



DIY AUTHOR

*Worksheets, reference
& checklists*

Everything you need to go
from idea to published

Month 1

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS



From idea to published in 6 months

Month 1

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

State your major fears/problems in this column.

Ex: "I don't have the money to publish a book."

REFRAME/Find a solution here

Ex: "I can be poor and not publish a book, or poor and find budget ways to publish."

Month 1

AUTHOR GOALS

What kind of writer do I want to be?

What does writing success mean to me?

What kind of books do I want to write?

Is there an author who I aspire to be like?

*What does my dream writing career look like
5 years from now?*

Which 5 steps can I take in the next month to get closer to my goal?

Month 1

WHO IS MY IDEAL AUDIENCE?

Describe your ideal reader:

Age

Sex

Geography

Education

Interests / hobbies

Style (how do they live/dress, etc.)

Preferred literary genres and why

What are they looking for in a book?

Problems they are dealing with

Where do they hang out in the real world?

Where do they hang out online?

Month 1
IS IT A GOOD IDEA?

Am I excited about it?

Can I imagine others being excited about it?

What is AWESOME about my idea?

Does something HAPPEN?

Do I have a compelling CHARACTER?

How is my setting FASCINATING?

Can I sum up the idea in an intriguing sentence?

Month 1

The 7 STORY ARCHETYPES

1 Overcoming the Monster.

2 Rags to Riches.

3 The Quest.

4 Voyage and Return.

5 Comedy.

6 Tragedy.

7 Rebirth.

Month 1

THE STORY SPINE

Introducing main character & setting

Once upon a time...

Initial situation
"baseline"-
MC's everyday

Every day...

Inciting incident

Until one day...

Call to adventure answered. Things start to change.

Because of this...

More causality- results of change.
(this can be expanded)

Because of that...

Climax. Things come to a head.

Until finally...

Ending. Character arc fully realized.

Ever since then...

Month 1

STORY ARCHITECT

In a notebook, jot down these key moments in your book

Opening image/situation/setup. *This is when we set the tone and get to know your character. This part should hook the reader and get them to care.*

Theme stated. *The theme can be stated by another character, in dialogue for example. This will be central to the book and to its lessons.*

Inciting incident. *This is usually not created by the protagonist, but it changes everything for them. It forces them to react.*

Debate. *Your character is still lying to themselves. They should hesitate before answering the call to adventure- if they don't, the stakes and challenges are too weak.*

Decision is made - embarking on journey. *An irreversible decision is made. Your character must start readying themselves for the changes that are coming their way.*

Exploring the world / false victories. *This is where your character feels that maybe this new world is all right, after all. There may be a bit less tension- they have a few victories but they are still not evolved enough to attain their true goal.*

Turning point- Antagonistic forces reemerge. *At this point it becomes evident that the stakes are still there, that all is not OK. The tension and conflict ticks up again.*

All is lost / dark night of the soul. *Some variation on this is necessary. Without this low point, your character will not be forced to change, learn, and grow. This portion forces an uncomfortable but inevitable solution.*

Possible solution is found / climax. *This solution is something that would not have been available to your character before, as they were. They have new strengths and new tools now.*

Ending. *This shows the new situation for the protagonist. It does not have to be happy but it needs to be satisfying. They have changed in crucial ways.*

Month 1

HOW TO WRITE A HOOK

DO... Start with a surprising statement or situation.

DON'T... Drop the reader into the middle of the action without quickly helping them to form an emotional connection to the main character.

DO... Remember your title is your first hook.

DON'T... Start with too much description or with infodumping.

DO... Start with a moment where your character's life is about to change.

DON'T... Make it too confusing as to what is happening. If the reader is not yet invested they might stop reading.

DO... Set the mood, introduce the tone, and start to ramp up the stakes and suspense.

Month 1

STORY, CONFLICT & TENSION

A story is about a character trying to achieve something they want and/or need.

**Conflict is a struggle between opposing forces-
Your main character, with their wants or needs,
and the obstacles that stand in their way.**

Conflict examples:

Someone wants the same thing as your character.

