



Scoops4Scribes from Barbra Rodriguez

Writing tips, publishing industry insights, and more for developing authors

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The What and Why of Book Coaching



Authors often seek an editor and a proofreader to quality test a completed manuscript for grammatical errors, character names that were inadvertently changed between chapters, and other mechanical and style challenges. Doing only that is like building a car from scratch and just having the prototype evaluated for functioning headlights, brakes, and a running engine. Buyers won't speak highly of one that doesn't offer a smooth ride, easy access to the glove box, and other benefits that enhance the driving experience.

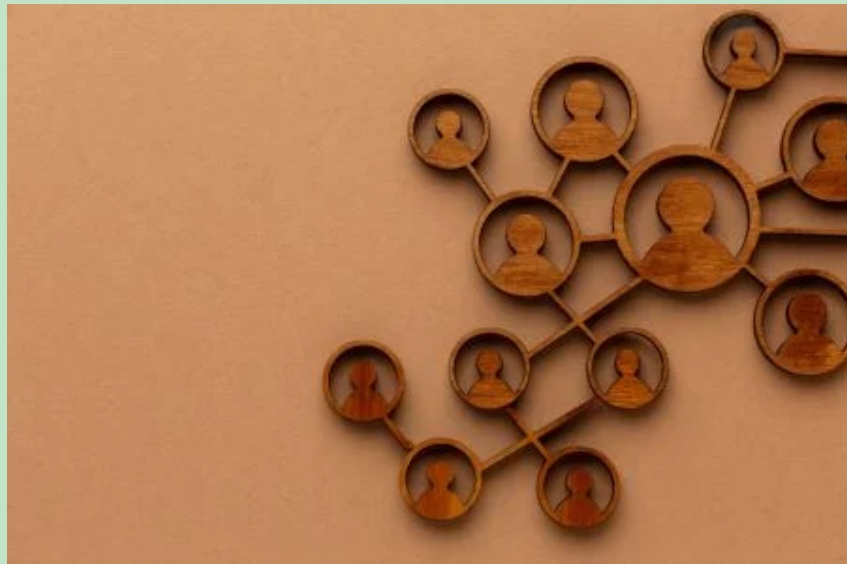
A book coach can help an author level up their work in many ways, such as in selecting the best book focus, refining the story structure and takeaway point, or enhancing writing skills. The focus in this ongoing, collaborative relationship depends on a client's experience and book-related goals, with the emphasis being similar to working with a life coach: rather than tell a writer what to do, a well-trained coach guides them to identify the conceptual and writing steps they could take, informed by the coach's knowledge of professional publishing expectations and more.

Learn more about input on readers' expectations and seven other benefits of a book coach, organized by whether a manuscript is still being envisioned, the basic structure, narrative drive and such are solid, or your work is ready to be self-published or pitched to literary agents (both of which coaches like me provide guidance on).

Book Coaching Benefits at Different Writing Stages

Writing Tips & Treats

Writing insights are just a click away, as are behind-the-scene editing tips, ways to dig deeper into life experiences, and more. In each issue of Scoops4Scribes, you'll benefit from the bounty bookmarked for you.



Does Building a Fan Base Really Matter to Get a Traditional Publishing Deal?

It's not uncommon for novice authors to worry about whether they have the online following to gain interest from agents and traditional publishers. The ideal situation is to have an audience of tens of thousands or more, but there are wrinkles to this self-promotional expectation.

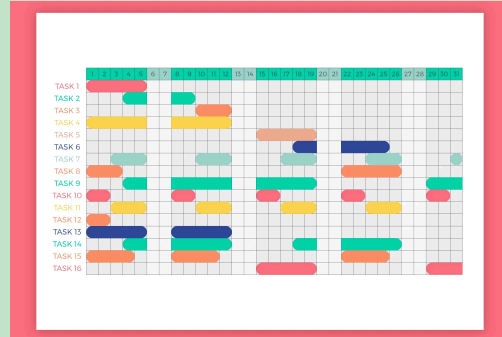
For instance, though nonfiction authors are looked at more closely for audience numbers, academics and journalists can be cut some slack, likely because their expertise and/or writing credentials are anticipated to help draw in readers.

Meanwhile, a recent survey suggests professional networking may in fact matter more for novelists than the count of social media followers. Publishing guru Jane Friedman analyzed book deals reported on *Publishers Marketplace* that involved 131 debut fiction authors in the U.S. over five months in mid-2024. As covered in detail in her fee-based [Hot Sheet](#) newsletter, rather than being what she calls "online superstars," many respondents (1/3) had strong engagement in the literary or university community that might have helped them garner attention, or had connections with journalism and media experts (about 17%). Other novelists were good networkers in entertainment fields or with publishing industry types directly (roughly 12% and 9% of the debut novelists fit these two categories, respectively).

You may wonder if this trend is fiction specific, as novelists more often gain reader interest from the appeal of their writings. While her Aug. 2024 survey is much smaller, social media savvy Kristin Hugo, a nonfiction writer, found that online outreach success wasn't key for for most of the 16 responding authors who had landed traditional book deals in various genres. Just two respondents noted that their social media presence mattered, with one writing that it was only partially significant. Those two were among 12 respondents that were not fiction focused, with about half of those focused on informational books related to science and/or history. Overall, half of the respondents who noted their online engagement wasn't considered a major deal were in a nonfiction category. See full details in Hugo's [Substack recap](#).



Consider dropping some of the hats writers wear by co-authoring a book, using these eight basic tips about merging writings, addressing point of view matters, and more.



Learn to develop a step-by-step schedule for the phases of digitally publishing an indie book (though developmental, line, and copy editing aren't covered).

Avoiding Self-Sabotage



A multi-book novelist briefly shares ideas for working with doubt and hubris that can derail your writing life.

2025 Writing Contests



Enjoy a database of 250+ contests for poets, nonfiction and other writers; it's searchable by genre, deadline month, fee, and keywords.





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