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**SECRETS TO  
A BESTSELLER**

IZZARD INK PUBLISHING COMPANY  
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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER: 2016908934

*Designed by Alissa Rose Theodor*  
*Illustrations by Kevin Nordstrom*  
*Cover Design by Andrea Ho*  
*Cover Illustration Image Copyright David van der Veen / Offset.com*

First Edition August 1, 2017

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Softback ISBN: 978-1-63072-902-8  
Hardback ISBN: 978-1-63072-903-5  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-63072-904-2

## PRAISE FOR TIM McCONNENEY AND IZZARD INK PUBLISHING

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*I have worked with the world's leading multinational companies for my books, in addition to managing my many speaking engagements. Izzard Ink's consultation services were some of the best. I am especially grateful for the guidance with my website and social media marketing campaigns. Izzard Ink's focus is on building authors and people. I would recommend Izzard Ink to any published or non-published author, regardless of where they are in the process.*

—Dan Clark, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Art of Significance*, National Speaker Association Hall of Fame

*My husband, W. Cleon Skousen, wrote several books, including *The Naked Communist* and *The Naked Capitalist*. We were so happy when each of those became bestsellers. I was told that, at last count, those two books had sold more than two million copies combined. I've had Izzard Ink refresh five of Cleon's books and all of them turned out crisp and new and attractive.*

—Jewel P. Skousen, editor and spouse of *USA Today* and *New York Times* bestselling author  
W. Cleon Skousen

*I am a self-publishing author/publisher and have had the best experience, bar none, with the Izzard Ink group. They are the best bunch of hardworking professionals that I have ever had the privilege of working with; I would recommend them to anyone looking to design a cover or create a beautiful interior; I would recommend them for all your creative publishing needs. Tim McConnehey has held my hand through the entire process and answered my questions at all hours of the day and night. I couldn't be more pleased with the results.*

—Diane Merrill Wigginton, author and owner of  
Jeweled Dagger Publishing

*I owe my new friends at Izzard Ink a tremendous debt of gratitude. They walked me through self-publishing 101 and helped me turn my non-sellers into great sellers. One title was a bestseller on Amazon. Until I met Izzard, I didn't know how little I knew about post-writing development to produce a polished, professional-looking book. They cared about making me a success. And where some prior efforts produced a couple of duds, they guided me to help so I could repair the flaws and try again. It was worth it. Highly recommend Izzard Ink. Sometimes you just need somebody who knows the way.*

—Paul Skousen, bestselling author and former  
White House CIA analyst

*Working with Tim was as effective as it was enjoyable. As a first-time author speaking on the phone with Tim for the first time, one of the first things he said to me was, "I just want to see your book be successful." That simple statement was the clear motivation of every interaction we had from that very first conversation all the way to me holding a finished copy of my book in my hands. It is immediately clear when speaking with Tim that his knowledge of this business is only surpassed by his willingness to help. I couldn't be more satisfied and grateful for his help to make my book a reality. I would recommend Izzard Ink to anyone and everyone without any hesitation. Tim and the Izzard Ink team offer professional advice and hands-on help that truly does range from A to Z.*

—Robbie Tripp, public speaker and author of  
*Create Rebellion*



# 10

## **SECRETS TO A BESTSELLER**

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An Author's Guide to  
Self-Publishing

