of the report, particularly its data parts, can be repurposed and adapted, will become clearer. Note down the themes that can be extracted from the report and consider how they might differ from the original report. You'll want to take these available themes or further develop them, combine themes to create new ones or break them down into subthemes. Be open to the potential for creating a theme that holds market appeal. Resist the inclination to use them as is.

Next, convert the themes into a set of objectives that can be realistically achieved within the framework of your envisioned book. These objectives may not agree exactly with the ones in the original report since your adapted themes offer a unique perspective.

Go ahead and identify the sections within the report that correspond to the themes and objectives you've outlined for the book. You can do this either by marking the sections in a PDF or on a hard copy. A hard copy is better, as it allows for a broader field of vision. The sections you mark should encompass both the textual descriptions and the data presented in tables and charts. No need to use the same charts, as you'll have to create new, improved ones for your book.

The texts containing descriptions and data analysis will have to be reworked. As suggested earlier, the text can't be used in the same form but to treat as the background for the data you'll take from the report. Remind yourself that the writing style in nonfiction shouldn't be as dry as that found in a research report. It should have vibrancy and engagement, distinct from the strictly factual tone of a research report. Copy the research report using the Save As function and give it a new file name. Store this copy in your main book folder. Delete all the unmarked sections from this copy. Your original research report remains intact in its original location—in case you need to go back.

See Fig. 14.1. This is part of a report on an empirical study of self-help groups in Kerala, India. The marked sections are to be lifted for converting into part of a book chapter. The tables (Fig. 14.2) are also marked to be lifted, reorganised and re-analysed.

Still, there is one more thing to take care of. Data in tabular form in the report isn't the one you'll lift from the report. You'll relook at it to find the scope for reanalysing it. To do that, the data should be available in its original format. If you wrote the report alone or in collaboration with others for the research you're using, then it's not a cause for concern. You've the data that was captured in whatever programs. Get hold of it in its original format and save it under a different file name in the book folder. Secure the original data safely. If you accidentally mess up the data file while working on it, you can revert to the original.

What if you're planning to draw data from secondary sources? Many have written nonfiction titles using secondary data drawn from census reports, health surveys and employment data (Maier & Imazeki, 2013; Skerry, 2000). Census data is a rich source of information on individuals and their activities. Nations collect data about their inhabitants and so do

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impact on members

Women become members of the SHGs for several reasons. For some, SHGs provide them with ample opportunities and chances for economic independence. They can put their small savings in the groups and take loans for self-employment ventures. Many of them could start their small enterprises with the money they had mobilised and the loans they had availed of after becoming group members.

Reasons to Join

As presented in Table 4.1, the facility for savings has been cited as the most compelling reason for women to join SHGs. They form about 36 per cent. Next come loans as the reason, for another 18 per cent. Some are motivated by the opportunities for group activities, enterprising initiatives, developing leadership qualities, becoming knowledgeable and so on. The members, by and large, have more than one reason to join the group. Among all the members, 494 have cited two reasons to join the group. Again, 128 women had three reasons for becoming a member. The reasons include all those enlisted in Table 4.1.

In Alappuzha, 145 members (36.7%) cited savings as the major reason, and the remaining 250 members (63.3%) belong to the Ernakulam District. As for 201 members who said loans are the important reason, 99 (49.3%) members are from Alappuzha, while the remaining 102 (50.7%) are from Ernakulam. Only 33 members, hardly three per cent of the total sample, have cited the chances for self-employment as the first reason. Their interest in self-employment may arise after working in the group for some time. Before considering self-employment enterprises, they may use the savings and loans for their immediate needs.

Region-wise analysis of the reasons of the members is the same. Of those 395 members who offered the reason saving as the most important one, 320 belonged to the Coastal SHGs which form 81 percent. Regarding loans as the primary cause, 144 of the 201 members are from the Coastal region (71.6%). Again, the preponderance of members is found in the Coastal SHGs, with self-employment as the major reason.

Sources of Motivation

As regards the sources of motivation to join the SHGs, it was their neighbours in the case of about forty per cent (Table 4.2). In the case of another 33 per cent, the members themselves decided to join the groups as they were exposed to the benefits of joining the SHGs from those already members. Friends, family members, including the husband, and others were instrumental in the case of the remaining members.

Of those motivated by their neighbours, 59.4 per cent (266) are in Ernakulam SHGs, while 40.6 per cent (182) are in Alappuzha SHGs. Of the 373 members who made their own decisions, 59 per cent (220) are from Alappuzha and the remaining 153 are from Ernakulam. Again, the number (79 of 126; 62.7 %) is more in the case of friends for Alappuzha SHGs.

Neighbours motivated most of the members in Coastal SHGs (319 of 448; 71.2%). Next, the order of reason for coastal SHGs is self-decision. There are 249 members of the 373 (66.8%) in this reason category. Friends motivated more or less equal members in both Coastal and Highway SHGs.

Expectations in the Beginning

The expectations of women before joining the group agree, though not in percentile terms, with the reasons for joining. They revealed that savings (50.3%) and loans (25.6%) formed the major expectations of the majority (Table 4.3). Only 2.8 per cent expected some benefits for self-employment opportunities. The members had more than two expectations when joining the SHGs. In all these, we found that the number of members was concentrated in savings and loans.

Fig. 14.1 Data sections marked in a research report

TABLES

Table 4.1
Source of Motivation to Join SHGs

Items	No. of Members	Per cent
Savings	395	35.4
Loans	201	18.0
Cooperation	130	11.6
Group Activities	125	11.2
Benefits	71	6.4
Gain Knowledge	63	5.6
Good faith in SHGs	36	3.2
Self Employment	33	3.0
NA	15	1.3
Women's Development	14	1.3
Social Interest	9	0.8
Spend Time Effectively	5	0.4
Personality Development	5	0.4
Happiness	4	0.4
Regulate Expenditure	3	0.3
Mutual Help	3	0.3
Repay Loans	2	0.2
Mental Peace	1	0.1
Develop Abilities	1	0.1
Total	1116	100.0

Table 4.2
Reasons for Joining SHGs

Source of Motivation	No. of Members	Per cent
Neighbour	448	40.1
Self	373	33.4
Friends	126	11.3
Family Members	104	9.3
Husband	45	4.0
Others	20	1.9
Total	1116	98.1

Fig. 14.2 Marked tables in a research report

provinces, communities and cities (Whitby, 2020). Writers use it to study age, gender, race, ethnicity, family, residence, housing, education, employment, income and many other aspects of human life. Edmonston and Schultze (1995), in their volume on *Modernizing the U.S. Census*, say that much of our knowledge on social transformations over the years has been gathered from the analysis of census data. They reported research areas such as ageing, race relations, education and poverty have used census data.

Books have also been published about how to use census data. *The Routledge Handbook of Census Resources* by Stillwell (2020) provides the methods and applications of a variety of census material that can be successfully employed in research and writing nonfiction. Bouk (2022), in his book *Democracy's Data: The Hidden Stories in the U. S. Census and How to Read Them*, tells us the stories hidden in the census data. He says,

To find stories in the data, we must widen our lens to take in not only the numbers but also the processes that generated those numbers. When we read these stories in the data, it helps us to see the journey that any set of numbers has taken and it helps us realize that numbers are just one crystallization of a much deeper, richer data set. (p. 1)

Whitby's (2020) book *The Sum of the People* looks at the census in a broader sense, not as a collection of separate national projects but as a human project. He shows how the census has changed societies as it's a form of quantitative social history. For nonfiction writers, such information is an excellent source for their books.

Mining data from the censuses and using it for nonfiction is a skilled job. Most censuses provide online options to download data into Excel or other data management programs. Books are there to assist you with this (e.g. Carmichael, 2016; Gaquin & Ryan, 2021; Shryock et al., 2013; Vartanian, 2011; Walker, 2023; Wilson, 2010).

To systematically prepare the data to combine with your analysis needs, exercise meticulous care throughout the entire process. Assess whether the data meets your objectives. If you find it lacking, you may need to explore other data sources. Exporting data from other sources should be carried out carefully as you're transferring from one format to another. While processing the data obtained from secondary sources, there may be chances that the data segments might have been cut or omitted by accident. Clean the data, bearing in mind that this isn't the primary data you collected by yourself. Cleaning involves filtering the data based on the variables essential to fulfilling the objectives of your book. In actual cleaning, you look for missing data and discrepancies, too.

Prepare for the analysis by producing basic frequency tables of the chosen variables. Moving beyond simple descriptive analysis, your goal should be to uncover meaningful relationships and associations among the variables. Run tables by inserting relevant variables. Running cross tables will illuminate data gaps when examining the interplay of two or more variables. This initial examination will reveal any discrepancies, though not much can be done in cases of missing data, which may necessitate omitting the variable altogether. It's not the data you collected, and you didn't have any control over the integrity of the data.

Experiment with several tests and analytical methods, each one unveiling a new layer of understanding. Carry on with a persistent exploration of the original or secondary data at your disposal. Dive deep into it with a focus on extracting valuable insights. Approach the analysis with an open mind, welcoming the possibility of uncovering unexpected results, even if it goes against your assumptions. Examine the data repeatedly, as if each review offers a fresh perspective, raising your curiosity with every iteration. With each observation, a concealed dimension begins to unravel beautifully before your eyes. Continue this methodical exploration until that

surprising moment arrives—when you stumble upon something new and significant within the data. It's like opening a doorway to a deeper world, where you, in turn, discover precious gems waiting to be unearthed. You'll see what you haven't seen before. There may be a white rabbit, the Cheshire Cat or the Queen of Hearts, as Alice saw in Wonderland. This is an adventure into the world of data.

The process of refining the usable data for the book is now complete, connecting to the book's objectives. It's time to construct the final tables from the data. Go chapter by chapter or section by section, to decide on necessary tables. Tables should be developed in the final form using the table function in Word. Follow a style, such as APA, as described earlier, for each type of table you require. Wait for Chap. 18 to see how a table is formatted.

Include tables of different kinds, from frequency tables to cross tables for inferential statistical tests. This diversity enhances the book's layout and provides deeper insights into the focused topic. Determine the number of tables for each section or chapter. Readers generally prefer more text than data stacked in tables. Take notes for the tables concerning the results of statistical tests: significance levels, correlation coefficients and p -values if they apply to your analysis. Finally, save the tables in a separate document under the book's folder, where you can move them to respective sections and chapters in the final draft.

Now, we enter the main body of the nonfiction—constructing the content for the book—in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 15

Crafting Content

Abstract The success of a nonfiction title is heavily influenced by its structure. This chapter serves as a guide, leading readers through the organisation of chapters in nonfiction. Chapters in nonfiction inherently vary in form, structure, objectives and length. The crucial aspect of nonfiction lies in establishing a structure that assists the writer in creating focused chapters for a book. This chapter introduces techniques for constructing the content of an entire nonfiction work. A book is divided into chapters, sections, paragraphs and elements, each demanding meticulous attention to craft an engaging nonfiction piece. The chapter provides methods of constructing these components professionally, making sure that necessary diversity in the organisation and structure of the content for each chapter is maintained. This enhances the readability of the book, making it accessible to a variety of readers. Special emphasis is given to thoughtful inclusion of content for chapters.

Keywords Crafting • Conceptualising • Structure • Abstracts •
Keywords • Paragraphs in nonfiction • Conclusion

A book project of about 250 printed pages can be a daunting responsibility when you initially think about it. This feeling arises because you're

attempting to picture the entire book before you even begin writing. As the African saying goes, ‘To eat an elephant, one bite at a time.’

In presenting ideas in science writing, Zinsser (1976 [2005]) uses an analogy, likening it to an inverted pyramid. This means the writing should commence with a foundational fact, which serves as the initial piece of information for the readers. Subsequently, each sentence builds upon the preceding one, progressively expanding the base of the pyramid. This widening effect continues as additional facts are introduced, creating a sense of breadth in the text. Zinsser contends that this structure allows for the inclusion of multiple facts, one after another, without any inherent limitation.

Conceptualise your book as a substantial block, which can be subdivided into distinct pieces. These pieces form the chapters; within them, the chapters can be further segmented into sections. Think of these sections as intricately woven threads in a fabric. Each section will be composed of elements working together to shape its content and render a form. Every element is built by a few paragraphs; paragraphs have sentences, and sentences contain words that are connected. This is the structure of a chapter.

Say, for instance, you are thinking of writing a book on the topic of education in a region. Let us take Africa, for that matter. A marketable theme. What could be the structure of that book? After reading the relevant material and connecting it with your knowledge in the field, you evolve a structure for the book. Remember, it is only a preliminary phase for the structure, and it will develop as it goes. The book is now conceived as a block, constituted by chapters. To make it different, you would want to cover chapters dealing with themes most relevant to Africa, as unique from other regions. In that case, you would think about themes, namely, the historiography of education in Africa from colonial times to modern higher education on the continent. So, the spectrum is conceived, the beginning to the end. You would then consider the themes that fall between these two. You might choose topics such as decolonisation of education, Pan-Africanism and several realms of education to cover vocational education, teacher education, peace education, religious education or science and technology education. Access to education and rights to education may also be pertinent. Taking into account the breadth of the book, in terms of topics and pages, you can expand or limit them. These themes will transform into concrete chapters; you have all the necessary

sections within each of them. Sections will be integrated with appropriate parts of paragraphs.

The content of each chapter differs. We can't have the same approach to the development of all chapters in a book. Chapter sizes and content are not the same. They are sliced in varying sizes, depending on the subject matter, the approach, the materials we're working with, and, of course, the overall purpose of the book.

For nonfiction writers, there are advantages of having a clear structure that they cannot ignore. Unlike fiction, nonfiction includes a good amount of information, facts, data, concepts and theories that are essential for the subject matter of the book. They need to be organised in chapters and sections in the most effective and structured manner.

Spend enough time to think through an outline and develop it into a neat structure. A well-planned structure will run into two to three pages. It will contain tentative titles, a synopsis of the contents and size in terms of word length. For each chapter, sections and subsections are placed in a logical and coherent order. A structure dictates what data and information are for what sections and chapters. The position of theories and their discussion are placed to fit the structure. The inclusion of tables, charts and images is assessed before the structure is finalised. When this is done the writer isn't intimidated by the size of the whole book, which looked untenable when the writing started. Complete section by section and chapter by chapter which accumulates gradually into a whole book. Without an outline, you wouldn't know where to start and how to proceed. Get a structure or an outline ready which can be developed by bits and pieces. The book will take shape gradually, step by step. It is easy to expand when you have structure, as in the case of the above example of education in Africa.

