This book is dedicated to everyone

who has a story to tell – and isn’t afraid to tell it.

Sally

“If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it,"

- Toni Morrison

VISION TO BOOK - DEVELOPMENT BLUEPRINT

A TOOLKIT FOR Writing YOUR Best Fiction

By Book Coach and Author – Sally Lotz

Congratulations on taking the first step toward writing the RIGHT book for you and your reader. The idea behind this development kit is to provide you with the tools you need to clarify your book and story idea, as well as reduce the tangled mess that many new writers (and some seasoned professionals) often create. It's also meant to ensure that your book resonates with your reader, that the story is engaging and suitable for your genre. It's intended to get you on the right path before you start writing.

This toolkit comes from my years of writing and working with high-paying clients. I wanted to offer something for those on a budget but who have a fantastic book to write, but perhaps don't have the means to hire a book coach like me. Or you may be a person who prefers to work independently at your own pace. One thing I would like to request is that you refrain from sharing your toolkit. Instead, share the referral link and receive a reward (instructions are included in a separate email).

You can consider this the first step toward reaching your goal of authoring a book. And because you've already set that goal, you know where you're going. This, my friend, is the blueprint that will take you there. Using this VISION TO BOOK - DEVELOPMENT BLUEPRINT, you will find that when you are writing, you will have clarity, less stress, and, most importantly, you will complete your book faster.

There are 5 major steps we're going to go through together. Each one is important. These are the steps that will lay out the foundation for you to build your book. Please don't skip any steps, no matter how trivial they seem. When you start writing, you'll understand the importance of what I am having you go through. And in the end, it will all make sense. It's okay to skip a step if you don't know the answer yet, but you must go back and finish it.

I created this toolkit for you to use over and over again. I suggest you write your responses in a separate document. If possible, try writing your answers on paper with a pen. The reason behind this is that when writing with your left or right hand, letting the ink flow onto the paper releases endorphins, energy, and ideas. It allows your brain time to think. Your ideas are much clearer. You will have more, but that's okay. More is better.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU'RE WORKING THROUGH YOUR BLUEPRINT

As you brainstorm and go through each step, you may find that you have a shift from your original idea or the intended audience for this book. Your plot line may change. You may come up with a completely different idea. And that's okay. That is precisely why you're doing this developmental part BEFORE YOU START writing. So, you get it RIGHT before you WRITE. I have written several books and then decided halfway through that I needed to shift because:

- Either the book wasn't going the way I wanted
- My plan changed
- I was unable to move forward, and everything was a jumble
- The characters were dull and flat
- I lost interest because the story seemed to fizzle out

Those are a few of the things that we're trying to prevent from happening. It's better to work through all of that before you start writing. Don't be afraid or alarmed if you need to go back and change your responses on any of the topics that we're going to go through. Even if you have to start this whole process over again, it's better to do it now than in the middle of a book. Or worse, discovering the book you wrote is so wrong that you have a lot of editing to do, which can be so overwhelming that you give up.

Sally Lotz – Book Coach/Author /Mentor
Your Path to Writing
www.sallylotz.com

Table of Contents

STEP ONE - WHY

WHY ARE YOU WRITING THIS BOOK?

This is where your journey begins. Think back to the time when you got the idea of writing a book. Perhaps it's always been with you. Or it was a slow process over time. There is a reason WHY you feel compelled to write.

The reason I am asking is that this is the CRITICAL FIRST STEP. This is what you need to know when you feel like quitting. This is the drive, the hammer, the heart behind the ink.

There are no right or wrong answers. You must be truthful with yourself, though. Don't base your reasoning on anything other than YOUR own WHY. Because if you're not honest here, it will come out in your work. You'll start fumbling, your words won't flow, and you'll lack compassion and connection. And your readers will know. They'll feel it and quit reading.

Here are a few examples of WHY. *Remember – you have your own WHY.*

- I want to share my story to help others who are going through a similar experience.
- I have an idea that I'd like to share – I know it can change lives.
- I want to take a reader on a journey.

