

How to write your life story

a DIYBook ebook



**DIY
BOOK**

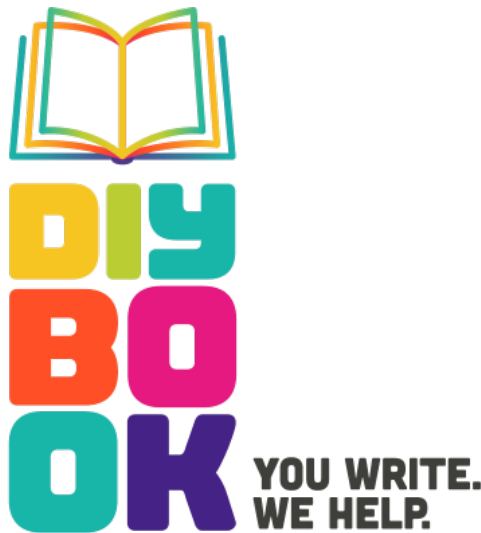
YOU WRITE.
WE HELP.

Barbara Basbanes Richter

Introducing *How to Write Your Life Story with DIYBook*. Within these digital pages, I invite you to explore the art of storytelling and self-discovery, focusing on utilizing the innovative DIYBook platform to craft your unique narrative.

Whether you are an empty nester, retiree, grandparent, or simply yearning to preserve your personal legacy, consider this eBook as your compass to guide you towards realizing your story's full potential.

Happy writing!



Visit us at [DIYBook.us](https://diybook.us) and get started!

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Introduction

Congratulations! You are taking the first step towards writing your life story. Sometimes, taking the first step is the hardest one. For some people, stringing words into sentences is frightening.

Maybe you have asked yourself one of the following questions:

How am I going to start this?

How will I finish?

How in the world am I going to fill an entire book?

Can I use AI to write my life story? SHOULD I use AI to write my life story?

If you've had these feelings, you are not alone—if writing *anything* was easy, *everyone* would do it!

But, let's face it, writing is hard, especially if you are writing about your life. But you do not have to do it alone: that's why I created DIYBook, a simple and affordable writing platform that provides all the tools and techniques you need to write your life story and write it *well*.

If your last major piece of writing was an essay for high school English, don't worry; we've got you covered. The [DIYBook](#) writing and printing platform was created for you!

And if you love writing but never seem to find the time to do it, [DIYBook](#) was created for you, too! Our platform helps you make the most out of your time and results in your book in your voice!

Let's address the elephant in the room: AI-assisted writing. This powerful tool has fundamentally changed the way people write.

Is using AI ethical?

While some writers allege that companies may have stolen data to train their models, using the technology itself is not an act of theft. Plagiarism—the act of claiming someone else's words as one's own—is theft. With that in mind, we can't be Luddites and avoid this technology—at the very least, we need to understand it to know its capabilities and limitations. I'll discuss the pros and cons of using AI in life story writing and provide some tips on integrating AI into the DIYBook platform.

About DIYBook

I created DIYBook when it became clear that people needed an affordable, easy-to-use system for writing and publishing their stories.

Many people have great stories to share but simply can't afford a professional ghostwriter. It made me incredibly sad when people would call or email me and ask if my ghostwriting company could help them write their book. Most people simply cannot afford to hire quality ghostwriters. I'd hear variations on the following: "But I saw a company online that was offering ghostwriting services for \$599!"

Or

"I guess I won't write my story—I can't afford the help I need."

Usually, if someone told me that they found another ghostwriting company that would write *an entire book* for some crazy price, I would tell that person that this was a scam. Any ghostwriter who says they can do this is lying. Run away as fast as you can.

Sometimes, people would call me *after* they had tried one of these fly-by-night ghostwriting companies. Needless to say, these people had been duped; the final product was often riddled with errors or flat-out plagiarized from another book. And they were out a couple hundred or even thousands of dollars. It made me very sad to see people's dreams crushed like that, and it's another reason why I created DIYBook: to give people a safe, affordable, and easy-to-use platform to write and publish their books.

If you do want ghostwriting help, you can purchase blocks of time with a vetted ghostwriting professional through your [Author Account](#) at DIYBook.

Ready? Let's get started!

Chapter One Getting Started

- Getting to know your Author Account
- How DIYBook works
- What to expect

“A word after a word after a word is power.” Margaret Atwood

Get ready to start writing!

You have your [Author Account](#) set up, and you're ready to start writing. Now what? You may be wondering how DIYBook works. This chapter will explain how to make the most of your Author Account on the DIYBook platform so that you can write your story on your own terms.

What to expect after creating an Author Account

Once a week, DIYBook will email you a prompt or question. These questions are based on a specific sequence that ghostwriters use when writing life stories.

To answer the prompts, log into your [Author Account](#) by clicking the link in your email. Then, you will be directed to your writing platform, where you will respond to the writing prompt.

Remember to save your work whenever you're done writing for the day.

Frequently Asked Questions About Writing Prompts

Do I have to answer every question you send me and in the order I receive them?

You can review *all* the questions and writing prompts in your Author Account at any time and answer them *in any order you choose*. This *is* your book—it's your story!

DIYBook's order reflects a sequence that our professional ghostwriters have found works well for most books, but every story is unique. Some questions may not be relevant to your journey, and that's okay!

I don't want to answer the writing prompts--can I skip them?

Of course you can skip the prompts! These prompts are based on my many years of ghostwriting life stories, and I have found that these kinds of questions help authors coax their stories out of their memories and onto the page.

The prompts are just suggestions intended to help you think about your life and how you want to write about it. Some DIYBook authors answer the prompts, others don't, and still others use the prompts as reference points to see if they've covered everything they want. It's your book--no one can tell you the right way or the wrong way to write it.

See more FAQs on our website [here](#).

Including Photos

You may wish to include pictures in your book. You can upload images to your Author Account by clicking on the “upload images” link. Then, you can position the images anywhere on the page. Pictures with 300 dpi (dots per inch) tend to print better than others, so ensure your pictures meet that standard.