Envision the broader perspective for the entire book. What's the core theme you want to discuss in the book? Once you've finalised the central theme, break it down into subthemes. These will serve as the content for individual chapters, each contributing to the overall theme of the book. You'll have a subtheme for each chapter. Construct a table similar to the one in Table 15.1 and use it as a guide when outlining each chapter. This method helps maintain coherence throughout the book.

Next, distribute the word count among the sections addressing distinct subthemes within each chapter. Not all chapters will have the same length; they should be proportional to the content they cover. The length of sections may also vary depending on the data you're utilising. The first

Table 15.1 Content plan for chapters

<i>Chapter no.</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>	<i>Sections</i>	<i>Use of data</i>	<i>Tables and figures</i>	<i>Parts</i>	<i>Length (words)</i>
1	1	1	1	Primary:	Figures:	Abstract	Abstract:
		2	2	yes/no		Keywords	Introduction:
		3	3	Secondary:		Introduction	Section 1:
			4	yes/no		Sections 1, 2	Section 2:
			5	No data		and 3	Section 3:
						Data	Data
						Analysis	Analysis:
						Discussion	Discussion:
						Conclusion	Conclusion:
						References	References:
							Total:

chapter may differ in length from data-laden chapters. Strive to achieve a balanced word count for each chapter to enhance readability. The same applies to sections, elements, paragraphs and sentences. You don't want to develop any section or chapter excessively long or too short. Now, estimate the count of words for each chapter and its parts of introduction, sections, conclusions and references. If the total final count for the chapter is 6000 words, divide them up for each part taking into account each one's importance. Exclude abstract from the total number. An approximate split can be more or less like this: Introduction: 800; Section 1: 1400; Section 2: 1400; Section 3: 1400; Conclusion: 600; and References: 400. Total: 6000.

The components listed in Table 15.1 shouldn't be applied uniformly to all chapters. And not too rigidly adhered to. Use your discretion when including or omitting these elements as outlined in the table. The initial three components—abstract, keywords and references—should be consistent in word length across all chapters. Publishers rely on the abstract and keywords for promoting individual chapters when they are sold separately, as they help enhance visibility on search engines. Abstracts can be likened to the driveway leading to the grand entrance of a building. Like this driveway offers the first impression of a magnificent edifice, abstracts provide readers with an initial glimpse of the work that lies ahead.

For abstracts, maintain a standardised length of 120–150 words each for all chapters, keeping them concise and precise. Lend a clear overview of the chapter's content without using personal pronouns such as 'I/We'

discuss ...’, instead use impersonal ones such as ‘The chapter presents...’, ‘In this chapter ...’, ‘The chapter discusses ...’, or ‘It deals with ...’. Briefly outline the chapter’s purpose and methodology if it’s a data-driven chapter and key findings within two to three sentences. Statistical results in the abstract are boring. They disrupt the flow, much like rocks in a stream. A well-crafted chapter abstract catches readers’ interest, giving them a glimpse of what’s inside.

A model abstract of a chapter, in this case, the historiography of education in Africa, could look like this:

This chapter presents the unique situation of education in Africa, considering its diverse socioeconomic, cultural and developmental contexts and needs. It discusses the history of education from the colonial period to the present, presenting the evolution of educational philosophies and practices on the continent. In this chapter, key topics such as the philosophy of education, African pedagogy, and pan-African education are examined in depth, reflecting their prominent roles in contemporary African education. By focusing on these topics, the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the historical and contemporary contexts of education in Africa, showing the importance of various African knowledge practices. The approach in the chapter aims to empower African learners and educators, fostering a more equitable and holistic educational landscape across the continent.

A short one. Note that the chapter is theoretical; therefore, the methodology and findings do not find a place here.

The summary is the book’s presentation to the world, a vital part of marketing. Think of it like the enticing pictures on a restaurant menu, carefully crafted to captivate customers. These images are designed to make the dishes look irresistible and colourful. Present it well. Effective presentation can transform even the dullest content into something appealing. How you present it matters. Just as a well-plated dish can make even a simple meal look exquisite, a well-crafted presentation can make your content intriguing.

Keywords act as signposts for your book. Select five to seven relevant words derived from the chapter’s title or content. The right keywords will increase the chapter’s online searchability. Research-based nonfiction readers prefer to take this initial step of searching online. Publication databases should efficiently recognise your selected keywords. While they aren’t presented at the beginning of each chapter when the book is published, the publisher needs them for their web content.

You've settled on a set of keywords. Test them in databases to verify if they yield relevant documents. This trial run will lead to refining your keywords by assessing the documents retrieved by the databases. If your keywords aren't delivering effective search results, modify them. Try again with alternate forms or even a new set of keywords. This is a key aspect of the endeavour to enhance the accessibility, reach and usability of your work.

Proceed to construct the introduction for the chapter. Writers follow different approaches to writing the introduction. Whether it's for the book or individual chapters, they aren't alike. Some prefer to write it after they've completed the entire chapter. Others choose to craft the introduction first, followed by the body of the chapter, which includes its sections. If you've a strong understanding of what you want to include in a chapter, writing the introduction first can help provide a clear roadmap for the chapter's development.

If you find it more comfortable to start with the body of the chapter, you can do the introduction later when the chapter is done. The introduction to a chapter isn't a repeat of the abstract. Sentences for both are drafted differently, even though they deal with the same content. The same applies to an introduction to the book.

Sections constitute the core structure of the chapter, serving as its building blocks, as we've already seen. They shape the chapter's content, character and overall effectiveness. The success of the construction of a chapter depends on the integration of the sections as they work in harmony to achieve the overarching chapter objective. Make certain that their connection is fluid, with each section logically leading to the next or complementing one another, ultimately synergising to accomplish the chapter's goal. To get started, identify the key sections and provide concise descriptions for each one. Weigh their relevance to the entire chapter and confirm that they adhere to the chapter's objective. The chapter's purpose is your compass when selecting sections. As you're in this process, list more potential sections than you'll need to meet the chapter's objective. From this extensive list, carefully organise and refine your selection, aiming to consolidate some of the initial ideas into cohesive sections.

Sections are now finalised, each serving a distinct purpose within the chapter, fitting into the overall structure. Move forward with further development of each section. This involves breaking down a section into manageable components referred to as elements. When considering the fundamental elements that will compose a section, coordinate them with the section's intended purpose.

Typically, aiming for four or five key elements should suffice in creating a robust section. Although these elements may not be explicitly detailed in the table, contemplate and outline these essential components for each section. These elements should be conceptualised as depicted in Fig. 15.1, and they should facilitate detailed elaboration within their respective sections while keeping the overall word limit in mind.

The constituent elements of each section are to be expanded upon in a series of concise paragraphs. Paragraphs are the components of an element. Given that paragraphs are the dwelling place for individual ideas, the division of sections into their respective elements facilitates focus, thereby minimising the likelihood of straying from the specific elements under consideration.

Draft your paragraphs with care. The opening sentence of a paragraph serves as an introduction to the primary idea of the element. Subsequent sentences in the paragraph should elaborate on this idea, providing supportive evidence or examples and citing relevant works as necessary. It doesn't vary differently for a theoretical or empirical chapter. In the end, each paragraph will look like an indispensable part of the element; you can't separate or remove them. Transition sentences are for a smooth flow between paragraphs, linking the ideas from one paragraph to the next and not jumping from one to another. Each paragraph typically comprises about five to seven sentences.

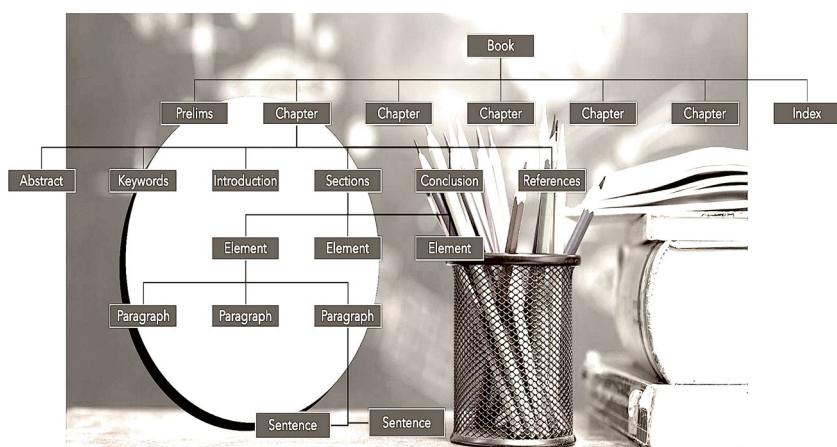


Fig. 15.1 Splitting the book

Shorter paragraphs are more effective, as they're easier and quicker for readers to digest, assuring the reader's attention span isn't exceeded. Short paragraphs are visually appealing, making them easier on the eyes. Longer paragraphs, on the other hand, extend beyond the eye's natural vision area. Short paragraphs are reader-friendly, enhancing the overall page layout, as opposed to long paragraphs that occupy a substantial portion of the page or even a full page. In research-based nonfiction, a short paragraph is distinct from a brief one in fiction. It may be a sentence long in fiction, not in research-based titles, unless in some rare instances.

Within paragraphs, attention should be paid to constructing sentences with precision. Each sentence should maintain a logical connection to the one preceding it, and one succeeding it for an uninterrupted flow and prevent any disruption in the overall coherence. The flexibility to rearrange these sentences persists throughout various drafts of your work, preserving the fluidity of your writing. Complex, long sentences complicate the matter being discussed, particularly in nonfiction where topics are mostly about specialised subjects and themes. Short is sweet. Not to say that all of it should be short, as that would be boring. Some need to be a little longer, but not too long. Limit the number of words to the minimum, just enough to present the idea. Writers favour about 20–25 words in a sentence. Nonfiction writing already suffers from a negative reputation associated with the use of jargon, clichés and complex concepts that are beyond the comprehension of the general public. We don't want to reinforce this perception through our nonfiction.

The conclusion is the last section of a chapter, where it provides a concise summary of the content covered in the preceding sections. Reiterate the primary objective of the chapter at the beginning of the conclusion. One or two sentences about the approach followed in the chapter are relevant. Continue with a synthesis of the key findings and insights that've emerged from the sections. This synthesis shouldn't merely repeat what was previously stated in the sections; instead, rephrase the findings to avoid the repetition of the same wording. The conclusion of a chapter is a thoughtful piece developed creatively from the results, findings and insights gained from working on the chapter.

If the sections collectively revolve around a central argument or theme, the conclusion is the ideal place to reemphasise the point. A good conclusion should provide the broader implications of the findings, considering both the general context and specific applications or consequences. By

exploring the broader and more specific contexts, the conclusion helps readers understand the chapter's content and how it fits into the larger context of the book. The conclusion should leave readers with a lasting impression, reinforcing the main takeaway from the chapter and setting the stage for the subsequent chapters. It's not necessary to cite references in this section, as these should've been addressed in the preceding sections. The conclusion is intended for your insights and shouldn't be a platform to introduce or reintroduce the ideas of others that have already been discussed in other parts of the chapter. Don't introduce any new ideas in the conclusion. This might leave the reader wondering why they are being brought in at this point. What is in the conclusions is the most probably the ones the readers take with them. It's the part the readers are likely to remember because it's the last thing they'll read (Howard, 2018). Make it thoughtful and memorable.

We need a conclusion for the book as well. The conclusion of each chapter provides the key points presented in the respective chapters. With the suggestions for concise conclusions in mind, remember that the conclusions in each chapter will contribute to the content of the final chapter of your book. This final chapter will be a more comprehensive account of the conclusions from all chapters, offering a fresh perspective on the collective findings, in a different light which looks non-repetitive. A concluding chapter should distinguish itself from one that merely summarises conclusions drawn from previous chapters. It represents an expanded version of a typical conclusion.

References—they're no less important in a chapter as we've seen already in the previous chapters. Its placement at the end of the chapter doesn't mean that it's the last part the writer should be concerned about. And, not the least important component. No. As discussed elaborately, don't overlook this part.

It's not unusual to find the structure of a chapter that follows a different pattern—abstract, keywords, introduction, objectives, methods, data analysis, findings, discussion, conclusion and references. This model is more appropriate for a data-driven empirical chapter, which we will see in a moment in the next chapter. In this model, sections can still be integrated into the chapters. Several sections, as in the previous model, may not be necessary. If there are multiple empirical chapters in the book, as is possible, certain elements can be shared across all the data-based chapters.

When the data used in the book has a single architecture, common features persist across different empirical chapters. The data may have been collected from the same source, which is utilised in all chapters. The methodology remains consistent and is applied to the data content presented in all empirical chapters. Data and methods can be consolidated into a common chapter, perhaps positioned as the first chapter of the book, which is a more suitable placement. This approach eliminates the need for repetition in all empirical chapters. Thus, in this model, the structure comprises an introduction, analysis, findings, conclusion and references. Abstracts and keywords maintain uniformity in word length and presentation across all chapters, regardless of their content or their position as initial or final chapters.

In the above model, begin each chapter with an introductory section, providing context and an overview of the chapter's purpose. Then, transition into the core of the chapter, which comprises the data-based segment. Within this data-based portion, organise it into distinct sections, each focusing on specific themes and objectives derived from the overarching chapter theme and objective. Sections, similar to the previous model, consist of elements that encompass data analysis and findings, presented through well-structured paragraphs. Each section stands alone yet collectively contributes to the objective of the entire chapter. Conclude the chapter, as outlined in the initial model, before concluding with the references section.

The approach of the second model keeps your chapter's content cohesive, logical and organised, facilitating a clearer understanding for your readers. The issue with this format is that it resembles an empirical journal article, which doesn't meet our intention of presenting nonfiction books distinctively, departing from the conventional article format. While there is nothing inherently wrong with adhering to this structure, readers have expectations for a book chapter compared to a journal article. If you wish to maintain this format, you can still incorporate the structure outlined earlier in the previous model, involving sections and elements, but this should be limited to the data segment of the chapter, specifically the analysis and discussion. More about crafting data-laden chapters comes in Chap. 17.

More important are the first and last chapters, the head and tail. We will see how they are crafted differently from the other chapters.

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CHAPTER 16

First and Last, and Titling

Abstract This chapter focuses on the creation of the introductory and concluding chapters. Just as the body of the book spans several chapters between the initial and final ones, a well-crafted introductory chapter is essential for capturing and maintaining readers' interest. This chapter acquaints writers with practical ideas that contribute to a robust and engaging introductory chapter. Likewise, constructing the final chapter of the book requires careful attention. A conclusion chapter should deviate from the conventional format often characterised by a mere repetition of findings. Instead, it endeavours to offer a unique perspective, refraining from the typical summarisation of results found in an ordinary conclusion. It goes beyond a mere conclusion, encompassing distilled insights from preceding chapters. The chapter outlines the process of building the concluding chapters in nonfiction without becoming repetitive.