My why:

> *I want to encourage children to imagine, dream, and see the world through a different lens. I want to give hope to those who are hurting or confused and show them that they can make a difference.*

Now it's your turn. Take a moment to consider this. Write it out a few times. Ask yourself if you're being true to yourself or if you're saying what you think other people want to hear. Take as much time as you need. You may have the answer already. Or it may take you a few days. Again, there is no right or wrong; there is only your answer.

"The idea is to write it so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart."
Maya Angelou

Worksheet – WHY

Try it a few different ways. Be honest. Be bold. Be you.

Attempt #1:

Attempt #2:

Attempt #3:

Ask Yourself:
Are you writing what's true to you?
Or are you writing what you think others expect?

Notes or insights:

Remember: the clearer your WHY, the more powerful your story becomes—for you and for your reader. Let this page be a place you return to when the work gets hard.

STEP TWO – WHAT

WHAT STORY ARE YOU TELLING?

If you're unsure of WHAT story you're telling, you're not alone. Many writers have a story idea in their heads, even characters, but they have no clear idea of where they're going or what their story truly *is*. This is where confusion sets in, momentum stalls, and pages stay blank. It also translates over into a book that falls flat with your reader, if you get that far.

But, not to worry, there is a solution. Take your time here and discover your WHAT. Brainstorm, try different ideas, and don't be afraid to go in a different direction than you thought. Be open and be brave.

Discovering WHAT you're writing means understanding the heart and core of the story you want to tell. No matter who the book is for (more on that later) or why you're writing, it is essential to ask yourself:

- What is happening to your character?
- What are they struggling with?
- What's changing for them, and why does it matter?

This is the center of your story, and from this all things revolve. In books, movies, plays, and TV shows, the story revolves around a central idea – that what? When you know what your story is about (beyond plot points), every scene, chapter, and choice has purpose.

You probably already have a general idea of what your book is about. But in order to make the story flow as you write and to make it enjoyable for your reader, you should know the following:

- What does my main character want more than anything?
- What's standing in their way?
- How will they grow, change, or fall apart by the end?

Here are a few examples of what I am talking about. They are simplified, and your answers can be to–after you dig deep. These happen to be three of my favorite books. And a good exercise for you is to do the same with one of your favorite books.

***Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White**

- **What does my main character want more than anything?**
  Wilbur wants to live and be loved—he doesn't want to be slaughtered.
- **What's standing in their way?**
  He's a runt pig on a farm where animals are raised for food.
- **How will they grow, change, or fall apart by the end?**
  Wilbur learns about friendship, loss, and love through Charlotte's sacrifice, and finds a new kind of family and meaning in life.

***To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee**

- **What does my main character want more than anything?**
  Scout wants to understand the world around her and feel safe in it.
- **What's standing in their way?**
  She lives in a town deeply divided by racism, fear, and injustice.
- **How will they grow, change, or fall apart by the end?**
  Scout matures emotionally and morally, learning compassion and bravery through her father's actions and her own observations.

***The Giver* by Lois Lowry**

- **What does my main character want more than anything?**
  Jonas wants truth, freedom, and authentic human connection.
- **What's standing in their way?**
  He lives in a controlled, emotionless society where those things are hidden or forbidden.
- **How will they grow, change, or fall apart by the end?**
  Jonas becomes awakened to the complexity of life. He escapes, willing to sacrifice everything to give others the chance to feel.

Note that each story has a different 'what' that propels the character forward. Every character changes in some way. And it's your job as a writer to discover what your main character wants, what is standing in their way, and in what ways they change by the end. A person reading your book wants to connect in some way with the main character. They want

see themselves or someone they know, or they want to relate to them. They want to feel something when they read. Remember, you're taking them on a journey. If you understand your character, where they are going, and WHAT the heart of the story is, you will find your job easier.

Now it's your turn. Take time to brainstorm the central question your story explores. It might not come all at once—this is a discovery process. Jot down possible answers, even if they feel rough. You're not just writing a book. You're crafting a journey, and this is your starting point.

The clearer your "what," the stronger your story.