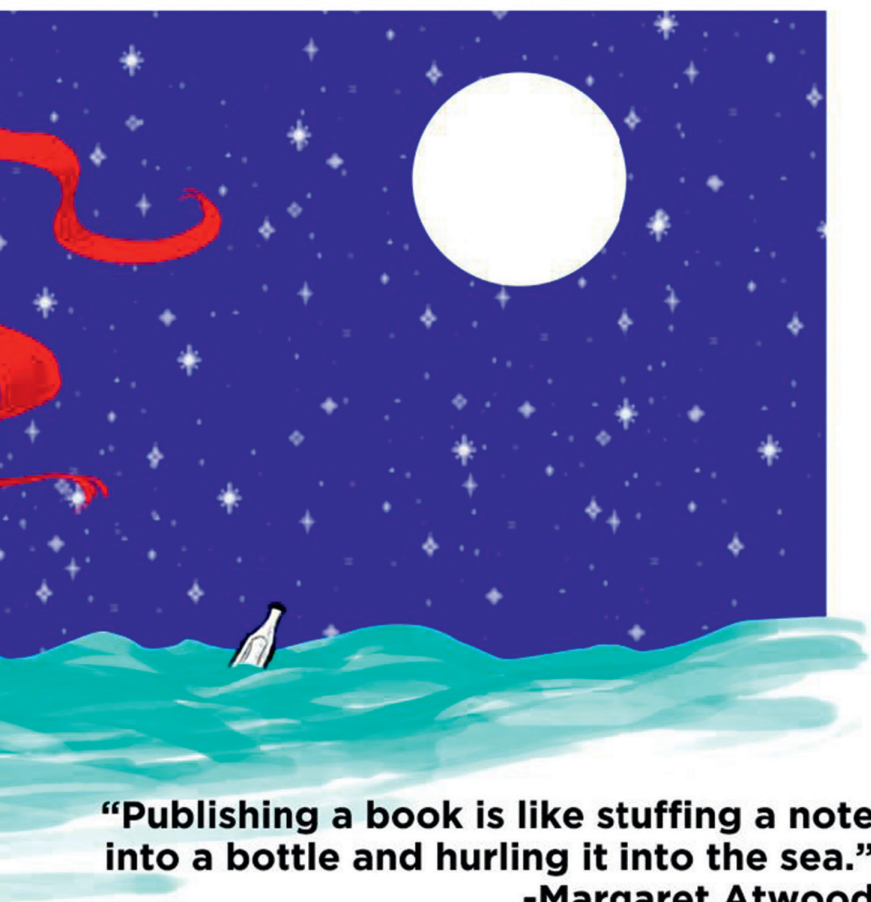
**TIM McCONNHEY**



**IZZARD INK**  
— PUBLISHING —







**“Publishing a book is like stuffing a note into a bottle and hurling it into the sea.”  
-Margaret Atwood**



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## FOREWORD

**M**y failures as a writer are all over the map—fiction, nonfiction, history, politics, religion, even an attempt at a world records book!

Each title was the result of passion and hard work. I wrote them because I enjoyed the journey, the research, the topic, and the writing. It was one of the few places in life where I felt that I was in total control. My world records book took sixteen years to complete. My first fiction book took six years. My first political book took four years. And a “bathroom reader” that I wrote out of frustration still took me two years to complete.

With no money to invest, I did everything myself using free or old software—cover design, interior layout, photo cropping and placement, writing, editing, ISBN purchase, and more. My mom, bless her heart, spent long hours fixing typos. A friend showed me some layout tricks. Another friend let me scan some photos with my laptop at his newspaper office. I pieced the books together as best I could, and after all of that labor, I submitted them to publishers and waited.

Silence.

No, it was worse than silence. With each rejection letter came the haunting, mocking laughter of successful writers who scorned my attempt to short-circuit the system that

#### XIV FOREWORD

they somehow had mastered. Maybe they had better DNA, I don't know.

I was discouraged. My hoped-for claim to that highly respected and vaulted title of Published Author had fallen short. Miserably short.

What was I doing wrong?

That's when I turned to a print-on-demand service, ordered a couple of copies of one title, and walked them in the front door of a local publisher. "See?" I told them. "This is what it looks like, all finished."

I was thrilled beyond measure when they took my first book and ran with it. They took my cover and tweaked it slightly, put their name on the copyright page as publisher, and sent me on 93 book signing tours over the course of a year to bookstores all over the state. Each trip was on my own dime—I paid for the gas and wear and tear on my car, and stood there, dressed in coat and tie, pacing around a table in assorted stores for three to four hours begging somebody to please come talk to me. After a few sales, they invested in some advertising. I was complimented!