Keywords Chapters • Crafting • Introductory chapter • Concluding chapter • Title

We've seen the structure of the main chapters in the previous chapter. Let's look at the introductory and final chapters of the book more closely. They've distinct characteristics and shouldn't be treated as equivalent to the main chapters regarding content, approach or format. They're the

head and tail of the body but are as integral as the main body, and together they constitute the whole body, the book.

The introductory chapter is the one that invites the reader to the book. Since the nonfiction genre we've been discussing is about specialised subject matter in both the natural and social sciences we need to make it appealing and accessible to the reader. In other words, we transform a dry idea into a juicier one in the book. If accessibility is compromised, readers will shun away. How to make it work? We aren't competing with fiction, but features can be adapted as we've seen before. For good intentions and reasons.

An entire chapter is devoted to introducing the problem, objectives, research questions and components of the methodology, even going so far as to discuss limitations. This approach can give the book the feel of a technical report or thesis. Blend these elements more cautiously within the introductory chapter, ensuring that the necessary details and scholarly rigour of a research-based title are maintained. Postpone the discussion of limitations for now, which is found in some introductory chapters. We want to avoid sowing the seeds of doubt in the minds of our readers when they come across limitations in the first chapter. Readers will be sceptical of the content. Limitations in the first chapter look good for research reports. If you think it absolutely necessary, find some space in the final chapter.

Give an appropriate and attractive title to the introductory chapter. Using 'Introduction' as the title for the introductory chapter is redundant. You don't need the word 'Introduction' to introduce the subject. A brief title that isn't too long—perhaps in less than six words would be nice. Make it appealing by connecting to the central focus of the book. Begin the chapter with a compelling story or leverage interesting personal experiences that relate to the book's central theme.

Stephen King begins his book, *A Brief History of Time*:

A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russel) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: 'What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.' The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, 'What is the tortoise standing on?' 'You're a very clever, young man, very clever,' said the old lady. (1988, p. 1)

Another effective approach is to use current news or shocking facts as a springboard. Intriguing events ignite the reader's curiosity and make them eager to learn more about the topic, catering to both specialised and general readers. Aim to present such information with a unique voice that sets it apart from the typical tone of an article, which tends to be straightforward, objective and matter-of-fact. Draw readers into the book using these techniques, creating a sense of excitement and anticipation about the subject matter, its purpose and key arguments.

To stress the significance of your work, reference what other scholars have said about the topic, emphasising that it's a timely subject in the contemporary world (also useful for your book proposal to impress the commissioning editor). With supportive evidence from other sources, you can persuade readers that the content of the book is original, if indeed it is, and that this represents the first attempt at addressing the topic. Readers are eager to discover something new, information that hasn't been extensively covered in any other books. After capturing the reader's attention, smoothly transition to the more substantive aspects of the book, where you introduce the objectives, approach and methodology. While maintaining the necessary seriousness in these sections, retain the reader's interest and involvement. Keep away from jargon and clichés. Add sentences that arouse curiosity and expectations. You've already hooked the reader. Don't let them get away.

The final chapter of the book is meant to synthesise the content from the preceding chapters into a cohesive whole. Give this chapter a title that reflects its unique content, avoiding the generic label of 'Conclusions'. You can still conclude without using the word. Depending on the nature of the subject matter, insert sections such as recommendations, suggestions for future research or addressing limitations, as discussed earlier.

Leverage the findings such as historical, theoretical and empirical insights, to introduce new perspectives already presented in the book. Merely reiterating what's been previously said and concluded in the preceding chapters will be unexciting. Summarisation is the easy part; instead, strive for originality in your content. Minimise the use of external references unless they're pivotal for making a key point or developing a new theoretical model. They prefer not to have a repeat of the same meal in quick succession.

The Selfish Gene (Richard Dawkins, 2016)

Outliers: The Story of Success (Malcolm Gladwell, 2011)

The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer (Siddhartha Mukherjee, 2011)

The Disappearing Spoon: And Other True Tales of Madness, Love, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elements (Sam Kean, 2011)

When Breath Becomes Air (Paul Kalanithi, 2016)

Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies (Jared Diamond, 1997)

The Second Sex (Simone de Beauvoir, 1949)

These nonfiction titles are known best sellers. The titles possess a succinct, compelling quality that arouses curiosity. They're concise and catchy. They exhibit a rhythmic tone when spoken and resonate in one's ears, making them irresistible and drawing readers towards the book. Many of them feature both a primary title and a subtitle. While the subtitle provides a glimpse into the book's contents, the main title is designed to be attention-grabbing. A captivating main title itself can eliminate the need for a subtitle. It's strong enough to stand alone without relying on the support of a scaffolding subtitle.

The title is the attire of the book. Just as dressing well captures people's attention and makes them look your way, a title demands pretty good effort. Titling is a process that unfolds through several rounds of brainstorming.

Begin with a working title that accurately represents the book's content, even if it's somewhat lengthy initially. Let it sit as you immerse in writing. New title ideas will naturally arise from your ongoing engagement with the material, courtesy of your subconscious at work behind the scenes. The human subconscious processes information at a rapid rate, even when we're not consciously aware of it. It's also associated with creativity. Many creative ideas and solutions emerge from the subconscious mind, even when the conscious mind is relaxed and focused on other matters. Make note of each of the titles that come to your mind from time to time. You've plenty of time for this—the entire book's writing duration. So, don't rush. If inspiration doesn't strike organically, try to craft one during your writing. Identify the key themes that underpin your book. Document and then distil them into one or two descriptive words for each major theme. List all your options and refine each of them. Discard the ones that don't please you. Leave those that don't satisfy you. Focus on a shortlist of approximately five powerful words. Now, combine them into a title that captivates.

Think of the impact that your chosen words for the title can deliver. Do they spark curiosity, excitement or intrigue? Do they carry emotional weight? Is the combination of words you've settled on unique and not commonly used by others? Search online book retailers to check for any similar titles featuring your chosen words. If you find any, go back and weed them out.

After you've pinned down the main title, turn your attention to a subtitle that effectively conveys the book's themes. Make the subtitle concise and don't reuse words from the main title. Keep it within a maximum of seven words. Perform an online search again to check for similar or related titles. If none came up, finalise the subtitle for the time being. You can park it for now. Revisit it later, or you may naturally come up with new title ideas. The subtitle should directly convey the content of the book, in contrast to the main title which is intended to capture the reader's attention.

We've seen the formation of chapters. In research-based nonfiction, we need some chapters that are data-laden. They are the book's middle part and come between the first and last. How to craft them for your book?



CHAPTER 17

Data-Laden Chapters

Abstract This chapter describes the art of crafting empirical, data-rich chapters that are found in nonfiction. Given that facts form the backbone of nonfiction, the challenge lies in presenting them in an informative and approachable manner. The selection of data precedes its utilisation in the book. The type of data deemed necessary is contingent upon the book's subject and the discerning choices of the writer. Unorganised and clumsy presentation of data in nonfiction can deter readers. A balance between data and words must be maintained in nonfiction, considering both the total word length and their appropriate proportions. The chapter offers lessons on creating data-driven chapters with an engaging style that integrates with the text.

Keywords Data • Tables • Charts • Statistical tests

Chapters based on data are essential parts of research-based nonfiction. They aren't like other chapters. Writers have concerns about the approach to be taken in presenting the content in data-rich chapters, the effective use of data within them and a non-intimidating presentation style.

While original data, either primary or secondary, advances the value of a book, chapters filled with extensive data may not always be readers' favourites. An excess of data-intensive chapters in a book might not appeal to general readers who find the topic intriguing but prefer not to go too deeply into the presented data. The reason primarily lies in data, which presents hard facts and requires readers to maintain focused concentration while digesting the information. The demand for concentrated attention and cognitive effort in comprehending content may be perceived as taxing. Such chapters can at times resemble dense forests, where each step requires careful attention to move forward in exploration. Handling data-rich chapters therefore necessitates active engagement and critical thinking on the part of readers. Strategies can be adapted to render data-intensive chapters more engaging and reader-friendly, promoting a smoother and more enjoyable reading experience.

Zinsser (1976 [2005]) says that surprise is one of the most refreshing elements in nonfiction writing, and if something surprises you, it will surprise the reader. It is true. You'll come across many such opportunities in research-based nonfiction. The data you use and the analysis you do surprise you with new insights. Capture those and save them for your book. Trigger the reader's inquisitiveness throughout the book. This is the skill every writer must nurture and master for their success in writing. It's the magic you can do with words and ideas. Why do certain nonfiction works turn out boring and lacklustre? It's because the writers tend to write what appeals to them or what they consider important without giving due consideration to the reader's perspective.

After sorting the data component and creating tables through appropriate statistical tests and data visualisation, think about integrating the data into the sections and chapters. Scrutinise the data carefully and categorise it under the primary objectives or themes that have been selected for the book. If two objectives require empirical data, data can be divided between them, not necessarily equally but just to meet the objectives. Organise the data for the empirical chapters. Ideally, this organisation should've been established when the chapters were initially drawn up. Empirical data shouldn't be part of every chapter; doing so can disrupt the overall structure of the book and readability.

In a data-based book of 80,000 words, less than half of it, i.e. about 30,000–35,000 words, can be data material. This is three to four chapters or about 40 per cent of the entire work. A book of this length can have about 10 chapters and the proportion of about 40 per cent for the data

contained pages looks quite reasonable. Divide and allocate the data carefully so that you don't overload chapters with too many facts. This is the first step towards crafting your sections that carry data.

Four chapters have been dedicated to the empirical data extracted from the original research or secondary sources. In addition to meeting the objectives of the chapters, the data should be closely related to the overarching themes addressed within each chapter. It's to establish thematic connections before defining the specific chapter objectives. Within these thematic boundaries, the selected objectives can be constructed with the support of the corresponding data.

After you've got the data sorted and know where each chunk is going, distribute it. Your concern here is not about equal or unequal distribution. Instead, it's determined by the specific needs of each chapter and its content. Roughly calculate how many words should be allocated for a standard chapter, which typically consists of about 6000–8000 words. You don't want to inundate the chapter with endless tables and charts of data, spilling over to several pages. Those tables and charts can be real space-hogs, and readers are likely to give them a pass. A reasonable data length for a chapter of 8000 words could be 1500 words, which can be housed in two to three compressed tables. This excludes the count meant for the analysis and interpretation of data, which is in textual form. Avoid repetition of numbers while describing and interpreting data so as not to obstruct the flow of the text; you want to look more like textual content distilled from the data presented in tables.

Readers are generally hungry for the juicy bits—the analysis, findings and interesting insights you've pulled from the data. This will make your chapter more reader-friendly and keep that narrative flowing smoothly. Let your words do the talking and save the charts for when they shine. This enhances the chapter's appeal to readers and facilitates a flow.

In essence, data-laden chapters should prioritise text over digits. Add more words to describe and interpret the data, going beyond the numerical values presented in tables or charts. Quantities of data are distilled to transform them into words. Provide an in-depth interpretation of the data that extends beyond what can be immediately observed. Simply describing a table straightforwardly is archaic and more suitable for student assignments or theses. The trick is to be as descriptive and narrative as possible. Sprinkle in some qualitative data to soften the effects of hard facts.

In addition to the mixed use of facts and text referring to original quantitative and qualitative data, add a touch of storytelling. Stories should be

real, not fabricated. Readers can discern the difference. For writers in the hard sciences, there might have been moments in the lab, like a funny conversation that still makes you chuckle or witnessing someone doing something amusing. Or a blunder someone has committed that made others laugh. Scientists do not always exhibit intelligent behaviour. There may be instances of the eccentric behaviour of scientists that the reader would find amusing. While maintaining anonymity, you can weave these anecdotes into your writing, providing readers with instances of levity amid complex subject matter.

A writer is a keen observer of their surroundings. Observations and experiences that may seem unique to you can be unusual and engaging for your readers. Collect them from your memory if you haven't journaled them. They're like pepper and salt, adding taste to bland meat. Select them carefully and present them in a style different from the rest of the books but similar to what a fiction writer would do.

Constructing narratives in an engaging style and making the data-laden chapters easy to read may not look easy for nonfiction writers. But it's possible. Think about a few things. Lexical and stylistic choices appropriate for the content of chapters and the subject of the book make insertions of narratives mesh well with the hard data. Like the interwoven threads in a fabric. The words in the narratives should speak to the context and the readers of your book. The vocabulary in the narratives should convey the meaning you want to give. A variety of vocabulary will work well with readers but pertains to the subject and readers. Keep the readers in mind while sprinkling the narratives in data-driven chapters. When imageries are used in the narratives, they should be easy for your readers to comprehend. Add a flavour of subtle humour to your narratives.

Grammatically, the construction of sentences in the narratives should be able to create a rhythm and resonate well with the ears. The usual sentence structure for the main text in nonfiction is not the right choice. The length of words counts—shorter is better. A mix of short and medium sentences is also good.

Choose the right voice—first or third person—of narration that makes your style distinct. Be consistent. It'll be very effective if you can create a mood, which is not easy. Fiction writers are good at that. A conversational style with dialogues can be mixed with narratives so that all the narratives used in the book are dissimilar. Dialogues have a captivating function, as in a fiction.

If you've got only quantitative data from your research project to use in the book, pay close attention to how you present it. Let's say in the original research report there were numerous tables and not as many words. Adapting it for your book, you might need to rethink how it can be reused. Doing a fresh analysis of the data, focusing on the chapter's theme and objectives, as suggested earlier, is the right thing to do. This reanalysis can take your data to a whole new level.

The research report is just a skeleton if the data is to be drawn from it. When we turn it into a book chapter, we need to add flesh to make it a readable piece. Only throw in the essential tables. A compressed table, made from several simple mono-variate tables, takes less space on the page than several simple tables. It eliminates the look of an array of tables that fill the pages and wouldn't give the impression of the dominance of tables.

In nonfiction, especially in the humanities and social sciences, we talk about qualitative data. This kind of data is about stories and direct quotes—the real stuff that makes reading enjoyable. It's like a breath of fresh air compared to those lifeless quantitative numbers or the overload of tables and charts you find in data-heavy chapters. But the secret sauce to keep readers hooked is having a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data. It's a perfect blend that makes those data-driven chapters bearable and satisfying.

When you mesh both qualitative and quantitative data into your chapters, a unique account unfolds. Qualitative data, inherently descriptive and engaging, join the composition like the several layers of a Subway sandwich, adding depth and taste to your storytelling. Use it intermittently to fit well with the quantitative stuff, like the layers of a sandwich dissolving without a trace of separate identities.

How many tables should we include in a chapter? First, estimate the number of tables that you want to include in a chapter. For a chapter with around 8000 words, having about four to five tables sounds reasonable. For 8000 words, take about 18 printed pages and six tables in approximately 5 pages. You won't see a table on every alternate page, but rather one table every three pages or so. That's good for a visual allure. Not many readers study data tables seriously. They may just glance at them and move on with the text.