"First, find out what your hero wants, then just follow him!" - Ray Bradbury

Worksheet - WHAT

Use the questions and prompts below to get clear on your WHAT. This is also a brainstorming space. You never know what will happen. There's no pressure for perfection. Let yourself explore.

1. Who is your main character? *
(Name, age, basic identity—whatever comes to mind.)

Answer: _____
_____

2. WHAT does your character want more than anything?
(This could be something external—like getting into college—or internal—like feeling safe.)

Answer: _____
_____

3. WHAT is getting in their way?
(Think: fear, a person, a secret, a lie they believe, the world they live in.)

Answer: _____
_____

4. WHAT will they change over the course of the story?
(What emotional arc or growth will they experience?)

Answer: _____
_____

5. WHAT question is your story asking? This doesn't have to be too deep here. It can be something simple.

(Examples: Is it too late to change? Are we ever really alone?)
Answer: _____
_____

6. Bring these all together. Write 2–3 sentences that describe what your story is about—not just the plot, but the *heart*. This should read like an elevator pitch. Don't overthink this. Use what you wrote above and connect your answers.

(Example: *A grieving teen discovers a cassette tape that lets her talk to her future self. Through their conversations, she learns how to let go of guilt and find hope again.)*
Answer: _____
_____

**If you want a more in-depth guide to building characters.*
You can download my free Character-Building Guide *here:*
www.sallylotz.com/charactersheet

STEP THREE - WHO

Who Are You Writing For?

This is one of the most important questions you'll answer as a writer. Yet it's the one most often skipped or oversimplified. Many writers begin with the idea that their book is for everyone. Or they believe they already know their audience. And they discover, when they are deep into their draft, they find themselves lost, disconnected, or unsure of how to move forward. And, if you're looking for a literary agent, they will have the same feelings reading your work and not connect with your story. Which means, no book deal.

I would like to acknowledge that the first person you are writing for is *yourself*. You must care deeply about this story. You need to feel its heartbeat. Authoring a book is too hard and too personal not to. Write the story you wish existed, the one you needed when you were younger, or the one you can't stop thinking about. Don't write what you THINK you should write, and what other people expect from you. Write for you. Once you're grounded here, it's time to think about your reader. And I am not talking about your best friend, your parents, grandparents, aunts, or uncles. I am talking about the real readers who will be looking for a book like yours.

Because after you, someone else is going to hold this book in their hands. And your story—if it's to make the impact you want, it has to *connect* with them.

Readers bring expectations to every book they pick up. It's part of the silent agreement between writer and reader. A mystery promises a puzzle and suspense. A romance promises emotional tension and a satisfying payoff. A middle-grade novel promises heart, humor, and a hopeful ending. When a book doesn't meet those expectations, readers notice. That's often the difference between someone loving your story and walking away confused, disappointed, or frustrated.

Understanding your audience, including their age and emotional range, as well as the themes they gravitate toward, helps you meet those expectations without sacrificing your

voice. If you're writing for children or teens, that understanding is even more vital. There's a big difference between writing for an 8-year-old and a 14-year-old. The characters, language, pacing, and themes must all align with your reader's world and what they're capable of processing and enjoying.

Think of a bookstore or library. Books are sorted not just by genre, but by *the reader*. Picture books, early readers, middle grade, and young adult. Thrillers, literary fiction, fantasy. These categories help readers find stories that they want to read, can read, and enjoy. And some categories merge together, such as sci-fi romance and historical mysteries. But again, those authors knew their readers and WHO they were writing for.

Before you start writing, take some time and answer the questions below. It may mean a visit to your bookshelf, the library, or a bookstore. This is going to be scary, I know it. But it's worth it. If you can't do this step, you will have a tough time connecting with a reader. And that's the goal: having someone read your book and embark on a journey. Be specific in your answers.

You might begin by writing to a version of yourself—a younger you, a braver you, a lost or curious or dreaming you. But from there, you'll want to create a clear picture of the reader who's waiting for your story. Get specific. Know their age, their concerns, and the kinds of books they've loved in the past. Imagine writing to *one person*, not the whole world.