At the end of about 12 months my book had sold 20,000 copies! They called it a bestseller and asked for my next title. But at a 10% royalty, I did the math. My book had made my publisher more than \$100,000. And me? Subtracting all my expenses, taxes, gas, etc., I realized I could have worked six months of weekends at McDonald's and made the same money as my royalty check. So what was that all about? Stroking my ego?

I was confused and even more discouraged.

And then I found Izzard. What a difference. After working with the people at Izzard, I took control of my own publishing destiny.

The result?

Two of my titles were downloading 1,000 copies a day for almost a week. Another title sold 4,000 copies two days before Christmas. One title is being considered for a movie. Another title is being translated into Mongolian (no joking, they have a politically active readership that loves American political writing!). Another title won an Amazon Hidden Gem of the Year award. Two other titles were accepted by a hard-to-access eBook referral company with a mailing list of 1.7 million. Another title was used as a fundraiser by a major political party, and this led to public speaking invitations at their national meetings. And I've had more than 700 online reviews averaging 4.6 out of 5 stars, including a few reviewers who called me incompetent, amateur, biased, and other insulting names—and I don't even mind.

What made the difference?

That's what this little book is all about.

Yes, I did have to pay my way to access top editors and designers whose day jobs are working for the top five publishers in America—but that was my choice, using Izzard's access, connections, and recommendations. I was in complete control through the entire process. My investments have been paid back from proceeds from sales.

Did I have some duds? Oh yes. One book I thought would be a great seller in print has been a dead dog. But the audio version was a top-50 bestseller. My investments in layout and cover for the print version, and the cost of the narrator, were all paid back by the audio sales. Who would have guessed?

Another title I've worked hard to perfect is still sitting out there waiting to be discovered. Will it? I hope so. I'm working with Izzard right now on a new marketing strategy. They pointed out how my stagnated title is part of a series not yet complete, and that people generally don't buy

## XVI FOREWORD

incomplete series. Makes good sense because I don't buy incompletes, either! It was a great reality check, so I've lowered my expectations until I finish the whole series.

Another title I thought dead was a book my father wrote in 1958 and later updated in the '60s, called *The Naked Communist*. Copies were dribbling out just a few a month. It needed some refreshing. I wrote up two new chapters and updated the statistics. Izzard gave it a new cover and more modern feel, and suddenly this 60-year-old book is on Fox News, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, and selling like new again. It's the power of self-publishing.

*10 Secrets to a Bestseller: An Author's Guide to Self-Publishing* contains all those tips, recommendations, and access to contacts that Izzard Ink offered me for my own self-published books. I was fortunate to have discovered them, smart to have followed their tips, and grateful for the invitation to add my own experiences in publishing as a foreword to this little guide.

Please take to heart the messages in this book. They can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but with the right devotion and patience to your own passion and labors, they can help you spin your bales of literary straw into gold.

*By Paul B. Skousen*





# INTRODUCTION

## THERE'S NO SELF-PUBLISHING MAGIC

**T**echnology is your friend – and your enemy. Publishing technologies, ecommerce, and the Internet have brought the capability of publishing your book much closer to you, the author. If you have a book, you can publish it – it's as simple as that. Unlike the vanity presses of years past, simply publishing your own book requires only a minimal investment, and when you are done with the hard work of writing and the relatively simple work of converting and publishing, you have a book that you can show your friends. You can visit your book's online page and feel proud and pleased to see that you are a published author. But this very same technology is available to the thousands of other authors with good ideas and the wherewithal to complete a book and publish it. Each time you visit your book's page, and congratulate yourself on your status as an author, you die a little inside as you see how few of your books are actually selling.