To find your image's DPI for Windows and Mac:

Windows: Click on the file name, then click on the “More” button that looks like three dots ... in the menu bar and select **Properties>Details**. The DPI will be in the Image section, labeled Horizontal Resolution and Vertical Resolution.

Mac: Open the image in Preview, a built-in app for viewing and editing images, and select **Tools>Adjust Size**. The DPI is labeled Resolution.

We'll talk more about adding images later in the book.

Now you're all set to start writing! The Author Account for DIYBook is simple to use—whenever you want to type your story, you only need to log in.

Logging in to your Author Account

Click [here](#) to log into your account. Use your email address and the password you created when you signed up for your account. (You can always ask to reset your password if you've forgotten it!)

You *can* write your life story. We've made it easy for you to succeed, even if writing isn't easy for you.



In the next chapter, we examine *why* you're writing your life story and why it's important to know this.

Check out this [article](#) I wrote about incorporating photos into your book project.

Chapter Two

What's Your Why?

- Understand the motivations behind your writing.
- Determine what you hope readers will learn from reading your book.
- What to do if you're not sure why you're writing your life story.

"How often we recall, with regret, that Napoleon once shot at a magazine editor and missed him and killed a publisher. But we remember, with charity, that his intentions were good."

Letter to Henry Mills Alden, published in the Chicago Daily Tribune, November 11, 1906, pg.

3. Mark Twain

Do you know why you're writing—are you looking for inner peace or to share stories with others?

American author Mark Twain (1835-1910) is misquoted a lot. One memorable misattribution is the following: "There are two days in a person's life that are more important than any other: the day you are born and "the day you discover the reason why." In fact, Twain never said or wrote this! The actual authors are an amalgam of various wits throughout the years. Whether misattributed or not, the second part of this aphorism is worth considering when embarking on the process of writing your life story.

You've decided to write your life story. Now, clarify *why*.

Knowing why you are writing your life story will help you focus on the task at hand.

At its most basic level, writing for any reason is a way for humans to explore and share ideas. We write things down to ensure we don't forget our thoughts that can be as mundane as a grocery list or as important as a college admissions essay.

Writing something down provides a fresh perspective. We can share our point of view with others and hope that readers may learn something new or recognize that there are always two sides to every story.

Writing is one of the most personal acts a human can commit. The author shares your thoughts, hopes, dreams, wishes, and beliefs on paper. They are making a declaration, stating a fact, sharing an opinion, exposing a truth, and hoping readers will find something valuable in their words.

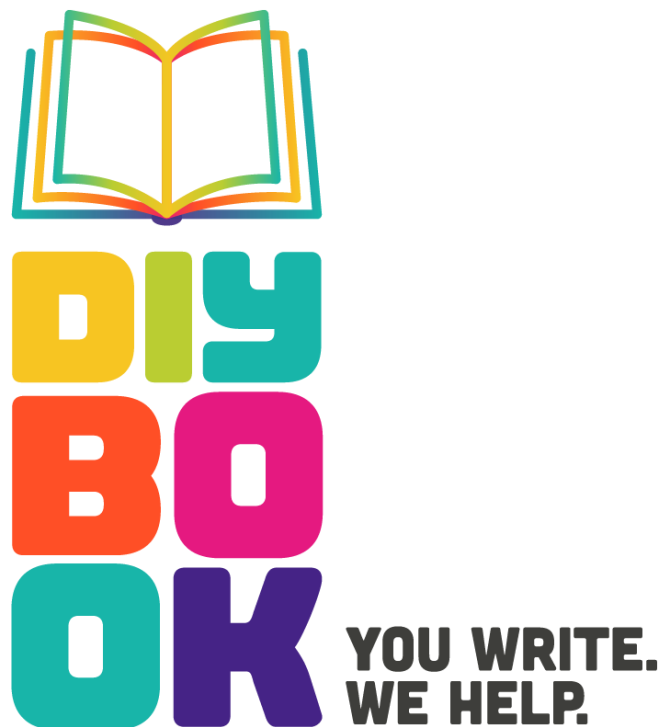
Why are you writing your life story?

At this point, we know that you have started writing your life story because you're here and you're reading this book.

Finding your *why* will help you identify the purpose of your book.

Below are a few reasons why people decide to write down their life stories:

- To become a better person or communicator
- To share a unique point of view
- To share a story of grief and hardship to show that we are not alone in our grief.
- To share a story of joy and that we are not alone in our happiness.
- To express creativity.
- To document a way of life for future generations.



Nancy's Why

Nancy is a DIYBook author and used the platform to write her life story. "The idea for this came about from a friend. She had been gifted with the opportunity to write her story and told me a little about it. And I gave it some thought and initially thought that was going to be a lot of work. I wasn't sure I wanted to do that," she said. But the more she thought about it, she realized she needed to write her story. "I decided I wanted to do it as a Christmas gift for my three daughters as a legacy. It would be **something that generations beyond me would be able to know who I was.**"

Watch Nancy share more of her experience on the Writing for Immortality podcast below.

Nancy's writing experience

[Listen to the full episode here!](#)

What's *your* why? What's pushing you to sit down and put your stories on paper? If you're unsure, read the following statements and see if they apply to you. Your responses may reveal your writing motivation:

- I have lived an amazing life and want to share my stories with others.
- People tell me I should write a book because I have so many stories to tell!
- My life has not been extraordinary, but I believe others will learn from my stories.



Finding the purpose of your book will help you create a compelling story from start to finish. This careful structuring of events (also known as a book's storyline or plot) will compel your reader to keep turning the page to find out what happens next.

Can you write your life story without finding your why? You can, but writing with purpose almost always leads to a better, fuller, more interesting book.

Knowing why you're writing your book will help you maintain your focus, point of view, and the tone you want for your voice in print.

Chapter Three Setting the Scene

- Ensuring your writing is as descriptive as possible
- Why word choice matters
- Show, don't tell, your story

"No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader." Robert Frost "The Figure a Poem Makes" (1939)

American poet Robert Frost (1874-1963) offered this kernel of writing wisdom as part of a larger meditation on the act and importance of creating poetry. It just as easily applies to the craft of writing a life story. In other words, if you don't feel anything, your readers won't either.