Someone wants the opposite of your character.

Your character is torn between their morals and desires.

The environment is making it difficult for your MC to succeed.

**Tension emerges from the consequences
of failing to achieve those wants and needs.**

**This tension drives the plot, escalates throughout
the story, and creates suspense.**

Month 1

INCITING INCIDENT

The inciting incident is an event that happens in relation to your protagonist at the beginning of your story to get the plot moving in a new direction.

What is the beginning situation for the main character?

What is untenable about that situation?

What makes the situation is hard to change?

What is preventing your MC from attaining their true goal at this juncture?

What are 5 things that could happen that would force your MC to change their status quo?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How can you introduce some urgency into the resulting situation?

How will your character be motivated & changed irreversibly by this incident?

Month 1

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

The Lover

Follows their heart.
Rash, impulsive, maybe naive.

The Hero

Idealistic, overconfident,
ego driven.

The Magician

Has a special power or
is on a power trip. Good or bad.

The Outlaw

Could be virtuous but is a
rebel and a lawbreaker at heart.

The Explorer

Curious. Maybe too curious.
Maybe to the point of
self destructiveness.

The Sage

They have the knowledge but
are slow to act. May decide to only
share part of their knowledge.

The Innocent

Naive to a fault. Often needs
saving. Can serve as a
foil.

The Creator

Creates things in the story whether
ideas or things that impact plot.
Can be good or bad or both.

Month 1

THE PROTAGONIST

Their actions drive the plot of the story.

DRIVEN

HAS a PROBLEM to SOLVE

RELATABLE

UNIQUE STRENGTHS

COMPELLING FLAWS

STRONG VALUES or IDEALS

EXPERIENCES CHANGE

Has a SECRET / BELIEVES a LIE

HAS SOMETHING TO LOSE / GAIN

Month 1

THE ANTAGONIST

They are a force opposing the protagonist's efforts to attain their goal

DRIVEN

HAS a PROBLEM to SOLVE

RELATABLE but not LIKABLE

UNIQUE STRENGTHS

COMPELLING FLAWS

STRONG VALUES or IDEALS

Has a SECRET / BELIEVES a LIE

HAS SOMETHING TO LOSE / GAIN

MAY HOLD A MIRROR to the MC

Month 1

ULTIMATE CHARACTER WORKSHEET

- Which accidents of birth impacted them? (Think: parents, class, location, events...)
- What was important about their childhood? (Happy/unhappy, illness, parental relationship, education, disability, upheaval, home, expectations)
- If they were to name the 3 most impactful events of their early life what would they be and why?
- Describe your character physically- but only the details that impact their sense of self/their abilities/ their relationships/ the STORY.
- Does something crucial change for your character between childhood and when your story begins? (They have lost someone, their circumstances have changed, they have a different sense of self)
- Is there a disconnect between your character's exterior or others' perception of them & their interior?
- What are the key things about your character when story begins? (How they present themselves, their work, their interests, their goals, their relationships, their fears)
- What does your character want? Do they know what they want? Is what they want good for them?
- Are there behavioral patterns in your character's life? Are they helpful or not? Why do they exist?
- Strengths/weaknesses? Strengths that are weaknesses? Weaknesses that are strengths?
- Interesting quirks for "texture" in your book: Aesthetic/style, favorite foods/music, pets, etc.

From Idea to Published in 6 months

Month 1

ULTIMATE WORLDBUILDING WORKSHEET

-What are the details of the landscape that impact the story? (Difficult terrain, drought, plentiful game, natural boundaries, natural resources, plants/animals, climate & weather...)

-Has the environment changed/ is it changing/ are there environmental issues /does your MC come from a very different place?

-What are distances like and how do people travel? Is travel safe or not? Is there city and country?

-Which species inhabit your world and how do they interact? Are there hierarchies? How densely populated is it?

-What is government/religion like and how is the world organized administratively? Are there states, territories, kingdoms...and are they at war or at peace?

