

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.