Maintaining an engaging tone will help you, the author, share a particular message with your readers and generate emotional responses.

All fine and well, but how do you make sure your readers not only are along for the ride but feel every high and low for themselves?

Here are a few tips that can help:

1. Be authentic.

If you are happy and upbeat, your life story should reflect those qualities. If your book focuses on heavy themes and trauma, your style should express those qualities. For example, upbeat, positive texts include humor and jokes, while more serious work will avoid lighthearted vocabulary.

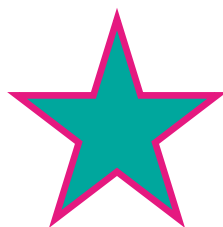
2. Identify your tone

If you're unsure of what type of tone you want to set for your book, take some time at the start of this project to find your tone. Ask yourself what kind of feelings you want your reader to experience. Knowing that will help you find the best types of words and phrases to create your desired tone.

3. Stay consistent.

Your tone should remain consistent throughout the text. You may have moments of happiness in a serious book and difficult passages in a lighthearted book, but your tone should stay as consistent as possible so that you don't confuse your reader.

Below are two examples of tone, each describing the same scene:



Upbeat:

I couldn't wait for that joyous day—_my wedding day—to finally arrive! I was going to become Mrs. John Smith. As my father often joked, my marriage was bigger than the famous baseball player Babe Ruth being traded to the New York Yankees. My mother and I made sure every detail was perfect, or at least as perfect as possible. We couldn't have predicted what would happen next!

Matter-of-fact:

My wedding day was to be the most meaningful and important day of my life. Becoming Mrs. John Smith was no small matter, and as such, I needed to make sure every detail would be perfect. My mother, a natural planner, was essential in getting this right. Unfortunately, neither of us (or anyone else, for that matter) could have predicted what would happen next.

4. Pick your punctuation appropriately.

Punctuation can create tone, as you may have noticed in the examples above. Fewer punctuation marks usually reflect an informal approach, unless we're talking about exclamation points, which convey intense emphasis. Compare "Thanks." versus "Thanks!" The first is matter-of-fact, while the second expresses more emotion, which could be angry, happy, or surprised, depending on what came earlier in the text.

5. Pay attention to personal pronouns.

If you are the primary subject of your book, ensure you use the correct pronouns to reflect that. For example, if you suddenly switch from writing sentences using “I” to “you,” you risk confusing your reader. Not *every* sentence will be about you, but be mindful of what you’re writing and when.

6. Put yourself in your reader’s position.

If you’re not sure whether your writing is hitting the right tone, take a break for a moment and consider your reader. One of the best ways to evaluate tone is to read your work back to yourself and see if you have the kind of reaction you hope to create in your readers. Another option is to ask others to read a section for you and see how they react.

7. If you can’t find your tone, don’t fret.

Developing your tone can take time, and it can be frustrating if you’re unsure what tone you’re setting. If that’s the case, just write—writing your story on paper is the most important step. You can also go back and edit your work when you’re done. If you still need help with sharpening your tone, you can always book time with one of DIYBook’s professional ghostwriters or editors.

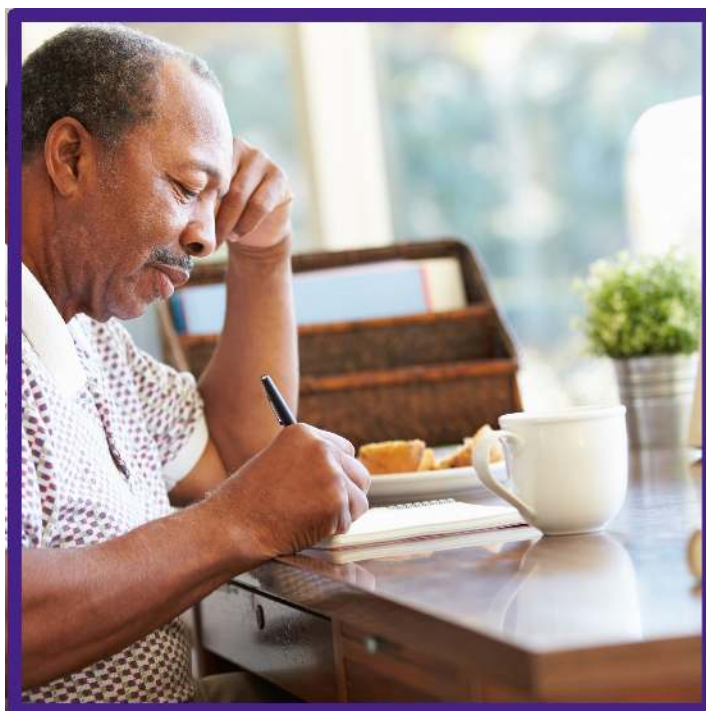


Chapter Four: Dealing with Difficult Topics

- Strategies for approaching and writing about challenging or traumatic subjects
- Tips on how to maintain emotional well-being while addressing difficult topics

“And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.” Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore* (2005)

Writing about life’s challenges will make your story whole.



Many compelling life stories reveal the narrator triumphing over unpleasant or painful experiences. Redemption stories are especially poignant because they illustrate the range of the human experience. In other words, readers see a little of themselves in these stories.

Many authors put pain to paper to make sense of difficult life events.

Writing a life story is challenging, and sharing difficult memories can add to the stress. Finding the right balance to keep readers engaged and interested can be daunting.

Below are a few tips to keep in mind as you approach your life story:

Assess your tone

Re-read [Chapter Three](#) for a refresher on what tone is and why it's important. Setting the right tone gets readers on your side. That means making sure you don't fall into the whiny, oh-woe-is-me trap.

Below is an example of a grouchy tone:

"Growing up, I wish we weren't so poor and hungry all the time."

