

# Through the Writing Process

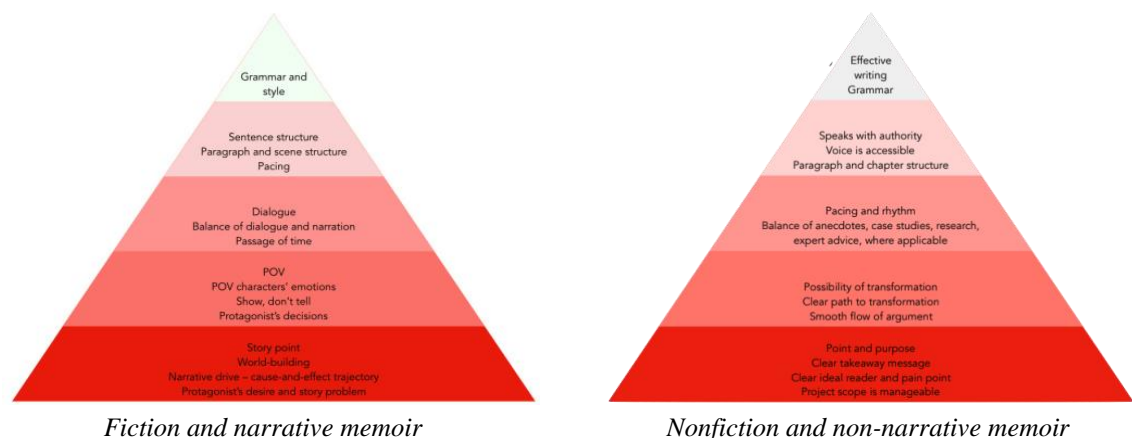
## From Idea to 'The End'

No matter the writer, the genre, the topic, or the format, the writing process is the same for everyone: **A writer must plan, draft, revise, revise some more, edit, and polish their manuscript before it is ready for readers.** Within these steps there is a lot of room for creativity and chaos to swirl, and the process is almost always iterative, particularly in the revision stage, as the manuscript takes shape, changes, and solidifies.

Working with a book coach can help a writer streamline the planning, drafting, and revision stages, but it does not take the place of any of these stages. A writer must move through them. And it's important that they do, because each step allows the writer to focus on a different layer of the manuscript, strengthening it so that the whole becomes the best book that the writer can write.

We have developed a tool that explains the writing process and the editorial concerns that you should be focused on at each step. We'll show you how and when to evaluate them as you move the writing process.

## The Hierarchy of Editorial Concerns



## The Planning Stage: Blueprint for a Book

Whether you are preparing to write your first draft of your book, or embark on a second, third, or fourth draft, it's important to take a step back and see the whole scope of the book. This will help you make sure that your idea is solid, and that the words on the page reflect your vision.

[Jennie Nash's Blueprint for a Book method](#) is a tool designed exactly for this purpose: It helps you lay the foundation for your book so that you can write forward with confidence. It can save you weeks, months, and even years of frustration writing a book that has fatal flaws or goes nowhere, because it allows you to see the entire book at a glance and to identify where the weak spots are so that you can fix them before you write them into your manuscript.

The Blueprint includes two powerful exercises, the Inside Outline (for fiction and narrative memoir) and the Outcome Outline (for nonfiction and non-narrative memoir). It's the outlining tool for both writers who love outlines *and* writers who hate outlines, because it's a quick and useful way of capturing all the layers of your book.

While the Blueprint is most effective at the start of the writing process, it can be used all the way through the revision stage. Our book coaches often have their writers go back to the Blueprint time and time again to tease out tough manuscript issues in a concise, clear way.

If you are at the start of a draft or the start of a revision, you should consider taking our Blueprint for a Book online course. It guides you to create a strong foundation for your book and walks you through how to create an Inside or Outcome Outline for your book. You can go through the course on your own or with your book coach to get their feedback on your work. At the end of the course, you'll have a solid map of your book that you can use to write forward or revise, resulting in a draft that is stronger than it would have been if you hadn't done the foundational work first.