-What are key beliefs, laws, and traditions and are any of these problematic or helpful?

-What are culture and education like? What are some key professions/ Are there classes and inequality? How do people act, dress, interact? Are there myths and stories?

-What are some of the key laws and rules of conduct? What is forbidden? If there is a magic system, make sure to express the cost, the limits, who can use it and how...

-What do people eat and drink? Is food generally safe and plentiful? Are there meal traditions?

-What are family/social units and interactions like? How does this impact your story?

-How is the technology, what are some of the things the world has/doesn't have that are important? If this is a historical book or one set in a historical-ish fantasy setting, make sure to be consistent.

Month 1

GENRE

ROMANCE Focuses on a romantic relationship (usually between 2 people) They are kept apart for most of the novel- lots of tension but they get together at end. Sub-genres include historical, paranormal, and western.

SCI FI Focuses on universe & worldbuilding and technology. Usually set in the future. Lots of sub-genres in SciFi such as Steampunk, Space Opera, Afrofuturism...

FANTASY Focuses on kingdoms. Many supernatural elements, mythology, and magic. Take cues from historical settings. Sub-Genres include historical, gothic, fairy tale...

MYSTERY The classic "whodunit." There is a major question that must be answered. Sub-genres include police procedural, Noir, and cozy mystery.

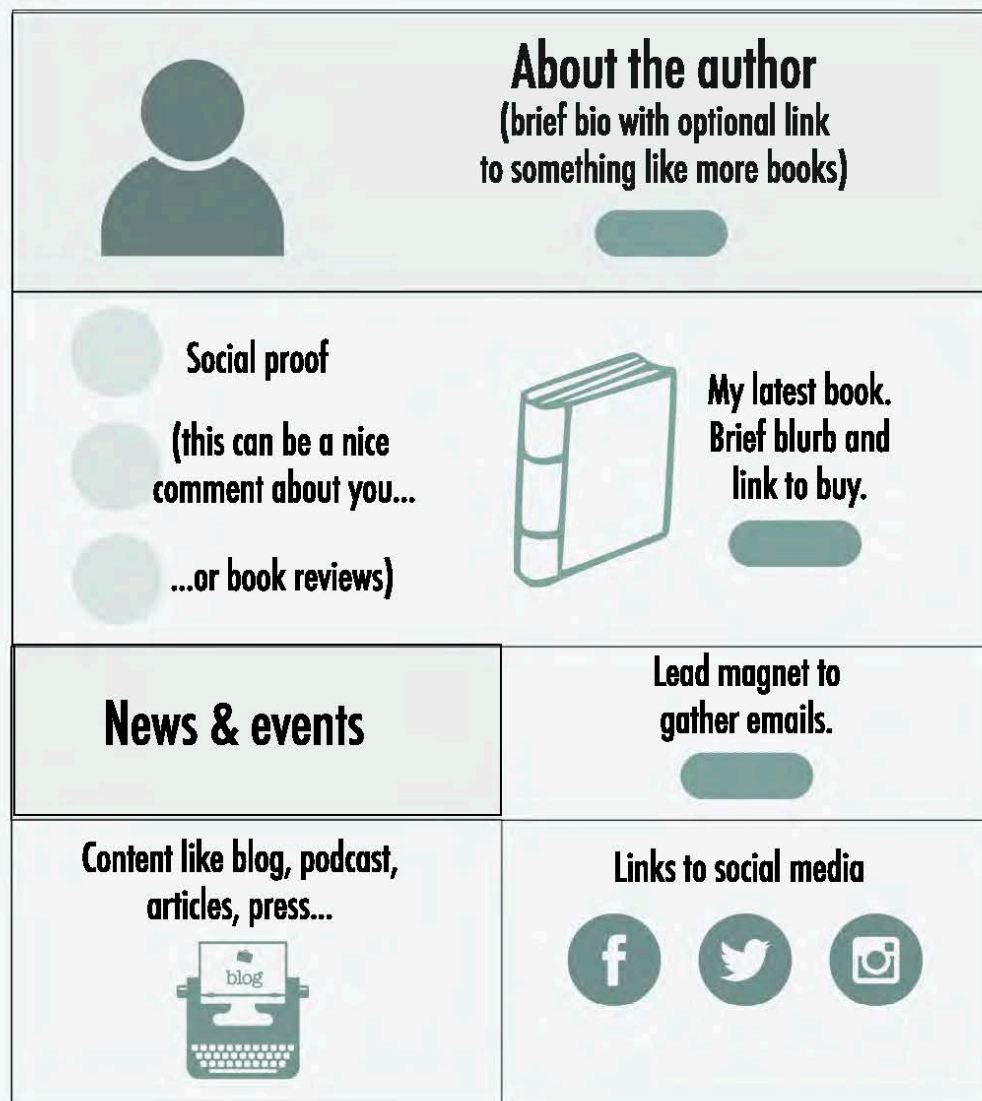
THRILLER The main character is in jeopardy. High stakes, high suspense, often high action. Setting is integral to the plot. Many cliffhangers throughout.