Instead, consider *describing* the poverty that defined your childhood:

"Ma sent us out every afternoon to scavenge for scraps from the dumpsters that served the fancy high-rise apartment buildings nearby. Dinner was always à la carte: moldy cheese rinds, wilted greens on the verge of turning to slime, and sometimes bits of meat miraculously overlooked by the street cats who always got first pick. However, our meager rations hardly fed our growling bellies many nights, and as we drifted off to sleep, we dreamed of four-course meals served on fine white linens."

In this situation, the author isn't saying he was poor, he's *showing* the poverty he endured by using vivid imagery.

Seek the truth

The best life story writers are honest about themselves and the characters they portray. Showing the various traits of your characters will make them more believable because no one is 100 percent evil or stupid. Your wicked stepmother will still come across as such even when you write about the three times she took you for ice cream, so don't worry.

Do not fabricate information.

Making up facts turns your life story into fiction. Share something if it did happen. Otherwise, making up stories degrades the book's quality and what you're trying to achieve.

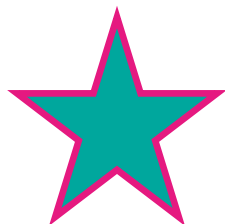
Remember why you're writing in the first place.

It's great to find personal satisfaction and catharsis in your writing. But you may also hope readers learn something from your ordeal. Consult [Chapter Two, "What's Your Why,"](#) for more details. Sometimes, writing down difficult stories can be challenging. Thinking about hardship can trigger unpleasant feelings and make writing the story that much harder. Some people may be tempted to give up trying to write about these things, but there are ways to get around the discomfort.

Here are a few tips you should try when you start writing about difficult topics:

Prepare your writing space.

Where you write your life story may not be the same place that you work. You may find that you want physical comfort while exploring challenging topics. Your comfort zone could be the kitchen table or an oversized easy chair. For some authors, writing in bed is the most soothing. Be sure that it's a space where you are unlikely to be disturbed for a while wherever you write. This might also mean silencing all but the most urgent notifications on your cell phone.





Feather your writing nest

Surround your writing area with items that bring you joy. Photographs of loved ones, a letter from a friend, or small mementos that remind you of happy times can all share space in your writing environment.

Pick one element or topic to cover in a sitting.

The temptation to write broadly is understandable. Avoiding confronting difficult memories is easy. Instead, choose one moment in time. Having one DIYBook prompt at a time can help with pacing and avoid feeling anxious or nervous about the task at hand.

Acknowledge how you feel as you write

Stop when it's too much, and remember that the writing process is cathartic, even if it's just for you.

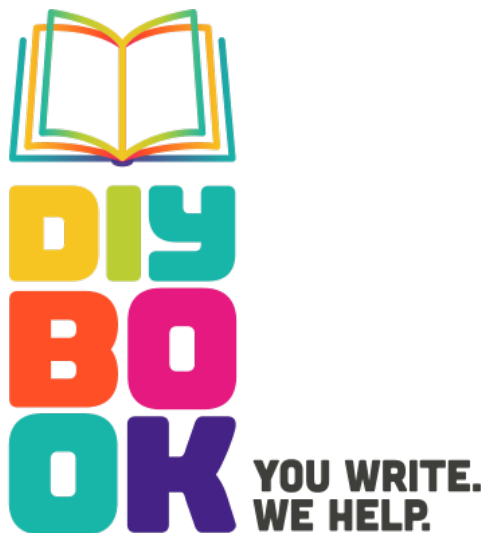
Set a realistic timer

Be honest about how much time you can devote to this without feeling overwhelmed or anxious. Setting a random time goal is meaningless. You may say you want to write for an hour, but you might be distracted and frustrated with your progress after twenty minutes.

Ask yourself what sounds like a reasonable amount of time you can dedicate to answering this one question. That time will vary: for some people, five minutes will feel like an eternity; for others, 15 minutes of writing is doable.

Take it day by day

You may be motivated and ready to write on one day and feel totally deflated the next. That's normal, especially with challenging topics. Acknowledge the feelings that come up as you approach each topic, and if those feelings interfere with writing, take a break and work on something else.



Chapter Five: Finding Your Style

- Exploring the concept of personal writing style and its significance
- Providing guidance on developing and maintaining a consistent writing style

“Writing is an act of faith, not a trick of grammar.” E.B. White, *Elements of Style* (1962)

Style isn't about fancy writing tools; it's about how you use language effectively.

Everyone's got style, but what does that mean when it comes to writing? How is style different from tone? Fear not, Author, we're covering all of that here.

What is a writing *style*?

It's a term used by many writers and critics but not often defined for us to understand its meaning. Some may wonder if having a writing style is necessary: Does style distract from the topic? Why not just get straight to the story and forget about style?





Everybody has a writing style, whether they realize it or not. One way to think about your own style is to consider the kinds of words and phrases you use when you speak. These phrases (and even accents) are a kind of style. For example, people from the North often use the term “faucet” to describe the device by which liquid flows from a pipe, while Southerners may use the term “spigot.” You might use the words “soda” in the Northeast, “coke” in the South”

and “pop” if you’re from the Midwest to describe your favorite sugary carbonated beverage. These are just examples of regional conversational style; writing style can be modified to suit an author’s specific purpose.

You might be thinking, “This sounds a lot like tone.” Tone and style are both elements of good writing. Tone is an element of good writing style. For example, you may be aiming for a particular *tone* in your life story, whether that’s upbeat, comical, or serious, but your writing *style* is the result of careful decision-making with how you are presenting your thoughts to a reader.

Consider the following questions as you write to assess your writing style:

- What can I teach the reader?
- What truth am I trying to share?
- Are my ideas clearly conveyed?
- Am I making every word count?
- Do my words stand on their own merits?

In short, style is *how clearly you write and convey your thoughts to your reader*. This does not mean your writing must be boring; you can write clearly while retaining your unique flair.

Different writing styles

There are a range of writing styles (emotional and imaginative, practical, plain), but for the purposes of this book, we'll focus on four styles you may have encountered at one time or another.

