

An Indie-Author's Guide to Organizing a Book for Publication

Whether you're writing a novel or a nonfiction book, you'll eventually need to organize the materials and format the interior for publication. A professional book designer can do this for you, but as the publisher, you should decide what sections you want to include. Some sections aren't as important in today's publishing world as they were even a decade ago, but for legal, administrative, and promotional purposes, many are still necessary, if not essential. With the advent of ebooks and Amazon's "Look Inside" option being so important for both print and digital books, the order in which this material appears — and what is included — is becoming increasingly more fluid.

Look Inside can be a valuable marketing tool, so it's not always optimal to include blank pages and half-titles up front. Publishers are taking creative license in the way the book is structured, sometimes even putting the Table of Contents (TOC) in the back of the book or condensing material that would once have been laid out over several pages into one or two pages.

We all know that there's a front cover and a back cover and that the chapters go in between. Most people know the TOC typically goes in the front after the copyright page, and there's a title page, but in what order? Does it matter?

In a word, "yes" it does matter — to some extent. You want your book to be easy for the reader to follow and structured so that indexers can find the information they need to catalogue the book, so while some things are negotiable, others aren't.

There are three main sections of book composition:

- Front Matter
- Body
- Back Matter

There are many opinions about what should be included with the front and back matter and in what order they should appear, and while none are wrong, some make more sense than others.

The actual list is quite a bit longer than what I'm discussing, but many of the sections are no longer used. Even with those still in use, not all will be in every book. My best advice is to find several books published by traditional publishers and academic presses (for nonfiction) and decide which are most important to your project.

Front matter:

Front matter pages are often numbered with lower case Roman numerals, although I've seen them with no numbers. These pages use the same fonts and margins (except for the title page, which usually mimics the front cover design) as the book body, but there's always room for creativity. If you grab a handful of books, you'll discover many use small decorations, images from the cover, or even complicated illustrations in the front matter.

Half-title: This is the first page you see when you open the book. It includes the book title set in caps and nothing else: no sub-title, no author name. The other side of this page (called the verso) is blank. The half-title dates back to a time when books weren't covered until purchased. Book sellers needed something to protect the book and identify it. These days, publishers leave the half-title page blank or include the author's signature, short reviews, or the dedication. If you choose to go with a half-title, don't waste an entire verso. To save pages, start the next section on the left instead of the right.

Ad card: On this page, publishers list other books written by the same author. If you don't have other books, skip this section, or use it for something else. I've seen author photos and bios on this page. Ami McKay's *The Witches of New York* has an illustration — a larger version of the crow from the front cover — on this page.

Title page: This page is usually on the right (the recto) and includes the book's full title and author's name. An actual copy of the front cover text without the graphics is often used. It's also quite common to see the publisher's name and imprint here. More elaborate layouts incorporate both the left and right (verso and recto) pages. Marshall Lee's *Bookmaking* (3rd edition) does this.

It's also acceptable to include some elements listed for the copyright page on the title page.

Copyright page: This is an essential section, often on the back (verso) of the title page. The copyright page should include:

- copyright notice
- ISBN
- Library of Congress Catalogue number and information
- printer's key (the numbers 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, you see). This indicates which printing of the book it is. If you see the 1, it's the first printing of that edition. If there is no 1, but there is a 2, it's the second printing of that edition, and so on
- publisher's name and address
- year the book was published
- NAFTA information (country or countries the book was printed and bound in)
- credits to designers, photographers, illustrators
- copyright notices for images and other materials
- disclaimers
- legal notices

Dedication page: Assuming you didn't put it up front in place of the half-title, this page would include the names of anyone you wish to dedicate your book to or thank. Some dedication pages can be quite humorous. For example, in the nonfiction book, *An Introduction To Algebraic Topology*, author Joseph J. Rotman wrote: "To my wife Marginet and my children Ellen Rose and Adam Daniel without whom this book would have been completed two years earlier." Dedications to pets are common.