Perhaps you have been fortunate enough to have sold a few. You eagerly look for reviews, and find disappointing comments: your book was hard to follow; your book was poorly edited, or it was in need of proofreading. Someone might point out that you use the phrase “in point of fact” on nearly every page. You find that the plot has died, or that despite your best efforts, your facts are in error. Maybe your characters leave people unmoved, or the premise of

your nonfiction book was completely misinterpreted. And look – some stranger just called you “illiterate.”

You’re not stupid – you wrote a book. You know that no book is universally loved, but you expected a better reception than this. You are aware that books published by the “Big 5” publishers may cause controversy, but the books sell and the authors might be called wrong or deluded – but not illiterate. So where did you go wrong?

The big publishers have a process for publishing, distributing, and marketing books, and the odds are that your process did not follow their process. Publishers invest in their books, and in all likelihood, your investment was of time, not money, and that time was focused on the technical process of publishing a book: how to get it from your word processing file into an eBook or printable format. But there is more to being a successful author than knowing how to manage the technology.

Publishers add value to a book because they have a process that includes not only getting a book from manuscript to its final delivery platform, whether digital or print, but also quality control (development, fact-checking, and editing), packaging, marketing, and distribution. By adhering to a process, the major publishers give each book its best chance to succeed – and by understanding that process, you can give your book its very best chance of success as well.

The most important thing I hope you learn from this book is that successful self-publishing is not magic. You can follow the same process that the major publishers do, within the limits of your resources. Understanding the publishing process brings into focus the need to have a step-by-step road map to follow, and that is what I hope Izzard Ink can provide for you.

Together, we'll address the following questions:

- Can you turn your great idea into a book?
- What are the steps you need to take, and in what order?
- How do you complete your book?
- What resources do you need: a cover designer? Editor? Fact checker?
- How do you distribute your book, and how do you make sure people know it's out there?
- How much should you sell it for?

And finally, we'll remind you – as you will remind yourself – **DON'T GIVE UP!** In my own life, I have had ample reason to remind myself of this simple principle: giving up ensures defeat.

No matter what life has handed you, no matter how overwhelmed or discouraged you feel, don't give up on your dreams. Life will take you up and down, but staying positive is something you can always control.

Whenever I am feeling deeply discouraged, or need to remind myself of the power of thinking about things in a positive way, I remember a particular time when life threw a series of curveballs at me. It could have been enough to make me give up. Instead, it turned into an opportunity to become stronger as an individual and as a family.

It was December 2008. Life could not get any better. After two years of courting the woman of my dreams and finally marrying her, I had reached my own personal nirvana. We packed our bags and enjoyed a 10-day honeymoon in South Florida.

Two weeks after arriving home I received a call from my boss. My job was no longer. This would have been devastating in any case, but in addition, I had just lost about 50%

of my savings due to the stock market crash, and as a new family we needed the income and build security.

A week later my Mom called and said we needed to meet as a family. The news was not good. My father had just been diagnosed with stage three brain cancer. The MRI revealed a tennis-ball-sized tumor in the front of his brain.

For the next two weeks I was paralyzed. I did not know how to move forward. All I knew was that I did not want to feel this way forever. My wife and I slapped a piece of paper on the fridge where we would only list positive things that happened to us.

Within three days our list was becoming quite respectable. We focused on some surprising things: for instance, that it was a great opportunity that I did not have a job right now, because I was able to be with my dad during his cancer treatments. It gave me a chance to consider some real options for my future. Finally, it gave me the confidence to handle future pitfalls and struggles by laying the foundation for how to tackle rejection: When things get tough, go back to basics. Our family grew closer together. I learned what it meant to be a true friend.

As my wife and I were reviewing our list of what eventually turned into 35 – yes, 35! – positive things that came out of the trifecta of losing my job, being hit hard in the stock market crash, and my father’s brain cancer, the truth of it all struck us: **Success is mastering failure.** If I wanted to be successful in life, then I needed to know how to overcome failure – and be good at it.

The same is true as a writer. Success is mastering failure. It is about how you deal with the rejection letters. Do you give up? When your first bad review hits do you immediately delist your book? There are many “failures” and setbacks in the publishing industry. Conquer failure!