If you need help on this, check your own bookshelf. What books do you love? Also, once you figure out WHO you're writing for, go and find some of those books, and read, read, read.

When you discover WHO you're writing for, you won't just be writing a book. You'll be building a bridge between your imagination and someone else's heart. And that's the kind of story readers remember.

"The most powerful words in storytelling are: me too." — Brené Brown

WORKSHEET – WHO

Who is this story truly for?

Think about the person behind the page. What stage of life are they in? What questions or struggles might they have that your story touches?

What kind of books do they love?

What genres, styles, voices, or themes speak to them? What books would they have already read or have on their bookshelf?

What emotions are they seeking when they turn the page?

Are they looking to feel seen? To escape? To be challenged, comforted, or thrilled?

What do they need from your characters, your plot, your voice?

Do they want courage, clarity, comfort, or something else? What does your story offer them that they may not even know what they're looking for? Do they want an adventure that makes them laugh? A romance that makes them cry?

STEP FOUR – HOW

HOW WILL YOU TELL YOUR STORY?

You've figured out *what* you're writing, *why* it matters to you, and *who* it's for. Now comes another essential step—one that too many writers skip until they're 30,000 words in and facing a total rewrite. Which I can say, I have done a few times. You can learn from my mistakes.

You need to know **how** you will tell your story. This is more than sentence style or voice. It's about perspective, the lens, the tempo. This is the structure behind your story, the start of the framework we've been building. Sometimes you may change your mind halfway through—but the clearer you are now, the less likely you are to lose momentum later.

The first thing I like to figure out is the point of view of the story. That is who is telling the story. For this, you will also need to know what your reader expects (see step two). It also has to fit your story. Point of view, also referred to as POV, creates a distinct atmosphere.

First Person ("I") – intimate, personal, often used in YA and middle grade
Third Person Limited ("she/he/they") – lets the reader in close, but still offers flexibility
Third Person Omniscient – zooms out, more classic/literary
Second Person ("you") – experimental, can feel immersive or alienating

Once you know who's telling the story, then you can consider how the story is being told. Is your narrator part of the story or reflecting from a future place? Are they reliable—or do they twist the truth? Are they trying to confess something, convince the reader, or simply telling what happened? Think about the tone of voice they carry. A sharp, witty narrator will invite a very different connection than a snarky one.

Then there's time. Are you writing in the present tense (quick, close, and in the moment) or past tense, which allows for reflection and distance? There's no rule here. Each tense carries its own unique energy, and each creates a distinct emotional current within your story. The more aware you are of your choice, the more control you'll have over how your

reader experiences the journey. I like to write a few paragraphs in the present tense and then rewrite them in the past tense if I'm unsure of the narrative voice.

Example of present tense told in first person point of view:

> Sometime after midnight, I venture a peek outside. The city is silent, except for the howling of the wind between the buildings. Above me, something knocks and hammers in the storm, a loose shingle, or the metal bars on the fire escape.

Example of past tense told in first person point of view:

> Sometime after midnight, I ventured a peek outside. The city was silent, except for the howling of the wind between the buildings. Above me, something knocked and hammered in the storm. It could have been a loose shingle or the metal bars on the fire escape.

Example of present tense told in first person point of view:

> Sometime after midnight, she ventured a peek outside into the silence of the city. The only sound is the howling of the wind between the buildings and the knocking of the metal bars on the fire escape.

Voice and tone can change and evolve as you write, just like your character, but it helps to begin with a vision. Will your language be lush and lyrical or sharp and sparse? Are you trying to sound like a child? A poet? A weary adult who's seen too much? Voice isn't just about the words; it's about attitude, rhythm, and presence on the page. It's the part of you your readers will feel even when they can't name it.

I would suggest choosing something that comes naturally to you, especially if you're starting out. A forced voice shows through in the writing, and a reader will quickly figure you out and quit reading.

Finally, consider how your story unfolds. Will it follow a traditional arc from beginning to end? Will it jump through time or be told in fragments? Is it one person's story—or many? Some stories come out best as linear journeys. Others work better as a puzzle to be pieced together. This is something essential to determine before you start writing. Additionally, when writing for children, consider their age and what they can comprehend.