Descriptive

This style is commonly used in fiction, poetry, and sections of life story writing. Descriptive writing “paints a picture” by describing people, places, and events through evoking sight, touch, sound, smell, and feel. This style is challenging to maintain over the course of a longer written work. Examples include passages in *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling.

Expository

This style explains a concept by presenting evidence and statistics. The writer does not offer an opinion in expository writing. Expository writing is often used in journalism (not editorials), scientific writing, how-to articles, and business papers.

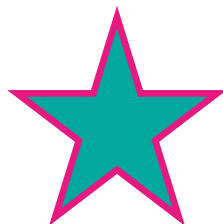
Narrative

This style is a longer form of descriptive writing with a storyline that includes a plot, a conflict, and a resolution. Fiction and life stories are typically written in a narrative style.

Persuasive

This writing style is about persuading the reader, as the name suggests. Speeches (like John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" inaugural address) and homework assignments usually fall into this category.

Can you write your life story and incorporate all these styles? Your life story will most likely include descriptive and narrative storytelling elements, but sometimes, yes.



Chapter Six: Using AI to Write Your Life Story

- AI is a powerful tool.
- The act of writing is undergoing a profound transformation that marries the artistry of human expression with the precision of technology.
- As this revolution occurs, writers may feel lost or overwhelmed by this new technology. Should we use it? Should we not? How can we use it correctly?
- Understanding how these tools work and employing them appropriately can enhance our capabilities as writers.

AI and Writing: Where We Are Now

Integrating large language models (LLMs) and artificial intelligence (AI) into the writing process is no longer a futuristic concept; it's a practical reality. Platforms like Grammarly and ChatGPT have revolutionized how we approach writing, from the first draft to the final polish. These tools are designed to assist emerging writers and professional authors alike, offering a spectrum of functionalities that range from grammar correction to style enhancement.

We should strive for balance as we harness these advanced tools. Technology is an extension of our creativity, not a replacement. Adopting AI in writing should feel empowering, like finding a writing mentor who guides but never overrules your authorial voice.

Keeping the Human Element

Technology offers consistency and efficiency but can lack the genuine warmth and understanding that the human touch brings to storytelling. Writers must dig deep and bring empathy, warmth, and personal connection into the narrative. This is where stories resonate most, when they reflect genuine human experiences and emotions. Furthermore, LLMs are not a substitute for human thought. These platforms cannot independently know the intimate memories of a memoirist or intuit which personal stories will generate the most emotional impact. But that doesn't mean a writer must rely on memory to get their story on paper. DIYBook offers hundreds of prompts to help writers dig deep and find the stories they want to tell.

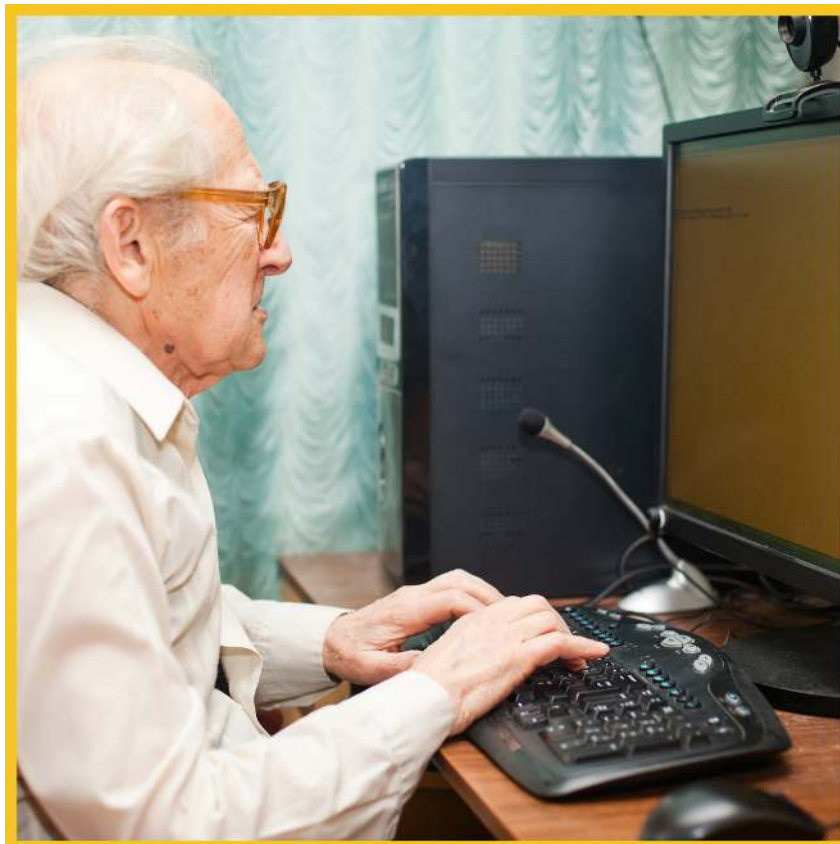
Here's how that might work:

- The writer selects a life story prompt from DIYBook. For this example, let's say the writer selects a prompt that focuses on a key childhood memory, such as the first day of school.
- The writer reflects on this memory and its emotions, considering the details that made the experience significant.
- Next, the writer can utilize an LLM, like ChatGPT, to expand on the memory by adding descriptive language and sensory details.
- Editing comes next! The writer revises and polishes the narrative until it's just right.

- The writer transforms a simple memory into a vivid and engaging part of their life story by combining the personal reflection prompted by DIYBook with the creative expansion enabled by the LLM.

Cost-Effective Solutions for Aspiring Writers

The cost of traditional publishing and editorial services can be a steep barrier for many aspiring writers. AI-driven tools democratize access to quality writing assistance. However, it's important to approach these tools critically, evaluate their benefits, and acknowledge their limitations. The goal is to always retain the author's unique voice and perspective.



Which LLM is *the best*?

Not all LLMs are created equal. Some are prone to hallucinations and lying, and some companies are defendants in several lawsuits. What LLM is the most helpful to us writers? There's no one answer, and these platforms evolve regularly. To that end, we at DIYBook have started reviewing the various platforms to help writers make the most informed decision possible when deciding which LLM to incorporate into their writing. We're also preparing a series of prompts writers can use with their LLM to increase writing efficiency and help combat writer's block.