You cannot have a bestselling novel if you failed to complete it.

STEP 1

**DO YOUR  
RESEARCH**

*Get your facts first, and then you can distort  
them as much as you please.*

—MARK TWAIN

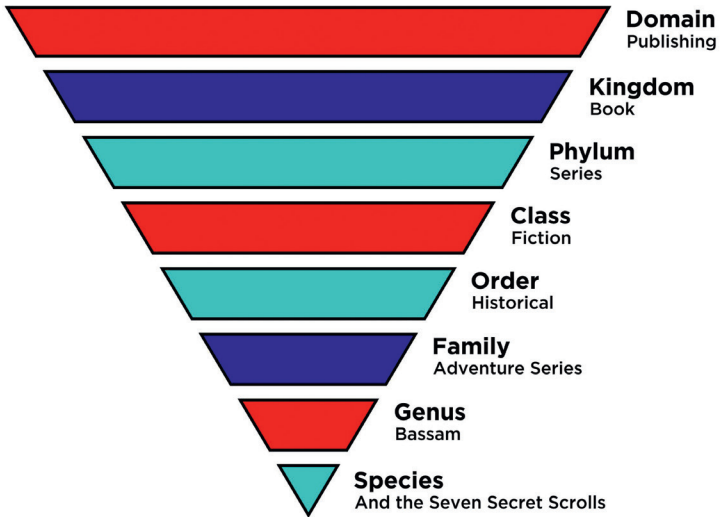


## Books and Books and Books and Books

**Y**ou have an idea for a book. Maybe it's fiction, maybe it's nonfiction, but in your heart you know it's a good idea. Maybe you've even written a good part of it, or outlined it, or perhaps you've even finished a draft. Wherever you are in the process, you've probably started to think about what a big job you've taken on. You may be looking at books in the bookstores and wondering how they made that big step from their personal writing to a published book.

You've probably been told to "write what you know," and to write from the heart, and as far as that goes, that's very good advice. But it's not enough to get you published, and it's definitely not enough to make your book sell. Even if your book is superbly well written, you may not find a market for it. Why? Because publishing, like every other industry, has its trends. And publishers and agents are very aware of those trends, because what people are buying this year, or what they predict will sell next year, are the considerations that drive their business. Not all books are equally viable commercially, and not all are intended to fill the same niche. There are coffee-table books, self-help books, memoirs, technical books, and dozens of categories of fiction.

Depending on your book and the publishing climate at the time, there may be more of a demand for some kinds of books than for others. Knowing this, how can you leverage this knowledge to give your book the best possible chance for success? Our best recommendation: Do your research. Understand what sells and why, and most of all, know how your book fits into the publishing landscape.



## Where Do You Fit?

A good place to start is by examining your own book, even before you start looking at what's on the market. Understanding your own book is crucial in being able to sell your book to a publisher or to market it to customers.

You should be able, first and foremost, to say what genre your book belongs to. Is it fiction or nonfiction? There are dozens of sub-genres in either category. For fiction, there are mysteries, science fiction and fantasy, literary fiction, and much more. In nonfiction there are, if anything, even more categories: self-help, history, social sciences, nature, and just about any subject you can think of.

Can't think of a category? You can go to a bookstore or library and browse the shelves for ideas, or you can go to Amazon.com and view the elaborate list of categories they provide for their customers' browsing convenience. If you



## STEP 1: DO YOUR RESEARCH 5

are really stuck, imagine categorizing your book for Amazon or another bookseller.

Once you have defined your book, try to put it in a sentence: “My book is fiction – a first-person fantasy novel.” Or, “I wrote a nonfiction self-help book for basic home repair.” And so on. The critical point is, you should know your book, and where in the bookstore it would sit.