YOUNG ADULT Often a coming of age story, can be Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Romance, literary, etc. Also New Adult.

LITERARY Focuses on the human condition, emotions, and inner journeys. Can be historical or women's fiction. Usually these books win more awards but sell more copies.

Month 1

SIMPLE WEBSITE LANDING PAGE



Month 1

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Brainstorm these components

How and where can I best reach my audience?

Which authors have websites and platforms I admire and why?

Which social media platforms and apps do I enjoy?

What would I share if I had a newsletter?

What shows up when I Google myself and how can I show up more consistently?

What am I passionate and knowledgeable about that I could share with my audience?

What kind of content could I create most easily (blog, videos)

Month 1

SEO BASICS

*(Psst: If any of these terms are Greek to you, Google that sh*t!)*

Understand your audience's wants & needs. What are they searching for?

Emulate your competition- how are they using keywords & content strategy?

Create smart content: based on what your audience wants, keyword rich, and well-organized. Optimize old content.

Diversify content and create great images and headings.

Be consistent and clear.

Make use of metadata and alt tags.

Use links (both internal and external).

Create clear URL's for your site.

Become an expert/ authority.

Month 1 CONTENT CALENDAR EXAMPLE

Introduce yourself!	Favorite books	Writer life	How to video	Share blog post	Writing outfit	Writing desk
Book aesthetic	Writing/author meme	Giveaway	Quote from work in progress	Book trailer	Share a passion	Writing prompt
Cover reveal	Writing snack	Favorite book	Announce quiz or PDF on website	Question for followers	Writing break	Character aesthetics
Motivational quote	Update	Favorite author spotlight	Writing industry facts	Your book's setting	Reader feature	Funny image
Favorite covers	Call for Beta readers	Share your blurb	Before & After	Jump on a trend	Writer gear	Latest news/ Appearances

Brainstorm

Batch

Re-use

Engage!

Useful podcast episodes:

How to go from writer to author

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000556547836>

How to find your voice

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000585494306>

Storytelling essentials

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000584641533>

Overcoming resistance

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000581536725>

Toxic Mindsets authors hold

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000580058414>

The characters and archetypes your novel needs

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000578536520>

Painful but necessary: the author platform

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000577108317>

Writing a book: where do you start?

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000566365936>

Top things authors shouldn't worry about

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000563519414>

The Story spine

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-be-an-author/id1618267503?i=1000564675119>

There are great episodes for every part of your journey and there will be new ones coming out each week so don't forget to subscribe and keep checking back on the How to be an Author podcast page wherever you get your podcasts.

Month 1 Checklist

- Did I establish my writing/career/book goals?
- Have I set aside time & space for my project?
- Do I understand which steps are involved?
- Have I completed the story spine?
- Have I brainstormed on the story architect?
- Am I comfortable with my writing voice & genre?
- Have I reserved my domain and set up my socials?
- Do I know who my audience is?
- Have I chosen a CRM?
- Do I have a rudimentary content calendar?
- Have I set up a basic website?