Here are our reviews so far:

[The Future of Writing: Embracing Technology with Heart and Mind](#)

[Is Grammarly Good For Writing A Book? Secrets From a Professional Ghostwriter](#)

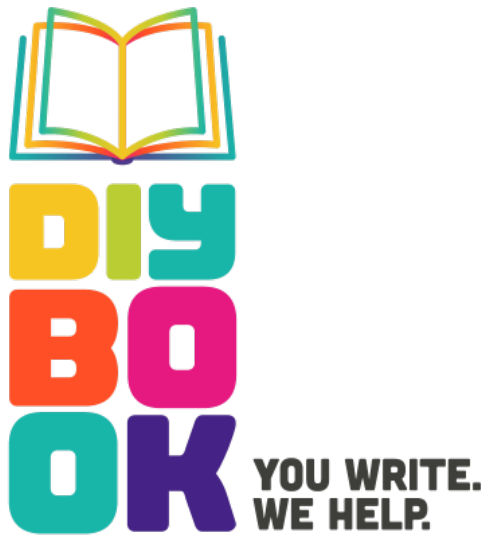
[ChatGPT Can't Write Your Book, But It May Be Able To Help](#)

As the technology keeps evolving, check [back](#) for new reviews.

Conclusion: Take a Balanced Approach

Let us enthusiastically but cautiously embrace the technological advancements in writing as we move forward. By blending the efficiency of AI with human-derived insights, we can navigate this new landscape with our authenticity intact. Technology can be our ally in the quest to tell well-crafted stories.

The goal is to empower writers, not replace them, allowing each to share their stories with the world in the most profound and engaging way possible. Let's use these tools to lift our narratives to new heights without losing sight of the personal touch that defines our humanity.



Chapter Seven: Editing Your Writing

- Techniques for effective self-editing and ensuring clarity in one's writing
- Tips on refining the content to convey intended messages accurately

Copyeditors are like priests, safeguarding their faiths." Zoe Caldwell in Dryer's English (2019)

Let's say you've answered all the DIYBook prompts for your book. Now what? Is your work ready for publication? Sure, you could go straight to "print," but it's good practice to edit your work before you do.

What is editing?

Almost all professionally written work goes through some sort of editing process.

Editing improves writing by correcting facts, restructuring content, and checking for grammar and spelling.

Editing ensures that you say what you mean to so that your reader understands you.

Editing a manuscript includes a few steps, which we'll explore here.

Content Editing

This type of editing focuses on your story's content, style, and overall structure. At this stage, an editor will read your work closely but generally will not make major changes to your manuscript. Editors at this stage will usually write comments about how they think a piece of writing can be strengthened or improved.

Seeing someone else's comments all over your work can be hard, but remember: content editing aims to make your work sound as good as possible. Also, you don't have to accept every—or any—suggestion at this stage, because that's all they are—suggestions. As the old adage goes, you can take 'em or leave 'em.

Copyediting

Authors are probably most familiar with copyediting, which is when a document is carefully scanned for spelling, grammar, and syntax.

But wait, you may think, isn't that why I have spellcheck? Yes and no. The spellcheck feature commonly found on word processing software is a huge help, but it cannot catch everything.

For example, the words *threw* and *through* mean entirely different things, but spellcheck won't flag either word as incorrect.

Conversely, relying entirely on spellcheck may mean you'll end up "correcting" words that were right to begin with, such as proper nouns (names of people, cities, companies, airlines, etc).

Can I do this type of editing on my own?

Yes! You can certainly do this type of editing on your own. Lots of authors edit their own work *in addition to* having someone else come in and complete substantive edits and copyediting.

Below are a few best practices you can use to edit your own work.

1. Take a break from your project.

Yes, you read that right. Step away from your writing project *after* you've finished writing and *before* you start editing. Why? When engaging in substantive editing, you want to approach the material as if you have never read it before. If you've been glued to your writing software for weeks or months cranking out your life story, you've probably read and re-read the material so many times you've memorized it.

Authors can get so close to their work that they may forget to add important details. So, yes, take a break before you embark on any kind of editing.

2. Pretend that you're reading your work for the first time.

Approach your writing like one of your readers: assume you know little to nothing about the topic. This will help you look for storytelling gaps and ensure each sentence supports your thoughts.

3. Do your ideas make sense?

If you're having difficulty following a train of thought, your readers will, too.

4. Are you repeating yourself?

Sometimes, the same story pops up in different parts of a life story. That's normal, but avoid repeating yourself.

5. Is your story interesting?

Are you skimming part of your story and hanging on every word in another? If so, you may want to see why one section is so much more interesting than another and see if you can replicate that feeling in the less exciting section.

Copyediting is usually done after substantive editing—think of it as detail work. And yes, you can copyedit your own writing. Here's what you can do:

1. Make sure your style is consistent.

Refer back to [Chapter Five](#) to review what this means.

2. Check for commonly misspelled or misused words.

A few examples include:

Its / It's / Its'

Affect / Effect

They're / Their / There

Consult a dictionary (dictionary.com is a great tool) if you're unsure whether you've used a word correctly.

3. Check your syntax.

Syntax is a fancy word that refers to how words and phrases are used in sentences. The placement of certain words in certain places can change what you mean.

Look at the following three sentences and see how the meaning changes just by moving one word:

***Only** you can prevent forest fires.*

Meaning: you are the only person who can prevent fires. No one else can do it.

*You can **only** prevent forest fires.*

Meaning: All you know how to do is prevent forest fires. You don't know how to do anything else.

*You can prevent **only** forest fires.*

Meaning: Forest fires are the single thing you can prevent. You cannot prevent anything else, such as the passage of time.

4. Perfect your punctuation

The placement of a period or comma can drastically change the meaning of your sentence. Take a look at the following example:

Let's eat, grandma!

Meaning: It's time for dinner. Come on, grandma!

Let's eat grandma!

Meaning: Grandma sure does look tasty.