Now, which tables are to be included? Think hard about the tables you need. Compress tables as discussed. Certain tables you initially thought necessary can be left out without a second thought. For example, if you're comparing mean differences between two variables using a *t*-test, there is

no need for a table to present the *t*-test results. Just give the results—like the mean, *N* (sample size), standard deviation, Cogent *d* and significance level—in plain language. Maybe toss some of these details into a footnote so readers aren't bombarded with numerical values. While dealing with a test of association, like a chi-square test, you can describe the results without resorting to a table. Turn those statistics and figures into a narrative. Your readers will like it.

What about charts? To add a touch of visual effect, strategically placed charts are to be sprinkled in the data-heavy chapter, giving readers a refreshing break while still delivering valuable data. Charts are awesome for visual effects and making your pages pop. Choose the right type of chart. Skip the old bar and pie charts that have been overused millions of times before. More eye-catching and unconventional charts lend a different flair. A range of chart options is available in visualisation software programs, including some that are freely downloadable and user-friendly for producing unique chart types. Keep the number of charts in check, as you've been careful with tables.

Formulas, especially in quantitative data analyses such as regression, are often presented in the chapter. These formulas can be like intricate puzzles with components of constants, operators, functions, parentheses, numerical coefficients, signs and more. Before cluttering the main text of your chapter with these formulas, relocate them to a footnote. By moving them to a footnote, readers can decide whether they want to look at the mathematical details or continue reading the text, free from the complexities of equations.

Working with data doesn't mean we have to stick to the same old formal, snooze-inducing style. Data can be interesting if you jazz it up a bit. Think of it this way: your writing style should make the data do the heavy lifting behind the scenes. Don't let those numbers steal the spotlight. They remain in the background, but refer to them to show their importance. Readers get the feeling that the writer is authentic even though figures don't take centre stage.

Sticking to the same pattern for the remaining data-based chapters might be tempting. Hold on a second. The book may contain multiple empirical chapters, each brimming with a wealth of data. The challenge is to construct these chapters in a way that doesn't look the same. Diversity is the mark of novelty. Think of it like entering a building with multiple rooms. When you step into the second room, you notice some similarities with the first one, but you don't think much of it. As you move on to the

third room, it becomes more apparent—these rooms are all the same: same doors, same windows, same dimensions and even the same wall colours. You may not even want to see all the rooms as they are alike. Think of what you would feel when you leave the building after touring all the identical rooms. That's not the kind of experience you want to give your readers. For the remaining data chapters, shake things up a bit and add some variety to keep them intrigued. Let's be creative with the structure. Introduce some variations, making each chapter a unique experience.

If a chapter's theme can be split into two major sections, do it. Having two broad themes in a single chapter can be a fresh take on the conventional structure we see in empirical chapters (the usual intro, objectives, data and methods, analysis and findings). This is another way to make two empirical chapters different. You can even have a common section for data and methods and maybe even an introduction for both themes. For example, if the first chapter had some cool charts, save the next set for the third or fourth chapter. As for tables, think of presenting them differently in each chapter. Some chapters might not even need any tables, or you can refer to a table provided in another chapter, as all chapters in the book are interrelated, if not interdependent.

To add more distinctiveness to empirical chapters, refrain from the repetitive use of data analysis techniques. Quantitative data requires statistical tests for analysis. By not using the same statistical procedures repeatedly, create a list of techniques that you can employ in different chapters. This approach helps minimise the monotony of data analysis. That said, the selection of statistical tools should always be in line with the purpose of data analysis and the appropriateness of the tools for the specific data. Regression analysis may be suitable for some chapters but not for all. Factor analysis might be appropriate for a chapter or two, but not for every chapter. Non-parametric tests apply to certain segments of data only that can be distributed across chapters. Not all data, except for the first empirical chapter, necessarily require the same descriptive statistical tests. Use ANOVA or MANOVA in different chapters rather than repeatedly in the same chapter. This variety will make your chapters less repetitive.

And let's not forget about the table layout. You're adhering to the APA style. But you can still play around with it a bit. Try alternating between portrait and landscape orientations for some tables to give them a different vibe to the empirical chapter. They will not look the same.

You'll find your creativity flowing more freely when working on the data chapters if you strive to keep them non-repetitive. The issue of

drafting empirical chapters in a variety of forms has now disappeared. They now mesh well with other chapters in the book that aren't laden with data, tables and charts—a great relief at last. A good look for the book as well.

Let's quickly recap the techniques of making data-heavy chapters more engaging and less drag. Decide on the number of chapters in the book that are to be dedicated to data analysis. Earmark the sections and length of data sections within these chapters and stick to them to avoid an overload of data. As data is mostly in the form of tables, be discrete about the selection of tables and the content that goes into the tables. Combine several variables rather than just two variables in a single table for the sake of looks and presentation. Avoid clustering tables, omitting all unnecessary ones and dispersing them carefully. Think about some tables that can be converted into text. Just descriptions will do. Gather enough qualitative data to incorporate into sections of data analysis, in the form of narratives and stories. Formulas of the inferential statistical tests are integral to data analysis. This doesn't mean that it should be included in the main text of the data sections. They can very well be housed in footnotes or endnotes. Apply a range of statistical techniques for the rigour of data analysis and show the diversity in different chapters by not repeating the same tests in all data-driven chapters. The same approach fits for charts as well. Choose variety in the selection and distribution of charts across chapters.

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CHAPTER 18

Structure, Format

Abstract This chapter elaborates on the structuring and formatting of nonfiction titles, a step to be taken at the outset of writing. The book's presentation leaves an impression on the reviewers and editor which can contribute to acceptance. The chapter offers hints to make nonfiction more appealing. Having a well-defined structure aids writers in upholding standards consistently during the writing process. Formatting necessitates a meticulously devised plan for style. A writer must consider a style sheet encompassing aspects like font, alignment, spacing, grammar, spelling, tables, charts and images to be adhered to in the book. The chapter provides a detailed and comprehensive style sheet, serving as both a model and a sample that writers can adopt and use as a foundation to develop their style sheet tailored for their book. The process of constructing a table is also elucidated, complemented by a sample table provided in the chapter.

Keywords Structure • Format • Presentation • Pantsers • Outliners
• Tables • Style sheet

Presentation makes a difference, a rather great difference in the minds of editors and reviewers. Writers produce great works and write excellent books. Not presented well? Then it doesn't make an impression or receive

the attention it should actually deserve. The content of the book is important. The way it is laid out is equally significant.

Writing a book is like preparing a gourmet meal. The content you've meticulously crafted is an exquisite dish filled with unique flavours and textures. When the book is produced in a well-structured, polished manner, it's like serving that gourmet dish on fine china with elegant garnishes.

The consistent use of the font in its style and size, justification, line spacing, levels of heading, length of sentences, paragraphs, sections, chapters and tables, charts and images adds to the quality of the presentation. Take care of these from the very beginning of your writing. It's easier that way. You won't have to spend time correcting and changing now and then and checking for consistency. A style guide prepared in advance helps. You can go back to the guide when you doubt the formatting you've been following.

The same page set-up used for all chapters avoids alignment issues when the chapters are finally combined to create a single document, which is required by some publishers at the time of proposal submission. Page orientation has different uses in nonfiction documents. Portrait is meant for the main text. Landscape orientation might be necessary in tables and charts, depending on their size.

Page borders look good for certificates but not for chapter documents which makes formatting arduous for the page-setters. Normal margins, 1 inch or 2.54 cm, for all sides, are typical. Pagination should be in the same location on the page. Left alignment is preferred to justified alignment. Page-setters do not favour the justified text, which aligns both left and right sides taking uneven spaces between words. No extra character space is left between words, only a single space. This can be sorted using the 'Find' and 'Replace' functions if you are using Microsoft Word.

Double-line space for the main text and single-line space between paragraphs are standard. Not for tables, which are set in single line. A tab before the beginning of the paragraph is omitted, allowing the page-setters to choose their own. Use the bullet and numbering functions sparingly. No need to use a header or footer. Writers use these functions only when submitting the full typescript to the editor, not the final version. The Word document should then be converted to PDF with a header or footer containing the title of the book and the writer's name. Even a watermark of Review Copy can be used. This precaution is to prevent the script from falling into the wrong hands and being used without permission from the

writer. The integrity of spelling consistency, British or US, ‘ise’ or ‘ize’, is to be maintained throughout. Hyphenation is not reader-friendly. Set your software program accordingly to leave hyphens that break words for the sake of alignment of the document.¹

Follow a structure for chapters: abstract, keywords, introduction, analysis, discussion, conclusion and references, to suit the content. In nonfiction, chapters are also marketed individually and therefore publishers want references inserted in each chapter rather than at the end of the book.

For fiction writing an outline beforehand isn’t essential. Some, however, prefer to have an outline. Others, called pantsers, aren’t bothered to develop an outline for their writing. Such writers prefer to ‘fly by the seat of their pants’ and discover the story as they write with the idea in their mind. Without a rigid structure, plan or outline, pantsers believe in the freedom and creativity to develop organic and character-driven narratives.

Outliners, on the other side of the spectrum, plan and outline their entire work in as much detail as possible before they sit down to write. They’ll develop the major plot, characters and scenes. Outliners are well-organised in their writing practices and every aspect of the book is thought out and planned. Outliners and pantsers aren’t two exclusive categories of writers. Many of them fall in between, not being strict outliners or not strict pantsers in their approach. Outliners at some stages of their writing benefit from the style of pantsers and vice versa. In research-based nonfiction, outliners work better.

Barry Boyce thinks that planning is like a campaign in writing and writing requires more management to support creativity (Silberman, 2012, p. 4). Geoff Manaugh, the author of *The BLDG Blog Book*, says that obsessive-compulsive organisational habits are your best friend (cited in Silberman, 2012, p. 4).

The word and page lengths of chapters depend on the content. Some chapters have tables that will extend the page length. Too short or too long chapters have an impact on readership. Confine to a range so that no chapter is excessively long or too short. A range of 6000–8000 words is reasonable. The same applies to sections within chapters. Allocate words to sections depending on the required content that is to be dealt with.

¹Some formatting information can be found at <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-format-a-book-manuscript>; <https://www.scribophile.com/academy/how-to-format-a-novel-manuscript>; <https://blog.reedsy.com/book-manuscript-format/>

Fonts—select a font and its size, preferably Times New Roman or Arial 12 points, for the main text and a smaller font size of 10 points for footnotes or endnotes. No stylistic fonts for titles and subtitles. For tables, a smaller font of 10 or 8 points may fit if the tables have thick data. Maintain the font style and size for different levels of headings, usually not more than three levels. No colour. Black is bright.

The ready-made table templates available in Word might not be the best choice for research-based nonfiction. Table designs given in Word are complex, though better for advertising material than for nonfiction, as mentioned earlier. The better option is to use the ‘Table’ function from the drop-down menu in Word. You can insert tables and add or delete rows and columns as needed. The ‘Autofit and Distribute’ option under ‘Table’ in the menu arranges table content to fit the window of the screen or column width, creating neat tables. Exporting tables from data management programs into Word format isn’t always great, as reformatting them into an acceptable format is exacting and frustrating. The APA table format is easy to adopt and looks simple and elegant.

Note the features of a typical simple table in Fig. 18.1. Table number 1.1, which represents table number 1 in Chap. 1, is given in bold. The title of the table is in italics, and the words are capitalised, except for the preposition ‘in’. No row lines for each item, only for the row titles and for the bottom. No column lines either. Digits are right aligned. Note and source (in italics) are at the bottom of the table, in smaller font.

Charts lend a cooling effect to the eyes of readers. Save the images in minimum 300 X 300 resolution as JPEG or TIFF and make a final selection of images when the book is ready for submission. Inserting images in chapters in Word format isn’t a good idea. It’ll enlarge the size of the file and opening takes time. You’ll find editing your draft difficult. Publishers don’t accept them in that form.

Look at the style sheet below. This sheet should include all the formatting styles you intend to use in the book, such as font styles and sizes for chapter titles, subtitles, tables, footnotes and references. These elements are distinguishable from each other and consider marking the levels of headings as well. See a list below, which can be customised to suit your project.

Style Sheet

General

Table number in bold

Chapter and table number in bold

Table title in italics

Words Capitalised in table title

Row titles with lines on top and bottom

Bottom line of the table

Figures aligned to the right

Note and Source in italics, and in smaller font size

No.	Collaboration	n	%
1.	No collaboration	1402	50.4
2.	Collaboration	1378	49.6
3.	All	2780	100.0
4.	Within Africa	739	55.7
5.	Africa and Global South	34	2.6
6.	Africa and Global North	543	41.0
7.	Africa and Asian countries	22	1.7

Note: Two or more variables may be present in a single publication.
Source: Collected and tabulated from Web of Sciences.

Fig. 18.1 A sample table

1. Font: Times New Roman
2. Font size: 12 points for the main text
3. Margin: 1 inch on all sides
4. Line spacing: Double-spacing for the main text
5. Page numbers: Bottom centre
6. Paragraph: No tab at the beginning of a new para. A line spacing between paragraphs

Headings

7. Levels: Three
8. Font: 12 points. Bold for the first level, italics and bold for the second level and regular for the third level
9. Capitalisation: Sentence case for all three levels
10. Numbering: No numbering for headings and sub-headings

Citations and References

11. Citation style: APA (seventh edition)
12. In-text citations: Author-date. Insert page number when quoted
13. Quotations: Indented, 0.5 cm on the left

Spelling and Grammar

14. Spelling and Grammar: British; ‘ise’ spelling
15. Punctuation: Minimum use of semicolons
16. Tense: Present for the main text; past for citing previous works and data analysis
17. Voice: Active
18. Sentences: 20–30 words normally
19. Bias-free language: Gender neutral
20. Abbreviations: Provide a list of abbreviations. Use expansion only in the first instance and abbreviations for the rest. Repeat in all chapters.
21. Quotation marks: Double quotation for direct speech
22. Comma: Serial

Tables

23. Table format: APA (seventh edition)
24. Line spacing for the body: single
25. Number of tables: To decide
26. Font: Times New Roman, 8–10 points
27. Orientation: Portrait and Landscape

Figures

28. Format: JPEG
29. Resolution 300 X 300
30. Colour or Black and White: Both

Others

31. Chapters: 6000–8000 words
32. Number of chapters: To decide

33. Preface, Dedication and Acknowledgements: Include
34. Index: Include

The style sheet you prepare continues to evolve as you progress in your writing. It proves helpful and saves a great deal of your writing time. In the end, you have a clean copy of your transcript.²

REFERENCE

Silberman, S. (2012). Writing your first nonfiction book: An array of accomplished authors answer the question: "What do you wish you'd known about the process of writing a book before you did it?". *The Writer*, 125, 1–11.