It's helpful to do some sample writing here. Try a few things out, get the feel for the page, and how your words sound. Sometimes when you're writing, the words will take on a natural flow. I say, don't fight it.

Picture the kind of experience you want your reader to have. Think about how close you want them to feel to your characters. Think about what you want them to *feel* when they read. And choose the *how* that gets you there. That's the fun part of telling a story. You get to choose.

"Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere." - Anne Lamott

WORKSHEET – HOW

Use this worksheet to play around with how you will tell your story. Try a few different approaches, discover what works best for you and your characters, and adjust accordingly. Take a look at your favorite book and use it as a helpful guide. It's your favorite book for a reason.

1) **Point of View**

- What point of view are you considering? (First person, third person, second person?)
- Why does this point of view feel like the right fit for this story?
- How close or distant do you want the reader to feel from the main character(s)?

Your thoughts:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2) **Narrator's Role and Presence**

- Who is telling the story—and what's their tone or attitude?
- Is your narrator a character in the story or outside of it?
- Are they trustworthy? Unreliable? Neutral?

Your thoughts:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3) **Tense and Time**

- When does the story take place?
- Are you using present tense or past tense—and why?
- Will your story unfold in real time, or reflect back on events?

- Are there time jumps, flashbacks, or a linear timeline?

Your thoughts:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4) Voice and Language

- How does your narrator *sound*? What is the tone of your writing?
- What kind of rhythm, style, or emotion do you want in your writing?
- What kind of voice does your narrator have? Are they a tell-it-like-it-is person? Humor-filled? Voice is not how they literally sound, but how the story is being told.
- Does their voice/tone match the emotional heart of your story?

Your thoughts:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5) Structure and Shape

- How will the story be organized or revealed?
- Will the story follow a traditional arc or a more fragmented style?
- Will it be one character's journey or multiple perspectives?
- Are you open to playing with form (diary entries, alternating POVs, etc.)?

Your thoughts:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Final Reflection:

What kind of *experience* do you want your reader to have?

What kind of experience do you want your character to have?

Write your answer here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

STEP 5 - WHERE

WHERE WILL YOU PUBLISH?

I found out that this is the biggest fear of new writers. Since they have no clue about the publishing world and what to do with a finished book, they don't start. Or they pick the wrong path and end up being taken advantage of financially, their book goes unnoticed, or they never publish it at all.

I am here to help you through this process. I am here to offer you options and opportunities that you may not have considered or been aware of.

Once you have completed steps one through four, you should have a good idea about your book. You should be able to walk into a library or bookstore and go directly to the shelf where your book would be located. This is an exercise you should do, because it will tell you several things: if you're on the right track, and how these books were published.

If you haven't done this step, do it now. Before you move forward. You can also do this online, but the bookshelves are where you can actually see books similar to yours.

Once you've done your homework, depending on what you're writing, you may have discovered that at the bookstore or library, most books are published through a major publishing house. This means the writer had acquired an agent. However, that is not the route everyone wants to take.

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

If you want to pursue traditional publishing, your work must be polished. You must stand out in some way. You need to have a clear understanding of your audience and the subject matter of your book. Traditional publishing can take years sometimes. It's a competitive market and not for someone who cannot

handle rejection or is shy about sharing their work. For some writers, this is the best option. While you won't have any out-of-pocket costs, you most likely will need a literary agent (which costs you nothing).

The pro here is that you will receive distribution and marketing, as well as editing and design services. None of that comes out of your pocket. You will often get an advance on royalties. Or not, it all depends on your publisher and contract. In the world of children's publishing, traditional is almost always the way to go. Again, this depends upon your book and your desired path.

HYBRID PUBLISHING

With this type of publishing, you will still need to find a publisher who creates the type of book you are writing. For example, they need to work on memoirs if you're writing a memoir, not children's books. The time is often fast, however. You **pay or share costs** to publish your book with a company that offers professional services similar to a traditional publisher.

The con here is that your out-of-pocket expenses can vary, and you will need to vet the publisher carefully before signing any contracts.
The pro is that you have more say in content and design. Also, the process is much faster.