Epigraph: An epigraph is a quote or a line from a poem indicative of the book's theme. The epigraph is sometimes used as a preface. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, the epigraph reads: " "Lawyers, I suppose, were children once." — Charles Lamb" The epigraph Mark Twain included in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* reads:

"NOTICE

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

Per G.G., Chief of Ordnance."

In *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo, you'll find: "Behind every great fortune there is a crime. — Balzac"

Table of contents or TOC: The TOC is simply a list of chapter numbers and headings, along with page numbers. Traditionally, each chapter started on the right-hand page, even if that meant leaving the left page blank. In an effort to reduce printing costs, this is not always observed in today's publishing world. In modern publishing, you'll even find chapters begin part way down a page.

Foreword: The foreword is an introduction written by another person. If this person is well known or an authority on the book's subject matter, it can be a useful marketing tool, so you'll want the foreword on the front cover. On nonfiction book covers, I usually put it under the author's name at the bottom, but I have also included it at the top as a tagline.

Preface: Unlike the foreword, the preface is written by the author. The preface usually answers the question, "Why did I write this book?" You can find a good article on how to write a preface at [Scribendi](#).

Acknowledgment: This section is what Lee Marshall describes as the place where authors gain "goodwill or repay obligations." It can also be a dedication, or to note credits, or to acknowledge a co-author. In *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, author Lynn Truss mentions many people in her acknowledgment, including "Nigel Hall (who) told me the panda joke," and "Adam Beeson (who) told me where to find the dash on my keyboard."

Prologue: The prologue is placed immediately before the first chapter. It's the introductory setting of the book, providing details about the place and time and setting of the story. Instructions on how to write a prologue with examples can be found at [Wikihow](#).

Back Matter:

In the hardcover version of JK Rowling's *Fantastic Beasts*, the back matter includes an About the Author page, followed by About the Book Design, which shares the identities of the book's designers; it also explains the source of inspiration for illustrations and even mentions they were digitalized using Adobe Illustrator. As with all of Rowling's books, the fonts used in the body text are noted (Crimson Text and Sheridan Goth SG if you're wondering. This is a move away from the *Harry Potter* series, which was typeset in Adobe Garamond). My reason for mentioning Rowling's books is that they are a great example of the fluidity in book formatting.

The back matter can be as important as the front matter, particularly for nonfiction books. The following list of sections that can be included in the back matter is by no means exhaustive:

Afterword: This includes a brief explanation of how the author developed the idea for the book. For nonfiction, it can consist of updates on people mentioned in the book.

Appendix: The appendix is a place for materials that don't seem to fit anywhere else: maps, tables, forms, lists.

Notes: These are created while you write the book. They can explain the relationship between a character in the book and a historical figure or perhaps mention something about fashions at the time or travel methods. Anything that the author finds noteworthy and the reader might find interesting can go here.

Bibliography: The bibliography is a detailed description of references cited in the book. These are also noted in the body text. When designing and typesetting this page, each listing should follow a standard format (you might remember doing this in school). Common styles include:

- [APA Citation Style](#)
- [Chicago Style](#)
- [MLA Style](#)

Glossary: Also known as a vocabulary or clavis, the glossary is a list — or a dictionary, if you will — of significant, unique or unusual words or phrases found in the book. Glossaries are usually reserved for nonfiction, except fantasy and science fiction. Note: There's no need to use caps at the beginning of the words in the glossary unless they're proper nouns.

Index: An index is a list of items, such as people, events and places relevant to the book that might be of interest to the reader. These are formatted with alphabetized headings and reference where they are located in the book (page, paragraph number, section). Indexing can be a momentous task, and for that reason, publishers often have professional indexers. If you want to try to do this yourself, there are detailed [instructions here](#).

Colophon: Many years ago, the colophon contained the publisher's information, but that is now almost always included in the front matter. Today's colophon can include information about the

printer, or details of the book's production, such as the fonts used, similar to the entry I described from JK Rowlings.