²There are useful sites that can be referred to for developing your own style sheet: <https://www.bookdesignmadesimple.com/style-sheet-template/>; <https://edinburghuniversity-press.com/publish-with-us/writing-your-book/style-sheets>; <https://theeditorsblog.net/2011/07/12/style-sheets-the-setup-and-the-benefits/>



CHAPTER 19

Refining

Abstract A written work undergoes multiple mutations before it reaches the publisher. From the first draft, the work passes through the refining stages, which involve redrafting and revision. It is the writer's responsibility to ensure that the work is, at the very least, perfected to the writer's satisfaction. The final draft is a stage in the writing process where the writer experiences a profound sense of satisfaction. They believe that every aspect has been meticulously refined and that no further improvements are possible. This chapter outlines the process of preparing the first draft, the checks to be performed before finalising the initial draft, and elaborates on the refining process. Refining encompasses rewriting and editing, taking the first draft through several iterations on its journey to completion. The chapter enlightens the readers about the essential steps in the refining process.

Keywords Crafting • Revision • Refinining • Drafting • Editing

No work is complete until it has undergone rigorous revision and rewriting. It goes through several rounds of revisions, evolving from one draft to another. This is the transformative process that ultimately refines your writing, preparing it for presentation to the world.

Revision, as Warner (2019) noted, is a process of seeing again. It's a step in writing in which writers reconsider their work with a fresh perspective, thinking anew about what they have written. The goal of refining is to satisfy and please you, the writer, and to evoke a sense that your work has significantly improved through several drafts. This evolution takes time and dedication. This is the saturation point for the writer regarding the work they've been doing. The book you're reading now went through nine drafts before it was first submitted to the publisher, followed by many more drafts after the peer review.

Accept the truth that writing isn't a linear process. In the initial stages, when you're working on the first draft, the focus should be on getting your ideas out as much as you can. At this point, you're not too concerned about the quality of the writing. Write, write and write. You don't correct or edit it at this stage, which'll stop the ideas from coming in the form of words. The single focus is on writing as much as you can and as much as possible.

We need to write more than the set target of words. Factor in about 10–15 per cent more words than your actual target for the first draft. As the saying goes, 'writing is rewriting'. In rewriting, you lose so many words you've painstakingly written, hundreds of them actually. Writing more than your target initially allows you the room to refine, edit and transform your text by the time you reach your final draft. You'll feel free to edit it thoroughly, as there's ample content and words for the book you've initially written.

The goal of rewriting is to continue refining your work until you reach a stage where your draft appears clean, concise and meaningful. It should be polished to your satisfaction. If you're not completely satisfied, go through the rewriting process again. Close the circle. Ask yourself, 'Is this what I ultimately desire?' or 'Is this what I can do?' If the answer is yes, it brings a sense of contentment, and you can feel confident about your final product. As Mark Twain said, the time to begin writing is when you've finished it to your satisfaction. By that time, you begin to clearly and logically perceive what you really want to say.

Rewriting doesn't merely involve editing sentences or words; it commences once you believe that your work is drafted in its entirety. All sections and chapters are written, and citations are correctly formatted. This draft represents the raw material and is considered the first draft, which has undergone multiple incarnations before it formed in its current form. Mark it and save it in a folder labelled as 'Draft 1' while all previous

versions are archived to prevent any confusion in rewriting. In case you wish to revert to early versions before creating the first draft you can open the archived documents.

The first draft is complete in every respect except for typos, grammar, sentence structure and the accuracy of citations. All the sections that were meant to be in chapters and parts are put in their proper homes. If you've created a detailed outline before you began writing, compare the draft you've in your hands with that outline. You may have deviated from the original plan, which is perfectly fine—it's a sign that your text has included many other relevant aspects of the book that you couldn't have foreseen during the initial outline preparation. Comparing with the outline helps you see any missing sections or even integral chapters that need to be included. You shouldn't remove any additional sections you've written that weren't part of the original outline; let them remain. If there are missing sections, work on completing the draft.

David Shenk, the author of *The Genius in All of Us*, says:

Make it great, no matter how long it takes. There's no such thing as too many drafts. There's no such thing as too much time spent. As you well know, a great book can last forever. A great book can change a person's life. A mediocre book is just commerce. (cited in Silberman, 2012, p. 3)

Joshua Wolf Shenk (2005), who wrote the nonfiction title, *Lincoln's Melancholy*, suggests that:

Get through a draft as quickly as possible. Hard to know the shape of the thing until you have a draft. Literally, when I wrote the last page of my first draft of *Lincoln's Melancholy* I thought, Oh, expletive, now I get the shape of this. But I had wasted years, literally years, writing and rewriting the first third to the first half. (cited in Silberman, 2012, p. 7)

Examine the overall organisation of the draft. Is it coherent, logical and well-connected? Does it deserve some reorganisation? If so, make the changes. Now, review each chapter. Are the subsections arranged correctly, flowing sensibly from one to the next without abrupt transitions? Do you have references at the end of each chapter? Are tables and charts appropriately numbered and placed? Check them all.

You can't skip verifying your facts and figures. Whether the data is presented in tabular form or descriptively within the text, spend time for a

thorough review. Reread the columns and rows. Any discrepancy? Are the figures in the text correct? Is every digit in its proper place, and no decimal is out of place? Your target audience also consists of knowledgeable readers who may understand your topic better than you do.

Once, I was at a conference. An invited speaker was making a presentation. As the presentation unfolded, the speaker referenced data displayed on the screen. Just before advancing to the next slide, a participant interjected,

The figures don't add up, sir.

The presenter halted in mid-sentence. With an expression of dismay, he directed his gaze to the screen. Upon turning back to the audience, his countenance revealed a pale and apologetic demeanour. It became evident that an essential argument in the presentation had been built on incorrect data.

If everything looks in order and you feel confident that the draft is ready, you can safely consider it as the first draft. The clay is prepared and ready to take shape. It is wedged and moistened. You enter the shaping stage of the clay you prepared carefully and you're confident that the clay is ready to be sculpted into the desired form.

With the completion of the first draft, you've completed approximately half of the writing process. Why only half? Yes, it's only 50 per cent. It could be slightly less or more, contingent on the quality of work invested in achieving the raw draft. If it doesn't require complete demolition or reconstruction, then it's a relief.

Perhaps you can park the first draft for a few days, allowing it to rest. This practice is common among fiction writers, who refrain from revisiting their work for some time, perhaps for several months. Some well-known writers have left their typescripts untouched for up to a year. When they eventually returned to their work, they did so with a renewed perspective on what had previously been 'frozen' in time.

In refining the next few drafts, you should maintain your role as a writer rather than shift to a reader's perspective. There's still time to step into the shoes of a reader. The primary focus is on the overall completeness of your work. You need to assess whether each chapter gets deep enough into the subject matter and whether the sequence of chapters is logically coherent and doesn't challenge conventional thought. Check whether any reorganisation is required or not, either among chapters or within them. Be

courageous to make these adjustments as needed, even if it takes some extra effort. Address sections that might not fit in their current locations—they can be moved or eliminated.

The coherence between sentences should be your concern as well. It's not rare to encounter sentences and paragraphs that redundantly elaborate on concepts already clarified. We don't require these reiterations in the text. Research-based nonfiction demands precision and conciseness. It should be lean without excess fat. Reread each sentence meticulously. Is the linkage between two consecutive sentences apparent? No? Refine it.

Sentences should be like sturdy building blocks, leaving no room for holes. They coexist harmoniously, collectively contributing to the overarching message and cohesiveness of the paragraph as a whole. Give your time liberally for this exercise of refining. It makes your work better and even better after every change you make. The same procedure applies to two consecutive paragraphs as well. When you jump from one idea to another in two paragraphs, your reader may not jump with you. The reader could still be processing the content from the previous paragraph, struggling to find a connection to the next one. If this disconnection occurs repeatedly, it might prompt the reader to close the book eventually.

Walk alongside the reader, tightly grasping their hand. Guide the reader from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, section to section and chapter to chapter. Embed something captivating in every paragraph and every section for the reader to discover and devour. That's how we make research-based nonfiction readable.

Now you're holding the moulded clay in your hands, closely examining it. Look at each part of it. You go through the current draft, sentence by sentence and word by word. This is a critical phase in editing. You've switched roles—now you're the reader of your work, with the writer operating behind the scenes. Every review you conduct is as if you're a reader experiencing the text. At this point, your focus shifts to identifying words, sentences or paragraphs that stick out like sore thumbs. These elements need to be pruned without hesitation. Don't hesitate to use the delete key generously on your keyboard. The inclusion of any single word that serves no distinct purpose is superfluous.

As Becker (2020) stressed, an unnecessary word lacks utility and fails to enhance an argument, convey a significant qualification or provide a compelling detail. You won't regret it by removing them.

Be a thorough and uncompromising editor. In this process, you'll likely find that thousands of words have vanished from your book. Correct the

typos and grammar. Pay attention to cliché and jargon. You don't need them. Scholarly writers often incorporate words and phrases when they wish to avoid expressing something too bluntly (Becker, 2020).

We copy several key principles of fiction in nonfiction. Prioritise the active voice over the passive voice for a more dynamic presentation. Employ robust verbs to enhance sentence effectiveness. Exercise restraint in using adjectives and adverbs, favouring a more minimalist approach. Tense is consistent. Embrace the elegance of simplicity by crafting sentences that convey singular, focused ideas. Identify any excessive elements in your writing and eliminate them, just as you would clear away snow in the winter, to create a safe, unobstructed path. Research-based nonfiction shouldn't be devoid of excitement or vitality.

While editing word by word, you've been reading it silently. Once that is done, change to a different method of editing. Read aloud. Writers do this as they know its value in their writing. This practice is to evaluate the flow of your writing and pinpoint any issues that may arise. Sentences have a natural rhythm, which isn't exclusive to fiction writing. Reading your work aloud helps you assess the pace and rhythm of your sentences, guaranteeing a smoother reading experience. This auditory approach is to discern the rhythmic cadence of your words and note any dissonant notes. While reading aloud, you'll also detect spelling, grammar and structure errors that might have eluded your scrutiny when reading silently. Your ears are a vigilant checkpoint, catching mistakes your eyes have missed.

Neither your peer reviewer nor the copyeditor will extensively revise your sentences for clarity or style. They won't change the voice of the author, which has a unique tone, style and perspective. A copyeditor will focus on the text, looking only at cohesion and correctness. They won't undertake a major sentence restructuring; their job is to find mistakes and improve overall readability. This is the perfect time for you to refine your work until it gleams brightly.

After each round of editing, be sure to rename the documents sequentially within the 'Drafts' folder. Finally, you reach a stage of contentment and happiness that washes over you like a cool breeze on a fall day. The draft is ready for the next level.

The next draft is intended for reading on paper. Print it chapter by chapter. It differs from the writing process, in which you work non-linearly on multiple sections and chapters simultaneously. When reading the printed chapters, go through them consecutively, as if you're reading the

entire book from page one. Still, you might move chapters from their original location to a new one. Do it unhesitantly.

Your work is now complete. Check your monitoring spreadsheet to see how many days you've dedicated to it since the first raw draft. Perhaps it has taken just as much time as it did to write the first draft. Wonder how many rounds of revision and editing your work has undergone to refine it in its current state? Your product is now refined.

There's one more step to go: get your final draft edited by a professional copyeditor. This is to make the final version clean, polished and free from any imperfections. When it's submitted to the publisher or the agent, there will be no stray particles to spoil its taste.

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PART IV

From Manuscript to Market



CHAPTER 20

Reaching Out to a Publisher

Abstract This chapter serves as a valuable resource, offering advice on potential publishers' strategic selection and approach. A central emphasis of the chapter is to caution writers against the pitfalls associated with predatory publishers. Finding a reputable publisher commences with the task of distilling the entire book idea into a concise and compelling sentence. The chapter guides writers through this critical step, recognising that the initial contact with a publisher or agent involves encapsulating the essence of the idea within a single sentence. The chapter provides guidance on approaching editors or agents, outlining the steps from the first formal communication onward. For those contemplating self-publishing, this chapter proves useful as it deals with the intricacies of the self-publishing process.

Keywords Publishing nonfiction • Publishing • Research-based nonfiction • Self-publishing

The hard work of writing is not over until you receive reports from agents, publishers or peer reviewers who might have suggestions that will necessitate further revision. Fifty per cent of the work is complete now. Half more is left which is devoted to publishing, from finding a publisher or an

agent to publishing the book. It might take another six months before you see your words in print.

With the completion of the work, the task ahead may be even greater than the writing itself—finding an agent or a publisher. Before you contact your agent or publisher, you must demonstrate the uniqueness of your creation and its market potential. It begins with conceptualising an entire book encompassing roughly 80,000 words. You know the essence of your book; you wrote it. But can you encapsulate the entire work in a single sentence? When sending queries to publishers or agents, you should be capable of doing so. As Brown (2004), inspired by his colleague Kevin, pointed out, if you can't succinctly explain your book idea in a single sentence, nobody will comprehend what you've done.

Consolidate the book into a concise sentence. As a first step, you start with a few sentences, not just one. Go through multiple iterations until you arrive at a sentence that captures your book's idea and its unique selling point. This sentence will serve as the hook to captivate a publisher's or agent's attention.

Approaching a publisher through a literary agent works well. Agents keep close contact with their preferred publishers, and they work in certain genres and niche areas. Finding the right agent who deals with the books of your genre takes effort. You need to get someone interested in your work. Some agents ask for a reading fee. After reading the typescript, the agent can decline to represent you and you lose the money paid for. If the book is acceptable and there is a publisher to take it, the agents take a commission of 15–20 per cent of the earnings the book makes. Some sources to find the agents are given in the footnote.

You send a query letter with a short synopsis of the book in an email to the agent you've chosen. Write directly to that person. Some agents don't like attachments of the detailed description of the book at this stage. So, write everything in the email, shortly and briefly. If you've published before, state it. Expect no response. Try again until you get someone genuinely interested in the work. What the agent is looking for is the quality and marketability of your work. Along with it, they consider the writing style and the audience. When an agent finds a submission worthwhile to pursue and is hopeful of its commercial value, they'll ask you to send sample chapters or the whole book.

Agents may suggest revisions if the work requires it and to make it a viable project to take up. Listen to them as they know how the market works in the area of your work. Some agents are generous to extend help

at this stage if they've seen value in your book. Make the changes the agent asked you to. If they're satisfied with the changes, you'll receive a contract of representation. Read the clauses, carefully.

