

Creating and Formatting e-Books

Lesson 3

Steps to a Good e-Book

Before an e-book is ready to be formatted, writers need to be sure it is a quality product. Reports and e-books abound that claim e-books can be written and ready for sale in one weekend. Such a quick turn-around on any writing is a disservice to the reader.

The reader should be at the foremost concern when writing a manuscript. A good book, electronic or print, considers the audience. Before formatting and converting, an e-book needs to be a good reader experience. Here are some steps for your client:

Write a good book

Sounds like a no-brainer, right? After all, we're writers. Many of us have seen those ads for "Write an E-book in an Hour." Have you seen the resulting e-books?

Some writers can hammer out an article or even a chapter or two in an hour. Actually, I can pound out a 1,500-word article in about an hour. But that's just words to paper, it's doesn't include research or re-writing. It certainly isn't publishable material.

Another method touted is to take a bunch of blog posts and string them together, *voila*, an e-book. I just read one of those. It appears the writer didn't bother to re-read the material. Not everything pertained to the subject of the book. Plus, there was a lot of duplication. While I did glean a few tidbits of information, I'm glad I didn't pay for the book. (For information about the right way to blog a book see Nina Amir's [*How to Blog a Book, Publish and Promote Your Work One Post at a Time.*](#))

It is far too easy to be tempted to hack out something, publish it as a Kindle book for 99 cents, and wait for the money to roll in. Even some professional writers fall victim to the promise of fast publication and quick monetary return.

Even the conversion of a print book that is already in publication requires going back to basics. The manuscript should be re-read. Has there been new information that changes a non-fiction book? Did some errors slip through the first time? Three different people edited one of my books (not my mother or husband). As I went through it before converting it to Kindle, I was amazed at the number of little mistakes I found.

Edit a good book

Editing an e-book involves more than semi-colons and point-of-view. But if these tiny details aren't corrected, the most beautifully formatted e-book will not be a pleasure to read.

It is far too easy for some writers to think they can edit their own material. I've seen more than one editor to not need a professional editor. I'm an editor. I still pay for another professional to correct my manuscript.

Beta readers and a favorite aunt who is an English teacher aren't editors. Although these people may provide valuable suggestions, a professional is needed.

Cover

Too often writers think the cover is not as important for an e-book. Not true. As much care should be given to the cover of an e-book as a print book.

An e-book doesn't sit on a shelf with hundreds of other books. But it does sit on a virtual shelf with thousands of other e-books. Remember, so many other things on the page grab the attention of online shoppers. Even on a business website, the cover needs to be attractive and attract attention. The cover of the print edition may be useable for the e-book. If not, give deliberate thought to the e-book cover.

At a trade show recently, I saw a book on display with a punctuation mistake. New authors sometimes try to put too much information on a cover. Professional help is needed.

It isn't necessary to have a back cover for an e-book book. The end of the book is a good place for the author bio, blurbs about other products, or a glimpse of upcoming material. We'll cover this in a little more detail in a future lesson.

Consider the reader

As writers we know that we need to be aware of the reading audience. This idea, though, is a little different for e-publishing.

E-books are a different medium and a different reading experience. The audience will have different needs and wants, other than just the content.

Jonathan Wondrusch says in *The E-Book Creation Explorer's Guide*, "Every single decision you make when you create an e-book plays into the experience that your customer will have. "

Remember, a reader may be reading on a computer or a phone. Some readers will be younger and expecting interactive material. Maybe the content requires tables and graphs. Children's books may be greatly enhanced with audio. All of these require special attention when putting an e-book together.

One time a writer posted a note on Google + requesting reviews of his e-book. I looked at the preview on Amazon and decided not to review it because of the poor formatting. My thought was, "If this writer doesn't care enough about the ease with which I can read his book, he probably doesn't care enough to write quality content."

Considering the audience now requires thinking beyond the words on the "page."

Let's review:

Step One – Write a good book.

Step Two – Edit a good book.

Step Three – Create a good cover.

Step Four – Make your e-book a good experience for your reader.

Assignment:

What do you expect from e-books?