VANITY PRESS (not something I recommend)

You pay a company to publish your book, often with little to no quality control or editorial standards.

The cons are that it's often expensive, exploitative, has limited distribution, and has a poor industry reputation.

PARTNER PUBLISHING / AUTHOR SERVICES COMPANIES

This type of publisher is very similar to a hybrid; however, these companies provide services such as coaching, editing, design, and/or marketing, allowing you to choose what you need.

The pro is that these types of publishers are cost-effective and professional. You also have a quicker turnaround time.

The con is that you, as a buyer, need to do your due diligence, research, and ask questions before you hire any services.

SELF-PUBLISHING

You do it all yourself. You edit, create your own artwork, and format your book or e-book. You will then use a service to print and distribute, such as Ingram Spark or Amazon Direct Publishing.

The pro here is that you'll have 100% creative control, fast turnaround, and higher royalties.

The con is that it requires you to incur upfront costs. Everything is on you.

Self-publishing, also known as indie publishing, has gained significant attention lately. But, as with all publishing options, you should do your homework and research. If you're not able to edit your work, then you'll have to hire someone. Your book cover needs to look professional, because yes, people do judge a book by its cover.

Knowing how to publish also depends on your audience and how you intend to reach them. If you're going to indie-publish, you should know your audience and what they want to read, from what they expect from the book, through the layout to the cover design.

There are pros and cons to all types of publishing, but this is something you need to discover before you write, for several reasons.

I suggest you take a look at the books that are similar to what you want to write, again. Look at the covers, how they were published. Perhaps all you need for your book is something that can be read on an e-reader. Or maybe you see your book being sold at your speaking events. Perhaps you see it on a bookstore shelf.

Do a little research. Take notes. The publisher's names are at the front of the books. Go to the author's websites. See what they did.

Caution – when you start researching the publishing industry, you're going to get emails, calls, and ads on your social media targeting you. You must be wary here. Publishers do not cold call and ask to represent you ever. You should talk to three or four hybrid presses, if that's the way you choose to go. Want to do it all yourself? Ensure you obtain references and review their work before signing or paying anyone. It's never too soon to prepare for your publishing.

Worksheet – WHERE

Before you begin this worksheet, make sure you have the following figured out:

- Do you know the genre of your book?
- Can you name at least three comparable titles?
- Do you know who your reader is and what they're looking for?
- Can you confidently walk into a bookstore and point to where your book belongs?

If not, go back and do any steps you missed, redo a step, and take the time to get the answers. Otherwise, let's move on to understanding your publishing options.

YOUR PUBLISHING GOALS

What matters most to you in the publishing process? (Rank these 1–6, with 1 being most important)

___ Creative control

___ Distribution reach

___ Speed to market

___ Budget friendliness

___ Professional editing and design

___ Ownership of rights

___Where my readership can find my books

RESEARCH COMPARABLE BOOKS

Select 3–5 books that are similar to yours. They should be new (within the last 3 years). Better yet, enlist some help. Bring along some trusted friends, describe your book, using what you've learned so far, and set them loose in the bookstore or library. Let them search online for comparison titles. See what they come back with. This is also market research to help you determine if you're on the right track.

Book 1) Title: _____

Author_____

Publisher and type of publisher (can be found inside by copyright or on the back): _____

_____

Notes: Cover, Layout, Size of Book, etc. _____

_____

_____

Book 2) Title: _____

Author_____

Publisher and type of publisher (can be found inside by copyright or on the back): _____

_____

Notes: Cover, Layout, Size of Book, etc. _____

_____

_____

Book 3) Title: _____

Author_____

Publisher and type of publisher (can be found inside by copyright or on the back): _____

_____

Notes: Cover, Layout, Size of Book, etc. _____

_____

_____

Book 4) Title: _____

Author_____

Publisher and type of publisher (can be found inside by copyright or on the back): _____

_____

Notes: Cover, Layout, Size of Book, etc. _____

_____

_____

Book 5) Title: _____

Author_____

Publisher and type of publisher (can be found inside by copyright or on the back): _____

_____

Notes: Cover, Layout, Size of Book, etc. _____

_____

_____

WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?
Based on your research and goals, which publishing paths feel aligned with your vision?