Upon signing the representation contract with the agent, the agent will seek a suitable publisher for the book and act as an intermediary between you and the publisher who has shown interest in the book. Receiving a gesture of interest from the publisher, the agent on your behalf will negotiate the terms and conditions for a deal. The terms of the deal would cover the advance payments, royalties, publication rights in other languages and other relevant matters. A good agent will protect your interest and strike a good deal with the publisher. The agent will continue to work with you through the production process, guiding the design and marketing of your book.

In research-based nonfiction, a writer can find a publisher directly. Look for a few publishers. Start from the top of the highly renowned publishers. Settling for a mediocre publisher won't benefit you. Publishing with unrecognised entities in your field can tarnish your reputation instead of enhancing it. Predatory publishers are out there. They ask for money from writers to publish their work. Publishing will be expedited when working with unknown publishers as they want to produce books as quickly as possible not following any strict quality control measures. Some of these do not even review the typescript.

Top publishers have high standards of publishing. They are keen to publish cutting-edge knowledge to create a niche in the expanding book market and to ensure that it's up to the mark. They don't accept type-scripts for publication before they receive positive peer review reports, usually from about three to five experts in the field.

While choosing your publisher a few things are to be taken into consideration. Is the publisher known for publishing books around your subject matter? Look for the ranking of the publisher among others in the world. Is it an international or local publisher? Does it maintain high publication standards in reviewing and producing books? Does it seek peer reviewers to assess the book?

See how prompt they are in dealing with submission. Collect the processing times of the publisher from their websites. You don't want to keep the typescript with a publisher for too long—not for a year before you hear about the peer reviews and the decision to accept or reject.

When you've the list of a few publishers ready get the point of contact. Collect the names and email addresses of the right commissioning editors

who receive typescripts in your subject. It's possible that the first few publishers you contact won't respond positively to your book idea. You're lucky when the first publisher you approach shows interest in the subject of your book and they want to take it further through the process. Even the best writers have experienced rejection by several publishers before their works saw the light of the day. You know the story of J. K. Rowling's famous Harry Porter series.

Try again with the next publisher on the list. Move on with the next if the second doesn't respond. Don't wait to hear from them for too long. After a week or so, remind them. Proceed with the next if nothing is forthcoming. The response you're looking for isn't far away. Publishing nonfiction isn't as competitive as fiction.

Be careful not to contact more than one publisher at the same time. What would you do if all five publishers you contacted simultaneously responded to your book idea? You can't ask them to wait until you hear from the one you like. Writing to more than one at the same time is unethical as well.

Before you write your first email to the editor of the first chosen publisher, a summary of the book should be ready. Draft a short paragraph about your book in 150–200 words. Include the outstanding features of the book. Look for similar books on the subject to see how yours is different. If yours is the first one on the subject and no other book is in print, stress it. Highlight the distinguishing attributes of the book. But don't boast about it. The tone of your summary should remain impartial. Revise it again and again. Tighten it. Work on it until it becomes a concise description of the book that summarises its unique elements. Every word you use in it should catch the attention of the editor. It's like a hook to catch the fish, which is your editor, and it's your first opportunity to catch them.

While reading the summary of the book, the editor should feel that it's something 'interesting' (the word editors are fond of) and worth pursuing. Editors are knowledgeable people and know the pulse of the market. They're aware of what is happening in their respective areas and are closely monitoring the developments in the field. This is the first test to pass, getting a positive but not confirmed interest from the editor.

After preparing a summary of the book, draft a polite email with your affiliation details or address to go with the summary. Just a name or short name isn't enough in the email. They want to know who you are. Include your LinkedIn or Google Scholar link for the editor to check your

previous publications. Editors want to see your stature—citations and h-index if you belong to academia. If you don't have one yet, sign up for it. Get your ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID, www.orcid.org) as well. Admittedly, it's not the essential criterion that editors are keen on. Many first-time writers have published their books with reputed publishers.

In the email, write a few lines of introduction about you, which can go before the summary. Not a bad idea to attach a professional curriculum vitae, provided you've some publications such as articles or chapters if not books. No need to mention that you're a first-time writer if you're or that you're eager to see your work published. Even if you're an accomplished writer and have several books under your sleeve, don't pose as a great writer and expect a positive response from the editor. Being humble is rewarding. Arrogance results in neglect.

Commissioning editors are also human beings like writers with emotions, feelings and pride. Maintaining good, friendly relationships with them in all correspondence will be in your best interest. Even if they don't communicate promptly and delay your project, keep your cool. Your response shouldn't show anger or disappointment. When necessary, speak to them on the phone or over the Internet. Patience is a quality you'll develop during publication.

Editors may not be as hurried as you are; they have plenty of work on their plates and manage multiple projects simultaneously. As a writer you want a quick publication, but established publishers may not always work at your pace. Sometimes, writers may be fortunate to work with prompt and efficient editors in their communication and project management. They want to move on with an idea that interests them. Some editors are disappointingly slow and sluggish in communication. They respond late with a standard note of 'I apologise for the delayed response to your email and thank you for your patience ...'. It might be frustrating if you're prompt in correspondence and a fast-paced person. No choice but to be patient.

Proofread the email and the book summary. No mistakes or typos. It's the first formal communication with an editor. Send it—only to the editor of the first chosen publisher on your list. Mark it as 'query' in the subject line. You might receive an immediate, automated response if the editor is away on leave or at official duties. When there's no automated response, it means the editor is available. Wait for a week or a little more. Still, your inbox isn't alive with the editor's response, you can send a gentle reminder.

Wait again. Even after a week of the reminder and no reply is received, presume that the editor isn't interested. Some of them don't even acknowledge your email, regardless of the standing of the publisher. You can't change them.

Move on with your second publisher and its editor on the list. Repeat the same game. Write and wait, wait and write. This time you might be feeling happy for getting a response. If not, there's another one. It isn't the end of the world.

When an editor finds your book idea interesting, you can expect to receive an encouraging email with an attachment. The attachment is their proposal template. The editor wants you to submit a developed proposal. This is the first critical test, and you've passed it. Many more to go, though.

There are other options for you to publish your work. Self-publishing has become a choice for writers. Opting for this route means taking on full responsibility for the publishing process, including copyediting, proofreading, designing, printing and marketing. An advantage of self-publishing is higher royalties, with self-published books often earning around five times more (Fitzpatrick, 2021). Several platforms and services facilitate self-publishing, including Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), which allows writers to publish e-books and print-on-demand paperbacks. Other similar platforms include Apple iBooks, Barnes & Noble Press and Kobo Writing Life.

Get ready for the next stage, as you have a positive response from a potential publisher.

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CHAPTER 21

Shaping the Proposal

Abstract Once a book is ready, the subsequent stage in the publishing journey is the development of a comprehensive book proposal. Agents and publishers rely on a proposal before a decision is made. Crafting a proposal demands meticulous attention as it serves as a test for the writer. A strong proposal has the power to leave an impression on both publishers and agents, ultimately shaping the fate of the work. The proposal should be regarded as a tool to encapsulate all the book's unique features and effectively convey its market potential. Every word used in a proposal should be chosen judiciously, reflecting careful consideration. This chapter draws information from proposal templates used by reputable publishers, offering valuable insights and guidance for writers in developing an impressive proposal. It covers components of the book to aid writers in presenting their work in the most forceful and marketable manner possible.

Keywords Proposals • Proposal preparation

Publishers and agents place great value on book proposals. Writing a proposal is a substantial responsibility and the initial step in the lengthy publishing process (DeMuth, 2008). According to Whalin (2021), an editor

and writer, a nonfiction proposal's value lies in the promise of what the finished typescript will deliver.

The preparation of the proposal demands serious effort. The proposal will be examined by the editor and the editorial committee of the publisher. This will go to peer reviewers after the editorial committee gives the green signal. A typical proposal template consists of sections that the writer needs to fill in. The sections centre around:

- What motivated you to write this book?
- The main themes and objectives of the book
- Why the proposed book is different from the existing ones?
- What is new in the book?
- What have you done innovatively in this proposed book?
- The table of contents and chapter summaries
- Details of the book in terms of the content, organisation, scope, word length, tables, graphs, diagrams, photographs and other images
- Description of the target market, both primary and secondary
- The main audience (students, academics or practitioners)
- The subject areas that cover your work
- What are the competing titles on the market?
- A few suggested reviewers
- Your CV

Completing the sections and questions in a proposal is a good deal of work. It's like writing an article, or harder even. It should be as elaborate as possible but to the point. This is a test for the writer. Once it's cleared, there's something to look towards the publication of the book. Invest enough time and effort in the proposal. Don't miss any section or any question they ask. Make each one as complete as possible and leave no gaps or omissions. Themes and objectives are to be focused. While answering questions about your motivation to write the book, don't mix your responses with the section on the target market for the book. They are two different things and require two different sets of responses from you. A poorly developed proposal compromises the purpose of the book, its market potential and its appeal among readers.

No need to cover too many themes. A central theme, which is well constructed and couched in novelty, needs and market, would do. From this overarching theme, a few subthemes can be developed, if necessary. Objectives emanate from the themes. Avoid a list of the objectives in

bullet format. Reviewers don't like it when you say that 'the objectives of the book are to 1, 2, 3 ...' Objectives presented in a bullet or numbered list may come across as overly simplistic and lacking in depth. Rather write in sentence form, giving each one the deserving consideration and focus. An objective elaborated in a sentence or two gives depth to it.

To fill the sections on other competing titles do some searches. Online booksellers like Amazon are a source to find similar works with which you'll be competing for the market. Google Books is another source to search for the titles. WorldCat (www.worldcat.org) has a catalogue of books acquired by libraries around the world.

Select at least five titles that have been published. Choose the books published by well-known publishers. Leave out self-published or unknown publishers. Use the recent titles that came out in the last five years. They're the real competitors to your work. Don't omit any for fear of a strong competition with yours. The probability of coming across exactly two books is slim. Gather the contents and endorsements that can be found on the web page of the titles. It helps reading the introduction of the book, which sometimes sellers provide as a preview. Read the preview to see the contents and parts of the chapters and compare them with yours. Collect this information for a description of the competing titles. Locate the key features and show how these contrast with that of your book. Be brief; say 150 words for each competing title and compare it with yours. Be open and frank in your assessment of the competing titles. Let the editors know that you're objective. Perhaps they already know as they have advanced online tools to look for recent titles in the subject.

Go through several drafts of the proposal once you've filled it out. Economise your words. Words will speak for you with the editor and peer reviewers. If yours is the first book on the subject, substantiate it with supportive and convincing evidence. Cite references to support your statements gently and politely. Your proposal will be read by peers who don't entertain arrogance. It will work against your proposal.

Writing a proposal isn't necessary to have completed the work of the book. Publishers ask for only sample chapters. Nevertheless, a better proposal is made when the whole book is ready for submission. Having written the entire book, the writer knows all of it, and based on it, a well-drafted proposal can be generated. Anyway, summaries of all chapters are to be included in the proposal. Good summaries are written when the chapters are complete.

If the full typescript is ready, it can be submitted along with the proposal, which has advantages as well. It reduces the time lag being taken for the review process. Even after the proposal with sample chapters is accepted, it goes back to the reviewers, a stage wherein the whole book is reviewed. In the case of the whole book being submitted along with the proposal, the second round of review becomes unnecessary. Following this, there will only be a clearance review to check whether reviewers' recommendations have been implemented or not.

The proposal is now submitted, along with the typescript and your CV. The editor takes a few days to go through it. Upon scrutiny, some editors will come back to you for additional information, clarifications and explanations. Address them. You need an editor who's happy with the proposal to take it forward. With some publishers, it needs to go through their internal editorial committee for initial approval. Once everything is fine with the committee, the editor will inform you that the proposal is being sent out for peer review. That's good news. Another step is over, and you passed the second test. You can now wait for the feedback from the peer reviewers which is yet another test.

Editors need at least two reviews, and they go up to five reviews. Usually, it takes six to eight weeks to receive feedback from peer reviewers. The editors need to be followed up after the period they promised the reviews has passed. Gently remind them, and patiently, every two weeks or so after the promised time lapses. Contact them over the phone if the delay is extended.

This waiting period can be made fruitful. This is when the writer should relook at the draft of the submitted book. Here's a chance to revise and take through another draft. Nothing is final at this stage—the final draft is still away.

Note that the book, even after its publication, remains under the radar of the readers. It will be reviewed, and the reviews will be published. Don't give book reviewers an opportunity to pick up the gaps, mistakes and errors which will reflect badly on the book and the writer. During this redrafting, you'll be astonished to see the changes that've been made from the previous version. It has improved further. The effort required to create a book can be likened to pouring water into a desert. You may pour countless buckets of water into the arid sand, only to discover that it leaves no immediate trace. A book absorbs every ounce of effort you pour into it, transforming itself into an entirely new entity, rejuvenated and enriched. There's no end to it. But you'll see that after every draft the quality of the

work gets better and better. Each time the draft gets revised the work gets strengthened. And you feel more confident about your work and the possibility of getting it published. This is a positive feeling that writers need. There's no 'final' draft in writing. Later you might discover that your book could undergo revisions even after publication. Writing is a continuous process, demanding increasing effort from the writer, with no discernible endpoint.

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CHAPTER 22

Peer Review: Insider Insights

Abstract This chapter offers an insider's perspective on the often-undisclosed peer-review process, shedding light on aspects that writers might not be familiar with when submitting their work to the publisher. Utilising the assessment criteria adopted by reputable publishers, the chapter enlightens writers about the specific focus areas that peer reviewers scrutinise in a proposal. Peer reviewers, who are experts in their respective fields, conduct a rigorous evaluation of both the proposal and the type-script. They assess dimensions including the project's novelty, scholarly organisation and structure, target readership, and market potential. Only after a thorough examination of these elements do publishers, informed by the reports of peer reviewers, decide on the submission. This chapter demystifies the peer-review process and offers insider perspectives.

Keywords Research-based nonfiction • Peer review

Research-based nonfiction is subjected to peer review before it's accepted for publication. This process is essential for upholding the quality of the work being produced, and it plays a decisive role in nonfiction

publishing. The friendly term ‘peer’ in ‘peer review’ is actually to soften the scary and intimidating process for the writer. It’s become the gold standard in research-based nonfiction. Peer-reviewed publications are more trustworthy than non-peer-reviewed ones. Both the publisher and the writer benefit from this process, and ultimately the readers.

Peer review serves multiple purposes. This is a quality control mechanism to maintain the credibility of what is published. Through the peer review process, a publisher can validate the methodology, data and findings presented in the submission. For the writer, it gives the chance to improve their work based on the recommendations of reviewers who might have found gaps, inadequacies and weaknesses. Peer review is to enforce the ethical standards in research, as nonfiction is based on research, and to check plagiarism and other unethical practices that aren’t unusual in publishing.

