

# How to Hire a Book Ghostwriter

10 VITAL QUESTIONS  
FOR YOUR FIRST  
MEETING

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By Carol Tice

Do you have a book idea that you've been struggling to write? If so, don't feel alone.

Many CEOs, philanthropists, investors, founders, and other brilliant people have great ideas that they'd like to get out in the world. They want to make a positive impact.

But writing is hard and time-consuming! Most first-time authors quickly discover it's a struggle to weave their ideas into a fascinating narrative. Especially if they're busy people.

If you haven't been playing with words as your full-time career, there's a long learning curve to get the hang of creating a compelling, book-length narrative.

That's why there are book ghostwriters like me. A talented book ghostwriter will take this chore off your plate and work hard to create the book you want—a book that reads exactly like you sat down and wrote it.



# Why Hire a Book Ghostwriter ?

There are two main reasons to hire a ghostwriter for your book: You don't feel you're able to write the book you want yourself, you don't have the time to make it happen quickly—or both.

Why might you need a book, and soon? Common reasons for fast-tracking a book with a ghostwriter include a need to:

- Build authority and level-up your career or brand
- Raise your profile in your industry
- Receive invites to speak or serve on boards
- Sell a 'book in the back of the room' at events
- Book more consulting clients
- Attract funding for your startup
- Position yourself as the go-to expert in your field
- Get more free publicity/media mentions
- Attract your next great CEO/C-Suite job offer
- Share your amazing journey to inspire and uplift others

In short, a book is the ultimate reputation enhancer. No short-form content imparts the gravitas that a book does.



Many thought leaders hire a ghostwriter because they've reached the point where they feel, "I've got to get my book out there, or I'll explode!"

If you've got a burning desire to become a book author, but realize you're unlikely to produce a masterpiece on your own, and you need your ideas out there now... it's time to hire a book ghostwriter.

Hiring a pro puts an expert wordsmith in your corner and makes your book happen fast.

The alternative is that your book happens many years from now—or possibly never. Or it doesn't turn out as great as you'd hoped.

## **How to Find a Book Ghostwriter**

How can you find the perfect ghostwriter for your book? The process is a little like dating. You're looking for someone you hit it off with personally, who has the skills to make your book a must-read that's authentically 'you.'

One easy way to find book ghostwriters is to search within your network for a ‘book ghostwriter’ on LinkedIn. Visit writers’ profiles, looking for past titles in the Featured section or in their Experience entries. Read their LinkedIn Recommendations for raves from past clients.

Your dream date has ghostwritten books before.

When you’ve found a few promising ghostwriters with experience in your topic, it’s time to schedule a meeting. These days, most happen on Zoom, as the author needs a sense of your personality.

This is a mutual interview. The ghost has to love what you’re doing, and you have to feel confident this ghostwriter will create a compelling book that feels like you wrote it.

Feeling ready to hire a ghostwriter and create your brilliant manifesto? Then let’s go over the key questions you need to answer to start a ghostwriter collaboration.



# Your First Meeting With a Book

## Ghostwriter:

### Be Ready to Answer These 10 Questions

What is your book ghostwriter going to ask you? Here are the top questions you'll likely hear at a first meet:

#### **1. Tell me about your book. What's the title or concept?**

If you can't answer this one, you're simply not ready to hire a ghostwriter. You need your basic book idea crystallized in your head to move forward.

Struggling to summarize it? If so, imagine you're at a cocktail party and everyone has had a few.

A stranger asks what you're doing, and you say you're working on a book. "What's it about?" they ask. Your answer is: \_\_\_\_\_.

If you can't fill in that blank, you're not ready to work with a book ghostwriter yet.

## 2. Why is this the book you're writing, and why is it needed now?

As with most big projects, there needs to be a 'why.'

Why do you feel driven to create this particular book, of all the topics you might share? What do you know that you feel others don't, but that they urgently need to hear? What's happening in the culture or the world today that makes your idea or personal story 'of the moment'?

Creating a book takes months—usually 4-6 months for a full-length nonfiction book. Without a strong reason why we need to do this, the project is likely to flame out before the book is completed.



### 3. How do you plan to publish your book?

There are two basic ways books come into the world: You pitch and land a traditional publishing deal, or you self-publish, using one of several available approaches. Your book ghostwriter needs to know which lane you plan to drive down, right at the start.

Why? Because the first project you'll do with your ghostwriter is totally different, depending on which way you plan to publish.

#### The Self-Publishing Journey

If you're self-publishing, the first step is to outline the book. If an author is struggling to find the right structure for their book, we'll often do an outline project first.

Why? Because [book structure is massively important](#), if you want readers to stick with your book through to the end.

Knowledge of all the different possible book structures for nonfiction is one of the big assets a pro ghostwriter brings to the table. A good ghost will review the options with you and make sure your book is structured for success.

Once outlined, a book you're self-publishing moves straight into writing the full manuscript. Boom! Soon, you've got a draft.