## Common Mistakes in Research

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### **Know Your Market!**

I was recently at a party where I was introduced to a new acquaintance. First he described himself as a college professor, now retired, but after some hints and returning to the topic several different ways, he confessed that he was, in fact, no longer a college professor, but a poet. He had published a book of poetry!

I congratulated him, of course – it’s not easy to get a publisher to accept a book of poetry – at which point he clarified that he had actually self-published his volume of poetry.

It turned out he had asked to be introduced to me at the party so he could ask my opinion on why his book of poetry wasn’t selling.

A little research might have told him that one of the reasons publishers hesitate to publish books of poetry is that they rarely sell well, and few become “success stories.” If our professor-poet was looking for a bestseller, he had chosen the wrong market!

## A Little Market Research Never Hurt

Of course, you need to write what's in your heart, but if you want to sell your book, a little research is a good idea. Maybe you've written a great Western story. But are Westerns selling this year? No? Can you change the setting of your plot, give it a twist, or make it relevant somehow? How about Space Cowboys – or Cowboy Zombies? Go to your bookstore and see what they are promoting, and check bestseller lists as well. If you are writing nonfiction, what else has been written on your subject? How is it selling? What makes your book different?

Sometimes, a good guide to what might sell in books is what is selling in the movies and on TV. For instance, when *The Martian* movie was popular, a dozen books on Mars, from science to science fiction and thrillers, appeared on bookstore shelves.

Another question you might consider is whether you can find someone who specializes in your kind of book, whether it's an agent or a publisher. If you just wrote a fine book on programming in Python, you would want to look at technical publishers, whereas if you just wrote your memoirs, a general-purpose publisher would be more appropriate. Don't send a racy mystery to a children's publisher, or young adult fiction to a self-help specialist.

No matter how you publish – through a major publisher, self-publishing, or hybrid – you'll need to invest time and probably money into seeing this project through to fruition. So before you commit to the enormous task of finishing your manuscript and publishing it, take the time to do a little market research, to make sure your book has a market.



## STEP 2

# COMPLETE MANUSCRIPT ROUGH DRAFT

*The best advice on writing was given to me by my first editor, Michael Korda, of Simon and Schuster, while writing my first book. 'Finish your first draft and then we'll talk,' he said. It took me a long time to realize how good the advice was. Even if you write it wrong, write and finish your first draft. Only then, when you have a flawed whole, do you know what you have to fix.*

—DOMINICK DUNNE



**T**his is probably the toughest step you'll encounter on the long road to publishing your own book. It is not uncommon to take months to years to complete a manuscript. The simplest truth about writing, and the one that underlies everything you'll ever complete, is that writing is work – hard work.

You want to write a book because you probably have a story in your head. It might be a certain type of story, like a mystery, or a self-help book. One way to help turn your idea into a book is to go online and read what people have written about how to write for a particular genre. You'd be surprised at how much there is online in these areas! While we're not endorsing any particular site at this point, doing a web search on "how to write a mystery book" or "how to write a self-help book" will turn up a treasure trove of information.

In addition, there are some time-honored tips that could help you, although everyone has his or her own way of writing, and we're not going to argue with success. But if you're running into a block, or if your manuscript remains just another good idea, consider the following time-honored approaches to starting and finishing a manuscript.



## Common Mistakes in Completing Your Manuscript Rough Draft

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### **Don't Get Hung Up on the Small Things!**

Lovers of Jane Austen, and particularly *Pride and Prejudice*, practically squeal with delight when Lady Catherine, speaking of her own musical talent, says, "If only I had learned, I would have been a great proficient!"

Don't be the Lady Catherine of writing. The best, most effective way to complete your manuscript is simply to do it - pick up your implement of choice, be it pen, pencil, or keyboard, and start getting your thoughts on paper, and don't stop until you're done!