That little comma between *eat* and *grandma* makes all the difference, so be sure to spend some time editing your work when you're done.

5. Get your facts straight.

Was your uncle born in 1952 or 1932? Did your great-grandparents come through Ellis Island or Castle Garden? It's your life story. Make sure these details are correct.

6. Take another break, then read everything again.

Yep. After you've copyedited your manuscript, give your eyes and brain a break and read it again.

Your text will probably read much cleaner and smoother after you start editing.

Removing words that weaken your work is an effective and easy way to tidy up your writing. Here are a few that can often be deleted from a sentence without causing harm to the overall structure:

7. Remove unnecessary words.

-very

-quite

-in fact

-just

-pretty

-actually

This is overwhelming! I can't possibly do all this on my own!

If that sounds like you, I hear you. That's why DIYBook offers one-on-one editing and coaching services that you can book in your Author Account. Our team of professionals can handle content editing and copyediting for you. All you have to do is get your thoughts onto the page and we can take it from there. Find out more in your [Author Account](#).

Chapter Eight: Overcoming Writer's Block

- Addressing common challenges like writer's block during the writing process
- Providing strategies for overcoming mental roadblocks and completing the writing project

"You may delay, but time will not." Benjamin Franklin

It should be obvious, shouldn't it—have you written the end of your book? Do you wish you've reached the end of your book?

Even if you're using the writing prompts from DIYBook, you may experience writer's block, a mental roadblock that keeps you from finishing your book.

What Is Writer's Block?

Writer's block is when a writer has a story to write but can't get the words to come out. Psychoanalyst Edmund Bergler first documented the phenomenon in 1950 as a "neurotic inhibition of productivity in creative writers." Writer's block may happen at any stage of the writing process, whether an author has written nothing or nearly completed a book.

Symptoms of writer's block:

- Anxiety when thinking about a writing project.

- Procrastination. Writer's block sufferers have been known to do everything from math problems to cleaning the toilets instead of writing—anything rather than facing the blank pages of their book project.
- Brain fog. Are your thoughts cloudy? Jumbled? Are you having difficulty concentrating? Writing a book is hard work, and the brain needs a break every now and then.
- Frustration. You may *know* what you want to write, but *how* to write it is proving difficult.
- Drawing a blank. You know you want to write *something*, but you're not sure what that *something* is.
- Stress can affect your writing productivity. Whatever else is going on in your life.

Treatment

Writer's block is curable, though it is common.

Use the DIYBook prompts.

At DIYBook, we created our questions to help avoid writer's block as much as possible. You may have already noticed that our writing prompts are *targeted* and *open-ended*.

Our prompts are designed to get authors thinking about specific moments in time. Rather than asking a question like, What was your childhood like? which is broad and nearly impossible to answer in a paragraph or two, we ask questions that focus on specific topics or events:

What did you dream of being when you grew up? This is a specific question about a specific topic.

Did you have a childhood nickname? Who gave it to you? Why?

This prompt focuses on a specific moment in an author's life.

If you prefer not to use the Author prompts, try using the same approach by breaking down the subject into small, manageable parts. Don't write about your *entire* childhood all at once. Start with your biological markers (birthdate, place, parents, etc.) and move chronologically through the phases of your life.

Find your perfect Author's Nook.

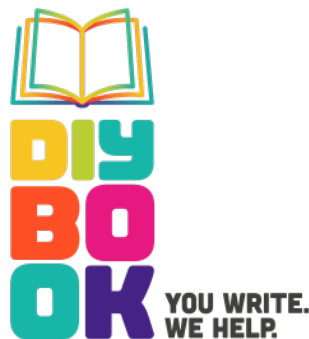
Sometimes, it's not your brain that needs a reset, it's your writing space. Look at your writing area: is it organized? Is it dark and cold? Do you have all your resources (journals, pictures, audio recordings) within reach? If your writing space is uncomfortable or inconvenient, you'll find lots of reasons not to sit there and write.

How do you do your best thinking?

Writing requires active thinking where the brain is focused and engaged. (Daydreaming is an example of passive thinking.) People unlock their creativity in various ways: physical movement is a great way to unleash ideas. And there's science to back up this technique: a 2014 study conducted at Stanford University found that walking increases creative output by 60%.[1] It doesn't matter where you walk—the simple act of stepping one foot in front of the other consistently boosted creativity levels compared to people who sat. (And you'd be in good company: Apple founder Steve Jobs famously held walking meetings while brainstorming the next big Apple product.)

Take a break.

Writer's block may be your brain's signal that it needs a break. Take a week off from your writing project and do something that brings you happiness. Usually, if you take a full break, you'll return refreshed and ready to start up again.



Chapter Nine: I Need Professional Help!

- Leveraging professional ghostwriters or graphic designers at DIYBook for assistance
- Optimizing collaboration with professionals to enhance the quality of writing

“It takes less time to do a thing right than it does to explain why you did it wrong.” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Know when it's time to call in the pros.

Maybe you want an extra pair of eyes to help you. Here's how to make the most of your time with one of DIYBook's professional ghostwriters or graphic designers.

Sometimes, even when you have plenty of resources at your fingertips, you may want an extra pair of eyes reviewing your writing. Here's how to make the most of your time with one of DIYBook's professional ghostwriters or graphic designers.

How a professional ghostwriter can help

Our professional ghostwriters can help you in many ways, such as coaching, reviewing a draft, and providing suggestions. Some authors ask our professionals to edit a chapter, and others ask for editing on an entire book. How you would like to use the time is entirely up to you.

How can a professional graphic designer help?

A graphic designer can help you with any of the book's visual elements. They can help create a book cover, design the interior content (including everything from a table of contents to a dedication page), format the margins, and ensure the text is typeset appropriately. They can also provide ideas on where to put photos and illustrations.

How to get started with a professional ghostwriter

You can purchase time with a personal ghostwriter in 5-hour increments. Just log onto your [Author Account](#), click on "Hire a Professional Ghostwriter," and follow the prompts.