[Start the Blueprint: Fiction course](#)



[Start the Blueprint: Nonfiction course](#)



[Start the Blueprint: Memoir course](#)

## The Drafting Stage: Nailing the Foundation, Getting to ‘The End’

The goal of a first draft is usually just to get to “the end,” with a manuscript that is not yet perfect but that holds together. If you are working with a book coach, they will be able to help you course-correct along the way when they see red flags or fatal flaws, without hindering your creativity and flow.

Editorially, the focus during the first draft should be on Tiers 1 and 2 (the bottom tiers) of the Hierarchy of Editorial Concerns. They make up the book’s foundation. The elements in these tiers will have been captured in your Blueprint, so your goal will be to make sure that they are coming through on the pages themselves.

These elements include:

*For fiction and narrative memoir*

- The story (and each scene) must have a point and a purpose.
- The story should start in the right place.
- The world of the story should be believable and logical.
- There must be narrative drive, a clear cause-and-effect trajectory – the protagonist must make clear decision with consequences.
- There must be a protagonist with an objective or desire.
- The protagonist must have external and internal conflicts.
- The point of view must make sense and serve the story.
- The point of view characters’ emotions should be on the page.
- The writer must be showing, not telling.

*For nonfiction and non-narrative memoir*

- The argument you are making must have a point and a purpose.
- The takeaway for the reader must be clear.
- The ideal reader’s desire and pain point must be clear.
- The scope of the book must be manageable for both the writer and ideal reader.
- The idea that the reader can experience a transformation must be present.
- The path to the reader’s transformation must be clear.
- The argument must flow smoothly and logically.

If you are working with a coach, this may be the first time you’re receiving consistent feedback on your writing. Your coach will help you move forward to “the end” while thinking through the big-picture manuscript issues listed above. You’ll get constructive criticism in a collaborative

spirit and may do some problem-solving or brainstorming with your coach if you're feeling stuck. Your coach may even give you some exercises to help you make key decisions about character arc, plot, or other foundational elements.

Their feedback will also include encouragement – not to give false praise, but to point out what you're doing well (so that you can keep doing it!) and so that you feel motivated to keep coming back to your draft and moving it forward.

## The Revision Stage: Story Development and Pacing

When you get to the revision stage, do not skip the urge to celebrate your accomplishment. Completing a draft is a huge milestone, and it's important to acknowledge the work it took to get there.

After the party, it's time to roll up your sleeves and get busy – the work of revision is about to begin.

At this point, it's a good idea to go back to your outline and compare it to the draft you wrote. You can do this by creating an "as in" outline, where the outline reflects exactly what's on the page, rather than what you intended or wanted to write. You can then compare the two outlines to see where the changes happened, and make a decision about how to revise.

Another great exercise at this point is to do a full evaluation of the draft. You can do this yourself, or bring a book coach in to complete it. The goals of an evaluation are to get a feel for the sweep and flow of the entire book, identify any weak areas, and make a plan for revision.

***PRO TIP:*** *If you worked with a coach through the drafting stage, it could be a good idea to have a different coach review the manuscript with "fresh eyes." Talk with your coach about this and about a referral.*

The revision plan should address the problem areas in the manuscript and outline a clear path for actually implementing the revisions. There is strategy involved, which is why it can be helpful to have a book coach to guide you and keep you on track.

Editorially, there will likely be a continued focus on lingering Tier 1 and 2 issues that you identified in your Blueprint. It's extremely difficult to translate your Blueprint *perfectly* into a first draft, so attention should be paid primarily to making sure that foundation of the book is strong on the page.

If the elements of Tiers 1 and 2 are shaky in the manuscript, you may need to do at least one round of revision to shore them up. The revision process is meant to be iterative, so approach each new draft with the confidence that you are making the book the best it can be.

Once the elements of Tiers 1 and 2 are solid, the editorial focus shifts to Tier 3 of the Hierarchy.

These elements include:

*For fiction and narrative memoir*

- Narration and dialogue should be well balanced
- Main narrative and backstory should be well balanced
- Each scene, chapter, and series of chapters should be paced well
- The time frame and chronology of the story should be clear
- The passage of time should be logical
- The manuscript should adhere to genre conventions regarding word count and any common tropes

*For nonfiction and non-narrative memoir*

- The pacing and rhythm should be smooth
- Any anecdotes, case studies, research, and expert advice should be well balanced

The revision process ends when all the Tiers 1-3 elements are strong. As we mentioned, this may take several rounds of revision and several drafts. This process can be difficult and feel slow but persevering through it will lead you to what is truly the best version of your book.

