

# Simon Whaley – Talks About Writing Non-Fiction Books

## Why should writers consider writing a non-fiction book?

- Better chances of publication statistically – in UK for every novel published there are five non-fiction books published.
- If you have a track record of having articles published on a specific subject, a publisher is more likely to consider you as an expert and an authority to write a book on the subject.
- You can re-use information and facts gained during research for those magazine articles in your book.
- You can write a proposal and sell the idea first, then write the book when you have been commissioned.

## What success have you had with your non-fiction books?

- My first book, *100 Ways For A Dog To Train Its Human* spent four weeks on the UK non-fiction bestseller lists.
- It has sold over 210,000 copies.
- It has three foreign editions.
- The follow up, *100 Muddy Paws For Thought* has sold over 50,000 copies.
- Even books on 'boring' subjects can be popular. *Fundraising for a Community Project* is my most borrowed book in the libraries, and the one with the most feedback on Amazon. And, it's the one I've done the most radio interviews for.

## What's the best way to get a non-fiction book published?

- Twist your idea to fit a publisher's existing series. The publisher of *100 Ways For A Dog To Train Its Human*, had already published *100 Ways For A Cat To Train Its Human*.
- *Best Walks in the Welsh Borders* follows the same format as the publisher's *Best Walks in North Wales* and *Best Walks in South Wales* books.

- Target a series and you don't need to re-invent the wheel. From other books in the series you can find out how many words you need to write, and whether you need to include pictures, drawings or maps.

## How long do non-fiction books need to be?

- That depends! Some of my books have been 5,000 words, others 20,000, whilst some have been 50,000.
- Novels have to be about 80,000 words and some, like family sagas can be up to 250,000 words. It is possible to get a 5,000 word non-fiction book published.

## Do you need an agent to get a non-fiction book published?

- No. I've had nine non-fiction books published so far without an agent.
- The publisher you sign with will try to sell foreign rights.
- Join an organisation like the Society of Authors so you can use their free contract vetting service.

## Are there any other benefits of writing non-fiction books?

- Once you've had a book published, it opens up more opportunities.
- Book and magazine publishers take you more seriously.
- Sometimes publishers will commission more books!
- You benefit from Public Lending Right, if your books are bought by the libraries.
- I get invited to groups to talk about my books – and am then able to sell copies to the audience afterwards.
- I've done many radio interviews to publicise my books, which is always an interesting experience.