The process book publishers adopt is single-blind reviews in which the writer is known to reviewers, but the writer is blind to reviewers. The publisher also wants an assessment of the writer regarding their professional standing and ability to write the book. The review allows the editor to make an informed decision based on the opinion of experts who’re familiar with the topic and the developments in the area.

Publishers, reputed ones mainly, want to know the need for such a book in the market. This is about their reputation, standing and survival in the publishing business which they don’t want to compromise. They know that there’s no scarcity of writers and proposals continue to flood their inboxes. They ask their reviewers questions about the work that is under consideration.

Until a writer receives feedback from their peer reviewers, they remain uncertain about the specific questions editors have posed to the reviewers. Publishers, through their assigned editors or review coordinators, may inquire about various aspects, and questions around such aspects can vary from one publisher to another. It would benefit writers to have insight into the specific questions that reviewers address. This way, writers can structure their submissions more effectively, covering the key areas of interest to both editors and reviewers and what they look for in their submissions. It’s also useful to know beforehand what the editors are looking for in the submissions and the questions they have for reviewers. It increases the chances of acceptance. Unless the writer has served as a peer reviewer for a book, it’s unknown and remains a trade secret.

Writers aren't told upfront about this and cannot ask them either. They keep them as part of their confidential trade practice. It's an examination they conduct. You can't ask your teacher the questions of the forthcoming exam.

Let's see some of the questions the editors want their reviewers to answer. The review is centred on matters of the quality of writing, originality, relevance to the subject matter, the worth of the book and, more importantly, the marketability of the book. Boxes 22.1–22.8 contain the most commonly used questions by top nonfiction publishers that they ask their peer reviewers. Some questions in the guidelines overlap but are repeated as they are phrased differently by different publishers. Pursue them carefully and draw lessons from these questions so that you know what should be focused on, what needs more attention than others and how to structure your proposal accordingly.

Box 22.1 Originality and Novelty of the Proposed Book

Does this proposal present a valuable and possibly innovative contribution to the field? Is it addressing any emerging or unexplored areas within the subject area?

- Does the proposed book offer fresh perspectives or engagingly present familiar but essential information?
- Does it make an original and beneficial contribution to the field of study?
- Please provide your assessment of the overall content, approach and rationale outlined in the proposal.
- Does this book, as described in the proposal, appear to be a valuable and pertinent addition to the field of study? If so, would you recommend it to your library? (Consider recommending the book to your students, sharing information about the book with your colleagues or purchasing a copy for yourself.)
- Based on the description provided in the proposal or monograph, would this work offer a meaningful contribution to this subject?

Box 22.2 Scholarship and Quality of the Work

How would you evaluate the scholarly quality of the proposed book? • Does it effectively engage with recent scholarship and advance existing knowledge in the field of study? • Do you believe that the book, as conceptualised and presented in the proposal, would make a valuable and substantial contribution to the current literature in your discipline? • Are there any significant topics within the subject area that are conspicuously absent from the proposed book's table of contents? Please provide details. • What are your thoughts on the quality of the scholarship presented in the proposed work? Does the scholarship demonstrate excellence and expertise in addressing the subject matter? • Could you offer insights on the proposed table of contents? Are there any missing areas, perspectives or topics that should be considered for inclusion? • How do you view the conceptual and methodological foundations underlying this manuscript/proposal? • Does the book rely on any assumptions or viewpoints that you find problematic or that may not align with the book's intended audience? Do these assumptions and arguments contradict current developments in the field?

Box 22.3 Strengths, Gaps and Weaknesses of the Proposal

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal and the book? Please evaluate the structure, organisation, coherence and presentation of the proposal and book. Assess the scope, coverage, appeal, degree of specialisation and target audience, and check for any noticeable omissions. Also, indicate if a significant portion of the work will require substantial revision. • What are the key strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, in your opinion? • In your opinion, what are the strengths of the chapters as outlined in the table of contents? • What are the weaknesses of the proposed chapters? • Upon reviewing the contents of the proposed book, please identify any chapters you find unnecessary and note any omissions. • Are the chapters appropriately tailored to your students or the primary audience, and what are your thoughts on the writing style?

(continued)

Box 22.3 (continued)

- How closely does the proposed book meet your research needs? Please explain.
- Please indicate how likely you would be to use each chapter in your teaching or research or recommend them to students. Please add any specific observations on individual chapters.
- Is the manuscript consistently of high quality, or are there chapters of such poor quality or misalignment with the overall theme that they should be removed entirely?
- Based on the assessment of the table of contents and the sample chapters/book: Are all the topics that should be included in a proposal like this adequately covered? Please note any content or relevant literature that you feel has been omitted or covered in too much detail. Are there any chapters or sections that stand out as being particularly strong? Are there any chapters or sections you feel are particularly weak?

Box 22.4 Organisation, Structure and Style

Is the material logically and effectively structured?

- How well is the work organised?
- Does it maintain a thematic focus and coherence suitable for its intended audience? Is the length appropriate, or could the book be condensed without compromising its quality?
- Does the table of contents align well with the proposed book title? Please elaborate.
- Is the organisation of the content logical? Are there any areas you would recommend expanding or condensing? Is there any noticeable bias in the proposed book's table of contents?
- Does the order of chapters make sense, or would you like to propose an alternative arrangement?
- Do you believe that certain topics should be relocated within the book's content or removed altogether?
- Does the proposed book require additional sections or chapters?
- Are the chapter titles clear and do they accurately represent the book's contents? Please provide explanations.
- Is the writing style in both the proposal and manuscript easily accessible to readers? Please elaborate.

(continued)

Box 22.4 (continued)

- Please indicate the reader levels for which you think the proposed book is most suitable. You can mark more than one level if you believe the book is appropriate for multiple reader groups: first-, second- and third-year students; junior or senior undergraduates; master's-level students; PhD students; academics; post-docs; researchers; practitioners.
- Do you think that the writing style and content covered align with the intended audience?
- Are there any chapters that require major revisions? If so, please describe the necessary changes. Are there any chapters that pose significant editing challenges, such as consistent issues with spelling, grammar, style, figures, references, illustrations, etc.?
- What are your impressions of the writing style and readability level? Do you find them suitable and fitting for the target market? (Please consider that this proposal and manuscript have not undergone copyediting yet, so some typographical, grammatical and stylistic errors may still exist. While some errors are expected at this stage, feel free to provide feedback on the overall writing quality, especially if you believe there are numerous errors.)

Box 22.5 Competency of the Writer

Do you believe the author/editor possesses the necessary qualifications to produce a high-quality book on the proposed topic?

- From your perspective, is the author well-positioned to create an authoritative and accessible book in this field?
- Is the editor of the proposed volume sufficiently qualified to address the subject matter, and do you have any recommendations for potential contributors? (Please note that while the editor has identified potential authors for each book chapter, these individuals have not yet been approached or confirmed as contributors to the volume. Therefore, please feel free to provide suggestions regarding author selection as you see fit.)
- What is the professional reputation of the author/editor/contributors? Do you believe they possess the appropriate qualifications to address the proposed topic effectively?

Box 22.6 Readership and Market

In what subject areas do you believe the proposed book would primarily find its audience? Are there secondary audiences, such as professional organisations, who might also find this book relevant? • Can you gauge the level of interest in this subject area—is it growing, stable, or declining? Is this subject area widely taught? • Who do you anticipate will be the primary readers of the proposed book, considering both their field and academic level? • Do you think this title could serve as a core textbook for students? If so, would you consider adopting or recommending it for the courses you currently teach? • If this book were designed as a textbook, would you personally use it in your courses? • Is this book essential reading or suitable for practitioners or policymakers? If so, can you identify the organisations, institutions or professional networks that might have an interest in this work? Additionally, who else, in your opinion, might be interested in reading this volume? • Does the material have timely relevance? How long do you believe this book will remain relevant? • Does the content of the proposed book possess a global perspective, or does it require enhancements to make it globally relevant? • What is your assessment of the timeliness and expected longevity of the research presented in the proposal? • Could this book potentially appeal to an interdisciplinary and/or international audience? • Apart from your location, in which countries or geographical areas do you anticipate the book having a strong market presence? If you have insights into the characteristics of the book market in specific regions, please share them. • If you believe the proposed book would be attractive to students, which courses or modules do you think it would be most suitable for, and at which academic levels (undergraduate and graduate)? • How do you expect to learn about a book like this? Please indicate whether you anticipate discovering it through colleague recommendations, email marketing from publishers, librarian recommendations, academic journals, social media and online discussion groups, conferences, your research, search engines or other means (please specify).

Box 22.7 Competition to the Proposed Book

Are there any comparable texts? How does the proposed book compare to existing literature in the field? • Are there competing works in this area? If so, please provide details on these works and how they differ from the proposed book. Do you currently use or recommend any of these competing works to your students? • In terms of writing quality and content, how does the proposed book stack up against the main competing titles in this field? • When comparing the proposed book to its primary competitor, what do you see as the three key strengths and three key weaknesses of the proposed book? • Can you identify the main competing works in this area? Please provide their titles, authors, publishers and publication dates if available. Describe their strengths and weaknesses and explain how the proposed book compares to them.

Box 22.8 Recommendations of the Reviewers

Is this book worthy of publication? • Would you recommend the proposal? • Are any suggested improvements crucial for the book's success, or are they discretionary matters that could be addressed after the proposal's acceptance? • Please provide any recommendations you believe would enhance the proposal's quality. • Can you offer specific suggestions for improving the content and structure of each chapter? • Based on your evaluation, please select one of the following options: I recommend this book for publication/I recommend publication, contingent on revisions based on the recommendations/I do not recommend publication in its current form. • If you recommend revisions, what type of revisions are needed (reorganisation, rewriting, updating, addressing grammar or style issues, etc.)? • After reviewing the materials in the proposal, would you consider using this book as the primary text for your research, including it among a few essential readings, or recommending it to students for your courses? • In your opinion, what are the key changes required, if any, to make this proposed book your first-choice text for research or a recommended resource for students? Please elaborate.

(continued)

Box 22.8 (continued)

- Are you open to providing feedback on draft chapters of the manuscript? • Do you have any additional comments or suggestions? • What recommendations can you offer to enhance the project's international appeal, if applicable? • Are there any other suggestions you would like to make for improving the proposal?

Box 22.1 provides what publishers and peer reviewers are seeking in the originality and novelty of the submission. They evaluate the book proposal based on its contribution to the field, emphasising the importance of addressing emerging areas and presenting information freshly. They also assess the overall content and approach while considering whether the proposed book would be valuable and recommendable within the field, potentially leading to its adoption by the library, students, colleagues or even personal purchase.

Reviewers are asked to evaluate the scholarly quality of the proposed book, considering its engagement with recent scholarship and the completeness of its content (Box 22.2). The reviewer is prompted to comment on any potential conceptual, methodological or ideological issues and whether they speak to the current developments in the field.

The reviewer refers to the proposal and the typescript for its structure, organisation, coherence and presentation, to find out the strengths and weaknesses. They note any unnecessary chapters or omissions and evaluate the alignment with the target audience. The overall goal of the questions in this section, as given in Box 22.3, is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the proposal and book's content, organisation and alignment with the field's needs.

Specific to the organisation, structure and style, the editor wants to hear from the reviewers about the logical arrangement, thematic focus and suitability for the intended audience. Reviewers address the clarity of chapter titles, writing style and readability while considering revisions and editing challenges.

Reviewers assess the qualifications, expertise and reputation of the writer, editor or contributors, along with their suitability to produce a high-quality and authoritative book on the proposed topic.

The most important focus for the publisher is to ascertain the marketing possibilities of the proposed book. This is about money, and they want to invest it wisely to generate profit. They make sure that an informed assessment is made of the proposed book's primary subject areas of appeal, potential readership and suitability as a textbook or essential reading for practitioners and policymakers.

Editors want to check the competition in the market in case they choose to publish the proposed book. In addition to the information they already have on the subject, they ask the reviewers to compare it to the existing titles in the field, assess their quality and relevance, and provide insights on how the proposed book compares in terms of strengths and weaknesses to the main competing titles. Finally, it's about the firm opinion of the reviewers regarding acceptance or rejection. Most often, editors go by the verdict of the reviewers and a final decision on the submission is made.

While conceiving an idea or writing a nonfiction book, always keep these questions in mind. A book produced by addressing those questions will have the likelihood of receiving positive reviews and, ultimately, acceptance from the publisher.



CHAPTER 23

Reviews In, Responses Out

Abstract This chapter discusses the imperative of adopting a professional approach by the writer when addressing comments, suggestions and recommendations provided by both peer reviewers and the overseeing editor of the project. To secure final acceptance and a publishing contract, it's paramount for the writer to respond thoroughly to the reports from peer reviewers. These responses should be comprehensive, leaving no room for gaps or omissions, and must be exhaustive in all respects. Recognising that the publisher's ultimate decision hinges on the completeness of these responses, the writer must approach this task with meticulous attention to detail. The chapter provides practical hints to help the writer successfully conclude this stage of the publishing process.

Keywords Peer review report • Proposals • Peer review • Revision
• Matthew Effect

Weeks have passed. An email from the commissioning editor has landed in your mailbox. It's a moment of anxiety. What's the outcome? You're curious. The email is about peer reviews of your proposal. A decision on the submission is ready. If you're too anxious, open the email and read from the bottom. The last line conveys what the editor wants to do with the proposal you submitted. If the editor wishes you the best and good luck,

it means the publisher isn't interested in your proposal and the decision isn't in your favour. But if the last line states that the editor is looking forward to your response, it means there's something you can feel relief over. The dawn of hope is breaking for you.

Move your eyes to the top of the email to read from the beginning. Take time to read and grasp each word the editor has written to you. The editor has attached the review reports. Suppose you're in a hurry and don't have the time to read the reports carefully; leave them for later.

The communication is clear. The editor has decided to take the project forward. The decision is based on the peer reviews, which should have been largely positive, and the editor is now convinced of the market for the work. No editor would send you the initial approval if the peer review reports were negative with suggestions for a major revision. Even when the majority of the reviewers have recommended publication of the work but made critical comments, the editor wouldn't think positively about the project's prospects.

Some editors request writers to respond to their emails regarding peer reviewers' feedback. This step is taken to confirm whether the writer is willing to revise the submission as per the peer review recommendations. Writers, especially established ones, may hold steadfastly to their work and resist accepting suggestions that they don't agree with. However, some writers are willing to make compromises to increase their chances of acceptance and publication. Therefore, writers are required to submit responses that outline which recommendations they can incorporate and which they can't, with reasons for their decisions. Writers aren't expected to address every recommendation. Still, they should provide reasonable justifications as to why they think certain suggestions are irrelevant and not addressed.