☐ Traditional Publishing
☐ Hybrid Publishing
☐ Partner / Author Services
☐ Self-Publishing
☐ I'm still unsure

If unsure, what questions do you need to answer before making a decision? _____

_____

_____

_____

If you're still unsure, you may have the wrong comparison titles, or you may be telling your book the wrong way. Review your answers and see if anything has changed since you began this process. I love writing groups, but they can also be confusing. If you're going to ask for advice, I would ask professionals (like me) in the industry, as well as writers. Get well-rounded feedback from both sides so you can make an informed decision.

Publishing is not the end. It's part of your plan.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

HOW DO I DISCOVER MY WRITING STYLE OR VOICE?

That's a good question. Everyone is different. I suggest several methods.

- Write as you talk. Speak out loud how you answer the question, and then write it, just as an experiment.
- Look at your favorite authors. Try writing out a paragraph by hand. This isn't meant for you to plagiarize; it's meant for you to get the feel of the words.
- Don't force the writing to sound like something you're not. If you don't rhyme when you talk or use long, flowy words, that's probably not how you should write.
- Trial and error. Try writing a chapter. I always recommend writing by hand. Write without editing, write without second-guessing. Just see what happens.

WHAT'S YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

Writing is a lonely business. You have to seclude yourself and write. It's also full of rejection and self-doubt. A suggestion is to find a support system in the writing world to connect with. Almost every type of writing has a group. For example, children's writing has SCBWI (Society of Children's Writers and Illustrators). There are groups for mystery and horror writers, as well as literature authors. There are even local groups that get together and write. You can check online to find a group that meets in person or virtually. You're going to need your people.

IS IT OKAY TO USE AI TO WRITE MY BOOK?

I will say, this is a hard no. AI is not a substitute for you, your uniqueness, your emotions, and your experiences. AI can mimic, but it lacks genuine emotion and personality. And honestly, your words have power. When you write, it can be cathartic and healing for you. Also, the more you write, the more CREATIVE you become. Your words have the power to take another person on a journey.

AI does have its place. It's great for brainstorming ideas. I use it for market research. I ask questions. However, it's not always right. It should be one of your tools, not your only tool. With tools like Grammarly, I only use the spelling and grammar tool. Why? Because I am dyslexic.

ARE YOU OPEN TO FEEDBACK AND GROWTH?

Part of the journey of being a writer is receiving feedback (from professionals or other writers) and growing in your skill set. This toolkit is meant to help you grow as a writer by teaching you how to develop your idea before you start. However, you will need to receive feedback on your writing. Once you're in a group, you can get that feedback. It's essential to receive and accept honest criticism on your work, otherwise, you may not reach your full potential or connect with your audience. If you are writing for yourself and no one else will read your work, then you don't need that feedback.

I encourage you to find someone like me, a critique group, or a writing partner to help you as a writer.

HERE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE BOOKS ON WRITING AND CREATING:

Save the Cat Writes a Novel, by Jessica Brody
On Writing: A Memoir of Craft, by Stephen King
The Artist's Way, by Julia Cameron
Story Genius: How to Use Brain Science to Go Beyond Outlining and Write a Riveting Novel, By Lisa Cron
Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, by Anne Lamott
90 Day Journal for Writers, By Sally Lotz (only on Amazon)

That's it! You've completed the Developmental Toolkit.

I hope you found this guide helpful—because I know it will be once you take the time to really work through it. You now have clarity around your idea, your audience, your goals, and even your publishing path. That's a powerful place to be as a writer.

Now that you've done the deep thinking and prep work, you're ready to start framing out your novel.

Hint… that's what the next download is all about:
Creating Your Framework – Laying Out Your Novel.

Let's keep going. Your book is waiting.

Want more help?

Consider my 30-Day Developmental Toolkit Program where we dig deep into your writing style, your fears, and you get feedback from a writing pro. Help is just a click away by visiting my website.