

A photograph of a wooden desk with a clipboard and a blank sheet of paper. The clipboard is made of brown cardboard and has a silver metal clip attached to the top right corner. A white sheet of paper is placed on the clipboard. The background is a wooden surface with a visible grain.

WRITING YOUR FIRST DRAFT: Getting Started

Jenna Benton, First Draft Coach

Questions to ask before you begin

by First Draft Writing Coach, Jenna Benton



The decision to write a book usually comes after spending too much time being afraid and procrastinating.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself in the beginning.

Questions to ask before you begin — First Draft

- **Why am I writing this book?** It helps to identify your "why". When things get tough, when your schedule overwhelms you, when you start to feel afraid, remembering why you are writing will help you power through.
- **What kind of support would help me?** Are you the type of person who works better with accountability? Do you thrive when there is a reward involved? Whether it's inviting someone into your process or buying yourself little goal rewards along the way, figuring out what helps you feel motivated and encouraged is really helpful.
- **What is my end game?** It's helpful to know what the "takeaway value" of your book is. In other words, what do you want your readers to know when they turn the last page and close your book? Do you want them to see life differently? Do you want them to learn something new? Knowing what your goal is will help you start out on the right foot and fight until the end.
- **Who is my reader?** I know many writers want to just write what they are passionate about, and that is fine if you are just writing something only you will read. However, if you're hoping to share your book, it may be helpful to get to know your ideal reader. Spend some time researching and asking questions, and you'll be leagues ahead of where you would have been otherwise.
- **Am I really committed?** One way I knew I was committed was I finally decided to commit at least 15 minutes per day just writing. That meant fingers on the keys, phone on silent, intently and furiously writing. To do that, I had to get up at 5:00 am before my family woke up. If you can't commit to even 15 minutes a day, are you really committed?

If you're ready to begin, please [click to enroll in our FIRST DRAFT online course for writers](#). It's time to finish that first draft!

How to decide what to write — First Draft

by First Draft Writing Coach, Jenna Benton



You've finally settled in to write. You have your favorite beverage, your favorite chair, your favorite playlist at the ready. You open up a blank document and... you're stuck.

What should you write about? Does it really matter? Does practice really make perfect? Here are some things to keep in mind when you know you're ready to write, but you can't decide where to start.

How to decide what to write — First Draft

- **Look around.** Are you already involved in any groups or local organizations? Do you actively comment or participate in any Facebook groups? What are you and your friends talking about? What types of Instagram or Twitter accounts do you follow religiously? Taking a look at the things you are already interested in may give you some clues about what to write about. Ask yourself how to serve the communities you are already participating in.
- **Pick a passion.** Is there a subject that draws you repeatedly into conversation with others? What fascinates you? What makes your blood boil? Chances are, if you are going to write a book about a particular subject, it will need to keep your attention until you're finished. Is there something in your life that keeps you talking? Write about that.
- **Fill the gaps.** Think about the last time you looked for a solution to something and came up short. Take a peek at your last several internet searches. Were they successful? Have you ever found yourself piecing bits of advice together? Think about what you wish existed, and then write that.
- **Embrace your story.** The truth is, you have probably learned some hard lessons in life. You are qualified to talk about what you've learned. Do you have something to say about love, life, or death? Can you help someone see something from a new point of view because you have walked a rough road? Be brave enough to talk about your tough moments, and you might just be surprised at how your readers connect.
- **Be the expert.** Everyone is good at something. What are you good at? Do you like to fix things? Redesign rooms? Grow things? Do you find yourself helping people navigate systems? Are you good at encouraging others? Doodling? Networking? Teaching? Grocery shopping on a budget? Try and think outside the box. Chances are, if anyone has come to you for help with something, you can probably write about it.