

# NOVEL WRITING CHECKLIST

by Her Narrative

Hi!

Embarking on the journey of writing a novel is both an exhilarating and challenging endeavor. I'm so proud of you for going after your dream!

This novel-writing checklist is your trusted companion — a comprehensive guide designed to help you organize your road to success and check off key milestones along the way.

Throughout this checklist, I've also included links to resources to help you along the way.

For my fellow go-getters, high-achievers, and perfectionists. This is a guide to help support you on your writing journey. It does not have to be followed to a tee. Use what works for you and leave the rest.

This checklist is a versatile tool that will empower you to tackle each aspect of the writing and publishing process with confidence.

The world needs your story, this is where you start!

Yours in creativity,  
Charlotte Chipperfield ✨  
Book Coach and Developmental Editor  
Her Narrative



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- Journal out your idea and why you're excited to write this story.
- Create a writing practice that works for you.  
**Resource:** [How to create a writing practice.](#)
- Outline your story.
  - A necessary evil, I'm afraid. You don't have to follow an outline perfectly but it will help you frame your idea and know what you're writing toward, in order to get your idea into ink faster.
  - **Resource:** [How to outline your novel with the three-act structure.](#)
- Develop your plot structure.
  - Plot is the backbone of your book, [here are five essential elements to keep in mind as you write.](#)
- Format your document for writing.
  - No matter if you're writing in Word, Google Docs, Scrivener, or another software, the resource below will help you format.
  - If you're handwriting, save this video and come back to it once you're ready to digitize.
  - **Resource:** [Here is an Instagram post I made about how to format your writing document.](#)
- Write consistently. As hard as it may be, try to keep writing forward. The first draft is all about getting the idea on the page. There will be plenty of time for edits later.
  - Remember it doesn't have to be perfect.
  - Progress is progress.
  - If motivation starts to lag, [watch this training.](#)

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- Find a critic partner/accountability partner. (*Optional, if this feels right for you.*)
  - This is a shared experience of providing feedback on each other's work in sections to get an understanding of what is working, what isn't, and where improvements can be made.
- Draft one complete!
  - The goal here is ~90,000 words for most fiction genres.
  - Remember, no one ever needs to see this draft but you did it!! This is a rough draft.
  - CELEBRATE!! 🎉
- Draft two (and three).
  - It's time to edit and rework the scenes you made notes to come back to, etc. Get your manuscript to a place where you are ready to share it with editors. This may take more than one or two (or ten) additional passes back through your rough draft. *That is OK.* There is no right number.
  - While you are working on these self-edits, you can be researching Developmental and Copy Editors.
- Work with a Developmental Editor.
  - What is the developmental edit? This refines your manuscript's structure, character development, and pacing to create a page-turner.
  - Read more about when to work with a dev editor [here](#).
  - An editor rate guide can be [found here](#) to help you plan your budget.
  - **NOTE:** The timeline here can be up to three months due to the complexity of feedback with both manuscript comments and an in-depth editorial letter.
- Incorporate editor feedback into your manuscript.

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- Beta readers.
  - Decide how many you'd like to read your book to provide feedback. 3-4 is often a solid target.
  - There are many dedicated writing Facebook groups that are a great place to find your beta readers.
  - Acquire feedback.
  - Decide which feedback to include. **NOTE:** You do not have to incorporate every piece of feedback! Take what works for you and leave the rest.
  
- Research & interview copy editors.
  - An editor rate guide can be [found here](#) to help you plan your budget.
  - **NOTE:** The timeline here can be several weeks or months.
  - **Resource:** [Here is a Her Narrative recommended list of book editors and designers.](#)
  - Incorporate all final edits.
  
- CELEBRATING HAVING WRITTEN A BOOK!!! YOU DID IT!** 🎉

What are four ways you can celebrate this milestone?

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You've written the book, now what?

This is where your path may split depending on whether you want to self-publish or take the traditional publishing route. I've created a checklist for each path.

## Self-Publishing Checklist

Self-publishing has been on the rise for years and many authors have great success. The following items listed are often completed concurrently so make this checklist your own.

- Write book blurb.
  - This is the back cover paragraph that gets a reader EXCITED and intrigued to read your book.
  - It's the billboard that gets people's attention and convinces them to buy your book.
- Write your author bio.
- Decide which platforms you'll be self-publishing on:
  - [Kindle Direct Publishing \(Amazon\)](#)
  - [Ingram Sparks](#)
- Understand the formatting specifications for publishing your book.
  - Your book designer will need these and can help you finalize these.

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## Self-Publishing Checklist Continued

- Book cover design.
  - There are a lot of graphic designers dedicated to book cover design so be sure to find a designer that sees your vision and fits your style.
  - This process will likely have a few rounds of revisions.
- Establish a publication date.
- Create your marketing plan.
  - Pre-order strategy (aka your launch plan).
  - Build your author platform. (Hello, marketing!)
    - **Resource:** [How to market your book.](#)
  - Social media. (Use [Canva](#) to create graphics).
  - Email marketing.
  - Local reading events and book events.
- Request advanced copy readers.
  - These are readers who will be writing reviews and posting about your book leading up to your launch.
- Official launch.
  - Announce on social media and your newsletter.
- Book release party. (*Go ahead, throw yourself a party!*)
- Continue marketing.
  - Offer contests and giveaways.
- CELEBRATE this journey!! You freakin' did it!! 🎉**

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## Traditional Publishing Checklist:

Depending on the publishing deal you sign, there will be different levels of support from the publisher. This checklist helps you build toward a publishing deal and can be adapted based on the roles and responsibilities defined between you and your publishing team.

- Write book blurb.
  - This is the back cover paragraph that gets a reader EXCITED and intrigued to read your book.
  - It's the billboard that gets people's attention and convinces them to buy your book.
  
- Write your author bio.
- Develop your query letter to acquire an agent.
  - Agents are your new BFF who believe in your project and will help you to shop it around to publishers. Think of them as a real estate agent working to find the best buyer for your home.
  - Your query letter is a package presenting yourself and your book which often includes:
    - Your book blurb
    - Author bio
    - Sample chapters
    - A list of similar works
    - Query letter
  - Rejection is hard and part of the process. I wish it wasn't but every "no" is getting you closer to a "yes!"
  - **Resource:** [Dealing with rejection.](#)

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## Traditional Publishing Checklist Continued:

Build your author platform. (Hello, marketing!)

**Resource:** [How to market your book.](#)

- Yes, you will get signed with a publisher that may support you with marketing but that isn't always the case. The success of your book still lies in your ability to market yourself.
  - Social media. (Use [Canva](#) to create graphics).
  - Email marketing.
  - Local reading events and book events.

Sign with a publisher! (Let's manifest it now!) **CELEBRATE!!** 🎉

Pre-launch and book release party. Most publishers will help guide and advise the timelines here based on your pub date.

Continue marketing.

**CELEBRATE this entire journey!! You freakin' did it!!** 🎉



**What have you learned throughout this process?**

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