If you would like to learn how to perform an effective manuscript evaluation on your own book, check out our How to Revise a Novel course (we don't offer a nonfiction equivalent, but you can use the steps outlined in the course along with the nonfiction Hierarchy of Editorial Concerns to complete an evaluation of a memoir or nonfiction book).



[Start the How to Revise a Novel course](#)

## The Editing Stage: Story Development and Pacing

When all of the elements in the first three tiers of the Hierarchy are in place, the focus on later drafts begins to shift to Tier 4.

These elements include:

*For fiction and narrative memoir*

- Paragraphs, sentences, and words should flow smoothly and best reflect the ideas being conveyed
- The pacing of sentence rhythm and paragraph length should be smooth
- Scenes and paragraphs should be tight and to the point

*For nonfiction and non-narrative memoir*

- The writer should speak with authority
- The voice should be accessible to readers
- The paragraph and chapter structure should flow smoothly and logically

## The Polishing Stage: Copy Editing, Clarifying, and Fine-Tuning

When the Tier 4 elements are solid, the final step in the writing process is to polish the manuscript. This job often falls to a copy editor or proofreader, and your book coach can offer referrals to help you find one.

The editor will be making sure that:

*For fiction and narrative memoir*

- Grammar is correct
- Style and tone are consistent

*For nonfiction and non-narrative memoir*

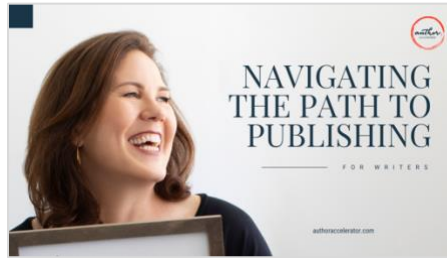
- Grammar is correct
- The writing is effective and captivating

Once the manuscript is polished and free of spelling, grammatical, or factual (in nonfiction and memoir) errors, it is ready for self-publishing or pitching.

## Next Steps

If you are interested in publishing but aren't sure of which publishing path is right for you and your project, we offer our Navigating the Path to Publishing course, which lays out the paths to publication – traditional, self-, and hybrid – and discusses the pros and cons of each. Worksheets help you assess your goals, finances, and skills, and determine which path is best for you.

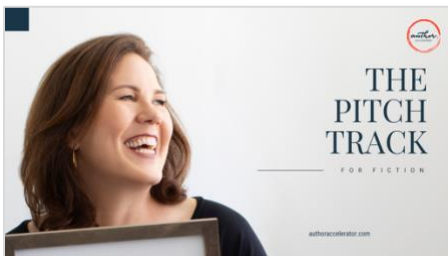
Numerous additional resources are included within the course.



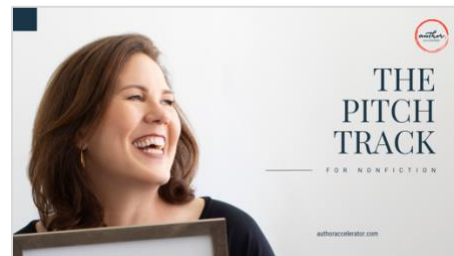
[Start the Navigating the Path to Publishing course](#)

If you know that you are interested in traditional publishing, your book coach can help you determine when you are ready to pitch to agents. We offer a course called the Pitch Track to guide you through the pitching process.

The Pitch Track is a self-paced, 8-step online course with instructional videos, case studies, and workbook exercises. You'll come away with a query letter, synopsis, pitch strategy, clear vision of the kind of agents you're seeking, and a greater understanding of the steps and possible outcomes in the pitching process. Many of our book coaches are equipped to walk you through this course, and the pitch process overall.



[Start the Pitch Track: Fiction course](#)



[Start the Pitch Track: Nonfiction course](#)

We hope this information helps to guide you through the writing process and shows you how a book coach can offer targeted feedback and support at every stage!

## Get Matched with a Book Coach

If you find a lot of holes in your universe of support, consider working with an Author Accelerator certified book coach. We train our coaches to provide support throughout the creative process at every level a writer might need. Visit [authoraccelerator.com](http://authoraccelerator.com) to get matched with a book coach.