



Nonfiction Book Proposal Template

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ANNOTATED

COVER LETTER

The job of your cover letter is to convince the reader to open your proposal.

1. Make a personal connection

Address your letter to a particular person. Has he or she represented or published something similar to your project? Someone you know? Mention it.

2. Hook and hold reader's attention

Don't assume an editor has nothing better to do than to read your proposal. The same way you'd work to hold the attention of the reader of your book, work to maintain the attention of an agent or publisher in your cover letter. Grab his or her attention with a brief anecdote, fun fact, or other compelling hook.

3. Get to the point

Don't make a reader work to guess what your communication is about. Assume she'll give it 30 seconds of attention. Work to earn more.

4. Identify reader's felt need

Why should this book be published? What need does it meet? Who has this need? How will reader be helped?

5. Identify your unique premise/angle/concept

This is BIG. The agent or editor needs to know, at a glance, how your angle is different than what's on the market now. Make it meaningful and memorable. What is the *one thing* this book aims to do? Clearly identify the singular unifying thesis.

6. Demonstrate competence

Highlight the element of your bio or resume most relevant to this project. Suggest that people, other than you, find you competent.

7. Communicate passion

Demonstrate your enthusiasm for this book by proving, with evidence, what makes you passionate.

8. Be concise

Demonstrate you're an effective communicator with the efficient use of words. (One page is optimal, two is fine.)

9. Extend courtesy

Thank the reader for his or her time and offer your availability to discuss the project further. Agents and editors prefer to work with teachable, respectful authors.

TITLE PAGE

The job of your title page is to convince the reader to keep reading your proposal.

Title: Subtitle

The title communicates the book's premise. What is the book about? If the title is too clever or vague, it doesn't offer the reader a hook to become interested. The title should hook the reader's interest *and* communicate what's inside.

The subtitle communicates the book's promise. What will the reader gain by buying and reading this book? Let the reader know what's in it for him or her when they buy the book. (5 secrets to happiness? How to make the perfect paper airplane? A proven path to worldly riches?)

Author Name
123 Street Way
Anytown, State 12345
919.555.1234
MyEmail@email.com

Date

Note: You may wish to include document footer with:

- a. Your name
- b. Name of your book project
- c. Date

PROPOSAL

The job of your proposal is to convince the reader to read the chapter summaries.

Your proposal must demonstrate 4 things:

- I. **Project:** This book has a unique and compelling concept.
- II. **Market:** There is an audience with a felt need for this book.
- III. Person:
 - The author is a **Communicator** who is building a solid platform to reach audiences
 - The author is a talented **Writer** who can engage readers

I. THE PROJECT

In this section you must convince an agent or publisher that this book needs to be published.

A. Premise (1-2 sentence description of the book's unique angle)

Hook the reader and create interest by crafting a concise and compelling description of book's thesis.

This is your unique fresh angle!

A strong premise will connect with a reader's felt need and meet that need. This thesis, or premise, is what will focus and guide both your proposal and, more importantly, your manuscript. It's the unifying theme, or thread, which holds your book together. This red thread should "peek through" in every chapter.

When an editor scans your summary of chapters, she's expecting to see how you're advancing this idea from chapter to chapter. When an editor sets down the proposal, this is the compelling idea that stays with him or her.

B. Overview

Write 2-3 paragraphs to entice a reader to read further.

This section is similar to dynamic and exciting copy on back of a book that might grab book browser's attention, compelling them to purchase and read the book.

C. Audience

**Note: Audience falls under “Market” section, but it’s so critical that the publisher needs to see it, here, right away.*

Who is the audience for this book? Male or female? Married? Parents? Age bracket? Education? Religious affiliation? Memberships?

The very worst worst worst audience you can suggest is: *Everyone*.

It’s been said, and most publishers know: *If you write a book for everyone, you end up writing a book for no one. But if you write a book for someone, you end up writing a book for everyone.*

You can communicate your intended audience in one of two ways:

1. “They are...”

Describe the demographic of the group of people who will be reading this book.
(Married fathers who are in the workplace, 2 children, 35-50, they use their vacation time to go on mission trips, etc....)

2. “She is...”

Identify a particular reader in the audience.
(Jessica is single, 25, and she lost her mother to cancer when she was thirteen. She’s finishing grad school in theology and hopes to...)

Whether you describe the book’s audience corporately or individually, know who your “someone” is. Tape her picture on your computer screen and write every word, sentence, page to meet her needs.

D. Need for the Book

Why is there a need for this particular book? What sorts of question are readers already asking that this book will answer? What’s the benefit to the reader? Give an agent or publisher several strong reasons that readers *need* this book. Convince him or her that this book *needs* to be published.

E. Unique Selling Proposition

What’s the pay-off for the reader who buys and reads this book? What does it offer that other books do not? Communicate to a publisher the benefits to the reader.

If a reader buys and reads this book, he or she will:

- Think...
- Feel...
- Do...

Because

- X
- Y
- And Z

This lets a publisher know how your book will impact/change/transform a reader.

F. Manuscript Details

(word count, time needed to write book after contract is signed)

G. Endorsers

List the people who have agreed to consider endorsement of the manuscript upon completion.