## Tips for Finishing Your Manuscript

- **Pick a time to write and DO IT.** Treat it like a job, primary if you're lucky, or secondary if you still have to work another job for a living. Set aside space to work in, if you can, or at least establish a certain time as your job – which happens to be writing – where you can't be disturbed. Even if you can only give it a few hours a week, if you're regular about it, you'll be surprised at how steadily your manuscript will grow. And of course, the more time you can devote to it the better.
- **Keep writing**, even if you hate what you're writing and you're pretty sure you'll have to throw it out later. Just keep working. If you stop, you'll lose momentum. Get your thoughts out of your head and into a file or on paper where you can actually work with it later, and make it right.
- **Stop stressing over that one sentence.** It will straighten itself out later. Whether it's a whole day's work or a single sentence, don't let it stop you. You can rewrite as much as you want later, once you've actually finished the thing. In fact, most authors are famous rewriters, so don't get stopped by something you're bound to obsess over later anyway.
- **Don't obsess over things.** It will keep you from finishing.
- **Consider outlining.** If you really can't get started, it's a way to get yourself going. Some writers do that naturally, but even if you don't, consider it as a way to get

yourself past a block or a plot problem, or just to get your book underway.

- **Have a support system.** Find at least one person who will read your work and be honest with you. It can be a friend or a hired editor, but it should be someone who is an experienced reader. Ask questions to see if your goals for your book are being met. If you know you have a story to tell, but you're not happy with how you're telling it, consider hiring an editor or writing coach to help you complete your book.

- **Set deadlines for yourself.** And when you miss them – because you will – set a new deadline. Don't give up.

- **“Murder your darlings.”** This famous quote by Arthur Quiller-Couch is a good one to keep in mind. Quiller-Couch was suggesting that when you are especially pleased with something in your writing, most likely to others it sounds contrived or awkward. So if you are over-attached to something in your work, and can't figure out why the writing doesn't read right, most likely it's that thing you love so much and are convinced sounds really, really cool. It probably doesn't.

- On those days when nothing will come at all, do writing exercises. Some ideas would be to describe three people you know in detail, or an experience from your childhood that had special significance, or to vividly describe your current surroundings. Anything that keeps you writing is potentially valuable. Keep a journal for this “extra” writing.

- **Keep reading** other people's books. Don't think of it as something that could interfere with your creative process; think of it as a way to collect ideas to keep your book moving along, and sometimes, to distract yourself enough to be able to return to your own work with a refreshed eye.

- **Some writing exercises to try:**

- Describe yourself as though you were a fictional character.
- Describe the most wonderful town you can imagine, and then describe what happens when it's invaded by hostile aliens.
- Describe the room you're sitting in, down to the smallest detail.



## STEP 3

# COPY AND CONTENT EDITING

### *Stop and Smell the Weeds.*

*When we went walking with our daughter, it was a very slow process. She would stop and smell everything – roses, dandelions, grass, oak trees. At first it was maddening, but it was something we learned to treasure. The lesson we eventually learned was we needed to stop and smell the weeds.*

*Don't rush past the dandelions and go straight to the roses. To do so is to limit your world. We have to learn from the difficult times – the weeds in our life – if we are to approach the successes. We would be missing the foundation to handle success if we do not smell our fair share of weeds during the publishing process. Sometimes you need to bend over and find out if what you are smelling is a weed or a rose.*





If you want a book that sells because people enjoy it, not because the government is paying for it to be in schools, then tell the best story you can. This includes editing it ruthlessly.



## A Book Publisher Story

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We sat down with one author to review his manuscript. For six solid hours we covered each page, one by one. On every single page, the author instructed us to bold, italicize and underline words or phrases, or even whole sentences.

About an hour into the process, the author stated, “We are doing this process because I know the content is boring and by changing the inflection of the words it will keep the reader’s interest.”

Izzard Ink Publishing does not recommend this method.

Because the quality of content was inadequate, the author released the book for free across all eBook platforms. Then we waited for the reviews. Over the next six months, they trickled in, and unsurprisingly, they were not favorable, even for a free book.

Later we found out that two very qualified editors from a well-known book publisher had read the manuscript, but the author had decided not to make any of their changes.