Have you had an experience with a poor e-book? Please describe it.

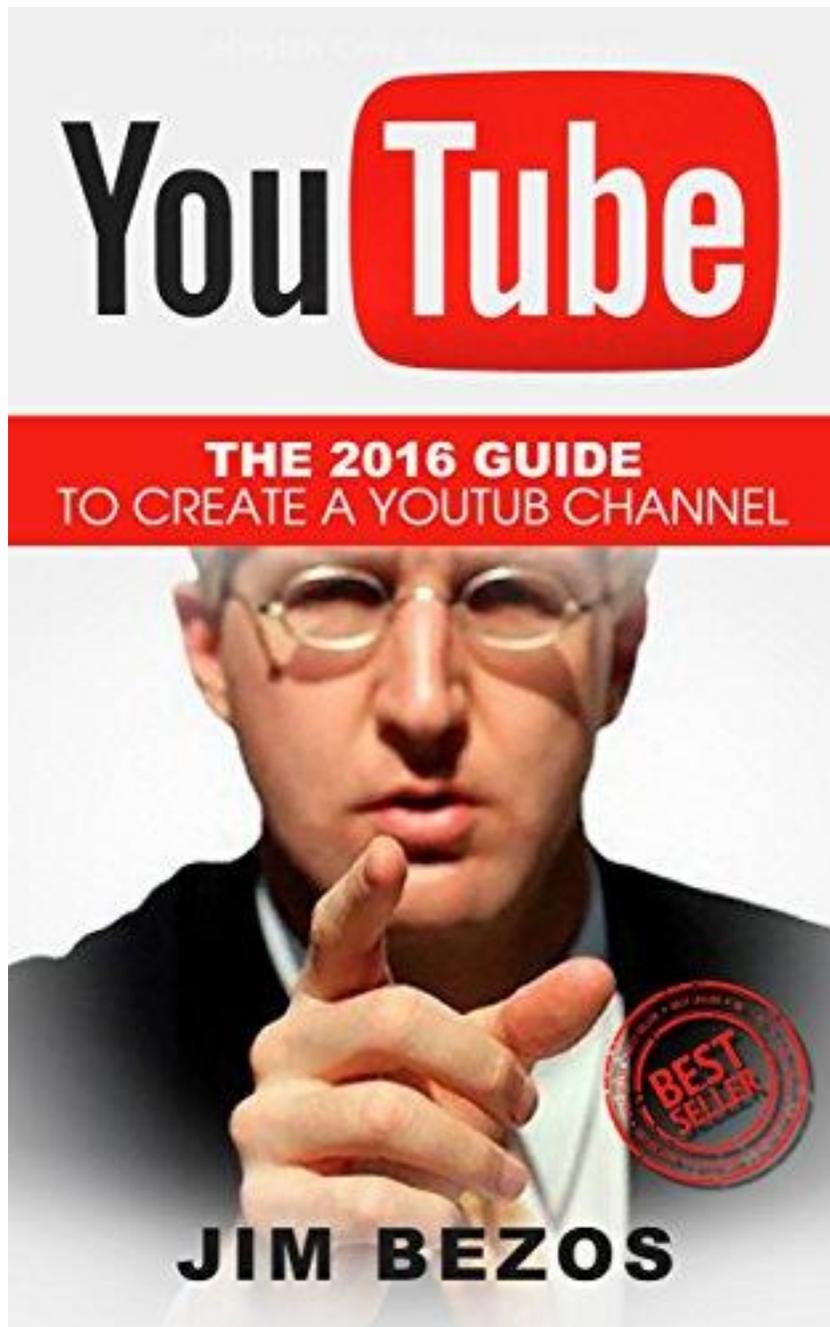
Beyond content, what do you think the reading audience is expecting from an e-book?

Below are links to articles about quickly writing a book. Read one or both and share your thoughts on the idea.

<http://menwithpens.ca/how-to-write-an-book-in-7-days/>

<http://www.copyblogger.com/ebook-in-30-day/>

This is an actual cover of a Kindle book. (2017 update: It appears this book is no longer available.) Take a look and comment on it: good or bad.



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