Note: This is not a wish list. Please please don't list Michelle Obama, Jim Gaffigan or Jimmy Santiago unless they've actually agreed to endorse your book. For each endorser, include endorser's name, position, and your relationship to them.

H. Alternate Titles

In the event that an agent or publisher would not automatically connect with the working title you've chosen, list a few alternate titles and subtitles here.

II. THE MARKET

In this section you must convince an agent or publisher that there is a significant audience who needs this book.

A. Audience (be specific!)

You've already let the publisher know, broadly, who the audience is for this book. This is where you get specific.

Describe your target audience, those who have the "problem" your book answers:

- a. Gender?
- b. Age?
- c. Race? (if relevant)
- d. Family configuration?
- e. What church/es do they attend?
- f. To what groups do they belong?
- g. Other memberships/affiliations?
- h. What else do they read? Books? Magazines? Journals?
- i. What conferences do they attend?
- j. To what radio do they listen?
- k. Anything else that characterizes this audience that is particularly relevant to your unique premise?

B. Competition (list titles and provide 2-4 sentences of explanation)

List 4-6 books on the market that are similar to yours. Though this isn't the most glamorous section of your proposal, it's very important to publishers, and shows that you've done your homework.

For each book, give the title, author, publisher, and year of publication. Then unpack how the book is like yours and how yours is unique.

This section does two things.

1. It communicates, "There's an interest in the book, because here are a few that have done well..."
2. It also communicates, "But here's how mine's distinct...."

TIPS:

- a. Be wary of blockbusters—avoid "War and Peace," "Kisses From Katie," and "Purpose Driven Life." Comparing your book to these may indicate naivety.
- b. Be thoughtfully critical about competition, not unkind. (Especially if this publisher published one of these!)
- c. Be very CLEAR about the differences, highlighting the way yours is unique.

III. THE PERSON

In this section you must convince an agent or publisher that you are the best writer to write this book.

A. Bio

Write this section in the third person, as if an agent or collaborator is bragging on you.

The publisher will be interested in a mention of your education, and you work or volunteer experience.

Use this section to communicate why you are the right author to write this book.

B. Previous Writing

1. If you've got books, list titles, years, publisher/s, sales figures.
2. If you've published freelance articles related to content of the book, include links to those here, and number of hits if available.

C. Personal Marketing

1. What you've already accomplished regarding this topic/project
 - a. How many times have you spoken in the last 12 months? List your speaking gigs from the last year, indicating venue/client and size of audience. Then list gigs you have booked for the next 12 months.
 - b. Are there organizations or conferences to whom you speak regularly? Explain.
 - c. Facebook followers/fans
 - d. Twitter followers
 - e. Instagram followers
 - f. Personal newsletter mailing list, # of subscribers
 - g. Other mailing lists, such as the organization for which you work, to which you have access?
 - h. Blog followers: how many hits per month? How long have you been blogging?
 - i. Website traffic: # hits per month
 - j. Relevant memberships, associations

2. What you'll do to promote this project

This is not a list of what you're *willing* to do (i.e. a glamorous 20-city book tour paid for by publisher). This is a list of what you will orchestrate to promote your book. Get creative and suggest the kinds of strategies that will work for you.

- a. Are there speaking gigs you'll secure to promote your book? Be specific.
- b. Will you write articles when book is released? For what publications?
- c. Can you be a "guest blogger" on someone else's site? Whose? Will you organize a blog tour? How many blogs?
- d. Will you be able to wrangle media opps on tv or radio? List those.
- e. Do you have a unique idea for how to create buzz and word of mouth excitement?
- f. What unique opportunities fit with who you are?

Be specific.

D. Relevant Affiliations

Are you a member of an extensive writer's network? A staff member of a national ministry? Do you have access to a syndicated radio show? Do you serve on a college's Board of Directors? List significant affiliations that could impact book sales here. Are you connected to an organization—a ministry, business or nonprofit—that would buy copies in bulk and help promote the book?

E. Awards and Honors

This section is optional. If you have any achievements that will benefit the book, mention them here.

F. Future Writing

Publishers like to work with authors who might publish more than one book. Suggest a few titles, with a sentence of description each, that you might hope to publish in the future. One or more of these might be included in a series that would include this first book.

G. Summary

Do ideas for this book keep you up at night? Have you been developing this material over the last decade? Is it already changing lives? Let publisher know why you're excited about this book.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The job of your chapter summary is to convince the reader to read the sample chapters.

Your chapter summaries are like an annotated table of contents for your book.

Use creative/engaging chapter titles.

Offer 2 or 3 sentences of description for each chapter.

Make sure there is a logical flow/arc/progression to your book and allow the angle/premise/theme/focus/red-thread to be evident throughout your outline.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

The job of your sample chapters is to convince publisher to publish your book!

Offer the publisher:

1. An introduction, if you have one
2. First chapter
3. Your favorite chapter

Pages should be black Times New Roman 12-pt font, double-spaced.

Make sure they:

- (a) Demonstrate your strongest writing, and
- (b) Are error-free.

Your unique angle should shine through these chapters!