Upon receiving the writer's initial responses, the editor assesses whether the project can proceed to the next stage. This decision depends on the writer's responses. Suppose the responses indicate that the writer is unwilling to revise the text according to most of the reviewers' suggestions. In that case, the editor may decide not to go ahead with the project and will communicate the decision to the writer.

Conversely, if the writer agrees to revise the text based on a significant portion of the suggestions, say 80–90 per cent of them, the project proceeds to the next stage. In this scenario, subject to the internal processes of the publishers, the responses, along with the proposal and peer reviews, are presented to an internal editorial committee for approval. Subsequently,

the revised text can be submitted as agreed upon in the earlier responses. Following this, a contract to publish the book is anticipated.

Be prepared for any comments on your work by peer reviewers. Some are hurting, cruel, demeaning the value of your work, and unjustifiably destructive. They're unappreciative of the positive aspects of the work. The tone is one of cognitive arrogance undermining the abilities of the writer. Yes, in that case, you must treat it as non-personal, which is easier said than done. Jensen (2017), in her years of experience in publishing, noted this very succinctly:

Anonymous reviewers can write whatever they want, and sometimes they have axes to grind or turf to defend. They may see as a stand-in for another colleague they want to cut down to size ... They may want to write the piece they wish they had written. They may just want to show off how much they know. (p. 100)

The editor is asking the writer to address the recommendations of the reviewers and return the revised version. When there are major revisions and the editor is still interested in the book, it'll go back for another round of reviews once all the revisions have been carried out to the editor's satisfaction. Rarely do editors take a chance like this with proposals that require substantial revisions of recommendations.

You need to study the peer reviewers' reports to find what is there for you. While reading the reports one by one, a mix of emotions will pass through you—anxiety, happiness, anger, disgust, pride, relief and hope—although the reports were positive. Experience the passing of emotions and draw courage from these for your future ventures.

Objective and seasoned reviewers would write a detailed and balanced assessment of the work. Such reviews can be expected from senior writers who've established in their fields and have taken the role of supporting junior writers in their writing and publishing. They start with the strengths of the work and recommend improvements where necessary in a constructive manner. Constructive but critical reviews are useful for both the writer and the work. Take the reports in your stride and consider it an opportunity to strengthen the work. It'll help you make a product better. Revisions improve quality.

In addition to the peer review reports, feedback from the editor is also to be taken seriously. A scrupulous editor wouldn't just write a summary of the reviewers' recommendations but would extend beyond suggesting

their assessment and recommendations. Expect a set of comments from editors who're knowledgeable in the subject area.

Addressing the comments and responding to them is as serious as writing the book. If your responses are lacklustre, you fail as a writer and lose the opportunity you've been given. You don't want to miss the boat. Inadequate responses are likely to result in rejection. Do your best to pass the test. This is your final test.

How do we approach the comments and recommendations? It isn't different from responding to the comments of a paper submitted to a journal. A little more concerted effort is needed here as it's a nonfiction book.

Before you key in the responses on your computer, read the reports a few times. Every time you read the reports, answers will sprout from the back of your mind. The content of the book is still alive in you. Comments become clearer and clearer, and the way to address them will develop quite naturally. Mark the sections of the reports that need your attention. Use colours to highlight them in the order of major, minor and typographical corrections. Leave them aside for a while, for a day or two, before you revisit them. Let the comments work on your mind, and in the process, answers will take shape, and you'll be able to draft them nicely.

Separate each marked comment of each reviewer to copy and paste them into your response document. Below each of the comments, responses are to be typed and detailed enough to cover all the points mentioned in the comment. Clarity is the mark of adequate responses. Construct the responses concisely, providing no room for ambiguity. Editors are meticulous, and they won't be satisfied with weak and complete responses. Thank the reviewers generously for their comments, even if you're fuming inside because of some irrational comments and recommendations.

No need to agree to all the suggestions. The writer has the right to disagree. Disagree in a way that doesn't antagonise the reviewer, who, upon reading your response, will come back with a new comment that will put you in a strange situation. The points of disagreement can be explained convincingly in a courteous manner.

Neglecting any part of any single comment is unwise. So is not responding to comments. Make the effort to address them as best as you can. Reviewers may sometimes misunderstand your sentences and sections of the book. Clarify them. The suggestions of two reviewers might

contradict each other. Justify your stance by pointing out the polarity of the suggestions on any aspect by two reviewers.

While attending to comments one by one, keep the relevant chapter open on your computer to repeat the changes being made. The editor likes to see the changes in the revised version quickly. The track change option in Word makes the changes easily visible. But track changes look clumsy and will slow down the computer. Think of typing the revised sections in a different colour or highlighting them. In the response document, provide the location where corrections have been made by the number of chapters, pages, paragraphs and lines.

Return to the chapters after all the recommendations have been made to record the correct locations in the response document. Compare the corrections with the locations in the revised typescript for accuracy. When all the comments have been addressed, read the comments and responses once again. Edit them carefully.

Everything is now done to your satisfaction. Close the response document and revised chapters. Leave them for a day. Open the documents of chapters and responses the next day to read over. Further changes may be necessary in this read. Complete them to finalise the corrections and recommendations. Nothing is left out. Responses are ready, as are the corrected chapters.

Draft a reply to the editor indicating that you've gone through the reviews and addressed them. Reply to the email you received from the editor, not on a new email. This is for both you and your editor to track the emails at any stage of the book project. Attach the response document (not in the body of the email) and the chapters. Zip the files into a single folder so that it's convenient for the editor to save them all in one go. Better to include all chapters, even if some chapters weren't revised as there were no recommendations. Editors don't like to receive them in bits and pieces.

Corrections should be returned promptly without delay. You can't sit on the corrections for weeks and months. Take only two weeks or so to submit the revised version. If you're diligent and have already put in considerable effort to complete the corrections within a couple of days, hold off on returning them immediately. Not to make the editor think that you weren't serious.

Any correspondence with the editor should be prompt and timely. You don't want your project buried among the many others for which the editor is responsible. The editor will respond quicker now than in the past as

the project is getting ready to enter the production line. You'll have a reply from the editor quite immediately if the corrections have been accepted and the editor feels it's ready to go for the final clearance review. Wait for the next steps. More exciting things to come that expose you to the production process.

Everything seems okay for the editor who checked your documents. The editor will contact you about a contract that the publisher intends to offer. It can happen a little earlier when you've accepted the peer reviewers' comments. The editor will discuss the terms of the contract with you. These terms include the percentage of royalty and the provision of complimentary copies. For nonfiction works of this nature, royalties typically range from 3.5 per cent to 10 per cent depending on the format (hard-cover, paperback or e-book). Royalties are usually non-negotiable, especially in research-based nonfiction with established publishers. Some publishers have a business model of no royalty but send you a few copies of the book when printed. There's another model in which the publisher pays a once-off payment for the book. Negotiations can occur in the world of fiction and are facilitated by a literary agent.

The editor will also coordinate with you regarding the submission date for the final documents in their required format and any other necessary paperwork. In addition to the typescript, you'll be asked to complete a marketing questionnaire for marketing purposes.

You may need to submit copyright forms if your book contains material that's been previously published. If you've previously published a paper in a journal that draws from the same research project, and if any of that material has been incorporated into your book, you'll need to obtain copyright permission from the journal.

After the book is accepted, it goes through copyediting and proofing. Meanwhile, the cover of the book is designed either using the images purchased from vendors or adopting their templates. At this stage, you or the publisher will approach scholars in the field for endorsements that might appear on the back cover of the book or the front pages. When the book is in production, it might take up to six months after your commissioning editor accepts your final draft. It's a period when a writer spends time working with the production team. Sow the seeds for another book project. Now you know what it takes and how to do it. Bank on this

experience. Let the urge continue within you. New publications advance your reputation. It's like the 'Matthew effect'.¹

You're now entering the production stage of your book, where you collaborate closely with your publisher.

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- Merton, R. K. (1968). The Matthew Effect in science: The reward and communication systems of science are considered. *Science, New Series*, 159, 56–63. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.159.3810.56>

¹ Matthew effect is a concept coined by sociologist Robert K. Merton (1910–2003), who derived it from the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament of the Bible. Briefly, the Matthew effect is 'the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer'. In academia, the Matthew effect refers to a situation wherein those who have an initial advantage or privilege tend to accumulate further advantages over time, while those who start with a disadvantage may fall further behind. Merton (1968) elaborated on this in the context of credit, recognition and reward in science. He found that already eminent scientists are given disproportionate credit even in collaborated works, and the visibility of contributions by scientists of acknowledged standing is heightened about the reduced visibility of contributions by less known writers. When it applies to writers, it implies that initial advantages can lead to increased opportunities, resources and positive feedback, which in turn can result in even greater success.



CHAPTER 24

In Production

Abstract This chapter overviews the concluding phase in the book publishing process—production. Once the publisher grants approval for the final version of the book, it advances to the production line. The typescript, meticulously formatted according to the style preferences of the publisher, proceeds to the copyediting stage. Concurrently, elements of book production are set into motion, encompassing essential tasks such as designing the book cover and securing endorsements from renowned writers or subject matter experts in the field. These stages are not passive; rather, the writer actively engages in the collaborative process, working closely with the editor and the production team to ensure the execution of each step. This chapter serves as a guide, outlining the intricacies of each stage in the production process.

Keywords Production process • Proofing • Proof • Copyediting
• Technology

The typescript takes the final form after incorporating feedback from both peer reviewers and the editor, and it gains approval from the editor. It then moves to the exciting production stage. This moment is the one you've eagerly awaited, having devoted months to your work.

The production of a book has a few stages, each carefully monitored to meet the publisher's standards and guidelines. While big publishing houses collaborate with third-party professionals for production tasks, the process is closely overseen by the editor and the production team.

One crucial step in the production process is verifying that the typescript's final draft agrees with the publisher's requirements. Publishers have specific standards for the typescript's formatting, referencing and overall presentation. They supply these guidelines for the writer to follow. The final version of the submitted typescript, which is in line with the guidelines, is verified in-house. This verification process involves a thorough examination by either the commissioning editor or an editorial assistant to ensure these standards are met. The process however varies from publisher to publisher.

If any discrepancies or missing elements are discovered during this review, the writer will be notified to address them. Once all requirements have been met, it can be assumed that the typescript is ready for handover to the production team.

The approved final draft is transmitted to the production team, who typically entrust copyediting and proofreading tasks to a third-party agency. This practice is commonplace among reputable publishers. The contracted agencies have skilled professionals acting on behalf of the publishers and may be geographically situated in different countries, sometimes separate from the publisher's central offices. Publishers are motivated by cost considerations to engage agencies located outside their home country where labour is cheap.

Upon receiving the typescript, the production agency will provide you with a schedule. You can propose adjustments to the schedule if it conflicts with your commitments. Anticipate a timeframe of approximately six months for the production process to conclude and for the book to be published in the customary formats, including hardcover, paperback and e-book.

Await a response from the agency overseeing your book's production within roughly four weeks. They'll send you the copyedited version of the book, which will bear annotations and queries. Yes, it's taking shape for the final product. Despite its appearance, this edited typescript is a major step towards the final, refined product.

An exceptional copyeditor has an eagle eye for every facet of your submission, including grammar, language, spelling, typos, consistency, clarity, flow, research-checking, adherence to the publisher's style guide, word

choice and cross-referencing. Within this edited version, you'll observe numerous changes made by the copyeditor. They may seek your confirmation if any alterations could potentially alter the sentence's intended meaning, ensuring the corrections are precise. Some astute copyeditors may even question the logic of certain sentences.

The publishing industry is rapidly evolving with technologies, reducing the time lag between production stages and within each of them. In the past, writers used to receive hard copy proofs that required manual checking and correction, which had to be returned via postal mail. The copy-edited version of the typescript nowadays is sent in a digital format, either as a Word document attached to an email or posted online for the writer to access.

When you get the copyedited version, a handy set of guidelines for writers will come with it. Take it chapter by chapter, and make sure everything's in shape. But remember, at this stage, you're not looking for big changes—it's more like a thorough check-up. This isn't the time for a rewrite. Publishers might be a bit strict, only allowing tiny word tweaks. This is your chance to catch any errors that may have been missed by you, your editor and the copyeditor.

Deal with the author queries. These are the questions from the copyeditor seeking clarification. Read each one carefully, understand what they're asking, and gather all the necessary information to respond to these queries. Be clear and thorough in your responses so that each query is fully resolved without the need for back-and-forth correspondence. Omit none. After you've worked through the last query, circle back to the first one and methodically check each query.

The copyeditor reviews your responses to the queries and the changes you've made. When everything is in order, the draft proceeds to the proofing stage. The proofs will be sent to you for a final check, and they may or may not contain additional queries.

Indexing work at this point may not be the most thrilling task. Ideally, it would have been more convenient to do the indexing during the final draft stage using a word processor. The choice in this matter depends on the publisher's preferences, which are different from one publisher to another.

The book's cover page will be designed in tandem with copyediting and proofing. If the publisher has templates, a selection of these templates will be provided to the writer, allowing them to pick the one that best suits their vision. In cases where the publisher hasn't established their

templates, they'll supply a link to the writer to choose images from their preferred online vendors, like Getty Images, Alamy or Shutterstock. The publisher will purchase the selected image for the cover design.

The day has finally arrived—your book has been published! You've become a nonfiction writer or published one more book. Your publisher will promptly send you the complimentary copies. It's entirely normal to be filled with anticipation, wanting to see, touch, smell and enjoy the moment. The excitement is truly indescribable if it's your first book. Share this exciting news through your networks. Let institutions to purchase a copy of it. Reach out to journal and magazine editors to gauge their interest in reviewing your book. If they express interest, follow up and request that the publisher send review copies.

After the reviews are published, read them with an open mind. Not all reviews will meet your expectations or provide an entirely objective assessment of your work. These insights might prove immensely helpful for your next book. Now think about your next creation if you've not started yet.

Many years have passed. My once-young colleague, whom I used to accompany to the library, has now attained a senior position. Our paths have diverged, and we're no longer in the same department. He visited me one day unexpectedly. He withdrew a book from his brown leather bag reverently and gently.

He announced with pride, 'My dream has finally come true. This's my first book.'

Extending the book to me, he looked into my eyes. I cast my gaze upon the book's spine to find the unmistakable logo of a renowned publisher. It was his first venture into nonfiction literature. I rose from my chair to shake his hand, extending heartfelt congratulations.

He looked so happy with his book that had his name on it.

Subsequently, I would stumble upon updates about his publications in the internal magazine. Over the intervening years, he'd added a few more titles to his name, further establishing himself as a writer of note in his field. All nonfiction.

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