What you can expect working with a professional graphic designer:

You can purchase time with our professional graphic designer in 5-hour increments. Log onto your Author Account, click on "Hire a Professional Graphic Designer," and follow the prompts.

Why do we offer services in 5-hour increments?

We have learned that more than one or two hours are needed. It takes time to understand your goals and help you achieve them. One hour is not nearly enough time to accomplish anything meaningful.

When working with one of our ghostwriters or designers, it's helpful to keep the following tips in mind:

Put together a list of tasks you'd like your ghostwriter to address. That could include:

- Identifying your voice
- Brainstorming
- Providing constructive feedback for making your story shine
- Serving as an accountability coach—someone who will meet with you one-on-one and help you meet your writing goals.
- Editing for comprehension and flow.

Be upfront about what you want your ghost to address. That will help your ghostwriter determine the best way to help your book.

Five hours may not be enough to meet your needs. For example, if you want a ghost to review your memoir for flow, that may be a five-hour job. A total rewrite will likely require many more hours.

You will see how many hours your ghostwriter spends on your project. Our ghostwriters clock their time when they work on a project, which is visible to you to ensure total transparency.

Don't spread out your hours.

We recommend that you don't spread your use of the time out too much. We have found that clients benefit most from this service when they are focused on their projects for a specific period.

When it's still too complicated—what then?

Our partners at [In Ink Ghostwriting](#) can pick up your writing project wherever you leave off.

You can contact them at writing@ininkghostwriting.com. Authors with active accounts at DIYBook can mention the code Help10 to receive a 10% discount on their services.

Chapter Ten: Crossing the Finish Line

- Celebrating the accomplishment of finishing a book and becoming an author
- Encouraging users to reflect on their writing journey and future possibilities

“Every book has a soul, the soul of the person who wrote it and the soul of those who read it and dream about it.” Carlos Ruiz Zafón

Congratulations!

By reaching this chapter, you're either on the brink of completing your life story or already doing so. This is no small feat, and it's a moment deserving of pause and celebration. You've journeyed through memories, navigated challenges, and contributed a permanent mark to the annals of your history.

Celebrate Your Achievement

First and foremost, celebrate yourself. Finishing your book is a monumental accomplishment that not many can claim. You've dedicated time, emotion, and energy to documenting your life in a way that's uniquely yours. Take a moment to appreciate the work you've put into this project. Whether it's a quiet moment of reflection or a small celebration with loved ones, acknowledge your hard work and dedication.

Becoming an Author

You are now an author—an identity that carries prestige and responsibility with it. As an author, you've joined a special community of storytellers and knowledge bearers. Your book is a testament to your life's experiences and your willingness to share them. It's a vehicle through which others can learn, be inspired, or find comfort.

Printing and Sharing Your Work

This is the easy part if you use the DIYBook platform to write your book!

DIYBook formats your book for you—all you need to do is choose your title, cover image, and whether you'd like hardcover or paperback.

Reflect on Your Journey

Take some time to reflect on the process you've just completed.

Challenges Overcome

What were the biggest obstacles you faced while writing your book, and how did you overcome them? Reflecting on these can show you how much you've grown as a writer and person.

Skills Acquired

Consider the new skills and knowledge you've gained through this process. Writing a book is not just about penning down memories. It's also about learning patience, organization, and, sometimes, complex software!

Emotional Insights

Writing about one's life is an emotional undertaking. You may have unearthed memories long forgotten or processed feelings you hadn't fully addressed. Acknowledge these emotional journeys as part of your writing accomplishment.

Look to the Future

What comes next after the last page? Here are a few possibilities:

Share Your Story

Consider the different ways you can share your book. You might give copies to family and friends, or perhaps you'll find a local bookstore or library interested in your work. Sharing your story isn't just about distribution; it's about starting conversations, inspiring others, and leaving a legacy.

Write More

Now that you've completed one book, you might find that you have more stories to tell. Perhaps a particular chapter of your life could be expanded into another book, or maybe this process has sparked ideas for entirely new projects.

Teach Others

Your journey could be incredibly valuable to others looking to write their own life stories. Consider hosting a workshop, speaking at local events, or even writing a blog about your experience.

Continuing Your Writing with DIYBook

Remember, your relationship with DIYBook doesn't have to end here. Our platform and community are here to support your continued journey. Whether it's through starting a new writing project, editing your existing work, or exploring other writing genres, we are here for you.

Final Words of Encouragement

Every word you've written has contributed to the incredible tapestry of your life. As you move forward, carry with you the knowledge that your experiences, your memories, and your words hold value—not just for you, but for everyone who reads them. Your story is a beacon, a lasting legacy that will inspire and teach others for generations to come.

You did it! Let's celebrate every word.

FAQ

How did DIYBook get started?

Many people never write their stories because of the high cost of hiring a professional ghostwriter, so we created DIYBook as an affordable and easy-to-use solution to help Authors write their stories.

How does the membership work?

Membership with DIYBook provides you with access to DIYBook. Your membership will be automatically renewed on the one-year anniversary of signing up and will reflect the renewal membership fee.

I want to write more than one book with DIYBook. Can I do that?

Yes! You can write as many books of the same kind as you want in your Author Account.

How do I cancel my membership?

You can cancel your membership at any time through your Author Account. When you cancel, you will not be charged for any renewals of your membership. There are no refunds for memberships that have already been purchased.

Are you ready to tell your story but don't know where to start?



In *How to Write Your Life Story: A Guide to the DIYBook Program*, Barbara Basbanes Richter unlocks the secrets to crafting your memoir with ease and confidence. Whether you're a veteran writer or putting pen to paper for the first time, this comprehensive guide will walk you through every step of the process.

Inside, you'll discover:

- * How to overcome writer's block and find your unique voice
- * Techniques for tackling difficult topics with grace and honesty
- * Tips for editing your work like a pro Strategies for working with professional ghostwriters and designers

With the innovative DIYBook program at your fingertips, you'll have all the tools you need to transform your memories into a compelling narrative. Richter's friendly, encouraging approach makes the daunting task of writing your life story not just manageable, but enjoyable. Don't let your story go untold!