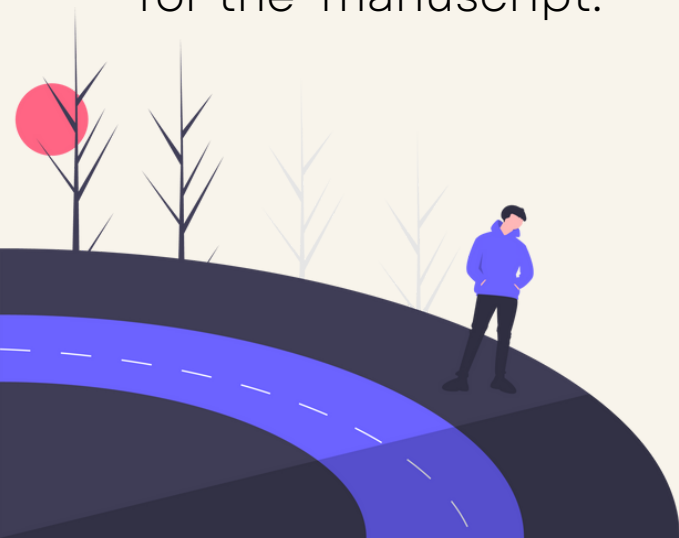


# The Long and Winding Road to a Book Deal

If your dream is to land a traditional book deal, the first step is to create a book proposal. That's what agents who pitch publishers and editors at traditional publishing houses want to see, to consider signing you as an author. The book proposal consists of:

- A table of contents (the outline)
- Three sample chapters
- Market research about competing titles and how your book is different
- Your bio, ideally stressing your established authority and pre-built audience that's dying to buy the book
- A marketing plan for how you will promote the book (yes, usually that task is still on you)

The book proposal is a project unto itself, separate from writing the manuscript. Professional ghostwriters typically charge \$10,000 for book proposals. Some of that fee may be applicable against the writing fee if you land a book deal and move forward with the same ghostwriter for the manuscript.



## How to decide on a publishing approach

Here's one important question to help you choose your publication route: Do you need your book out soon?

If so, you're going to want to self-publish. A traditionally published, print book usually takes nearly 2 years to see the light of day, from the moment you have a contract and start writing. The editing process alone can take a full year.

That timeline assumes you find a publisher the minute you want one—and that's unlikely. The timeline from creating your book proposal to getting a deal extends from now until... potentially, forever.

Most aspiring authors who hold out for a traditional book deal will never get one. It's harsh to hear, but it's reality.

Maybe you have publishing-industry connections or already have interest from a traditional publisher. If so, great—it's always wonderful to pay for your ghostwriter fees out of your publisher's advance. Otherwise, I strongly advise you to consider self-publishing if you need to build authority now.

#### 4. What is your goal for this book?

This simple question helps your book ghostwriter understand why we're doing this, and what success looks like. It might be anything from helping you get your first CEO job to landing more consulting clients, to simply leaving a legacy and making sure your ideas are preserved for posterity.

#### 5. Who is the audience?

This is a question you want to discuss, because you want a ghostwriter with experience writing to your target audience. If your ghostwriter has been working on children's books but your book is for C-suite executives, you're not a good fit.



## 6. What's your deadline?

This question should come early in the discussion, because if your schedules don't line up, you can wish each other well and move on. If you need this book in your hand at a conference that's 6 months out and a draft in 90 days, but the ghostwriter is too busy to start for the next 3 weeks, you probably can't work together.

A note about timeframes for ghosted books: The writing either happens on a fairly short, defined timeline, or the timeline is open-ended.

I'm firmly in the first category. I want to drive to completion in 4-6 months. I'm results-oriented. I want your book to see the light of day!

If creating the book is a low priority for you and could be completed any old time 5 years from now, you want a ghostwriter who's willing to roll with that.

A warning: You'll tend to pay more on an open-ended timeline. Most book ghosts will charge you hourly in this scenario. The bills will keep coming, sometimes over many years. You also may see some delays, as your project won't be top priority and the ghost will need to fit you in between more pressing deadlines.

## 7. How will we write this book together?

There are a lot of ways ghostwritten books can happen—and the amount of time your method requires will impact your investment.

We might talk for a single hour to give me a sense of your voice. Then I do a lot of research and write. I've done a book that way.

Alternatively, you might have existing materials to work from—blog posts, speeches, trainings, research. Or perhaps you have a list of experts who are willing to be quoted. Obviously, working from pre-existing materials is faster and usually more affordable.

Most often, I've worked with authors who need their ideas pulled out of their head through interviews. In this case, I've found weekly 45 min.-1-hour Zoom meetings create steady progress. We talk, I write a chapter or two for your review and feedback. Lather, rinse, repeat until the book's done.

It's time-consuming, but often the only way to produce a great book in your voice.

Collaborating on a book can feel overwhelming—which is why I often give short homework assignments to help authors stay focused on their next priority. A good ghostwriter should 'drive the bus' and make sure your manuscript keeps moving toward completion.

## 8. Are you open to an ‘as told to’ or ‘with’ co-author credit for your ghostwriter?

This isn't something I care about, because I've already got two bylined traditional print titles and about 15 self-published e-books. I don't need more credit, and am perfectly happy to stay behind the scenes.

But some ghostwriters would like recognition, possibly because they're still building their portfolio and it'll help them get more book-ghosting contracts.

Consider whether or not you're willing to grant a 'with' or 'as told to' credit. Another credit option is to give your ghost a 'thank you' in your acknowledgements at the end.

## 9. Are you aware of professional rates for ghostwriting a book?

Many aspiring authors have never hired a book ghostwriter before. That means you have no idea what ghostwriters earn. So the fee conversation can get pretty awkward.

Let me help: [Professional rates to create a full-length business book \(225-250 pages\) begin around \\$35,000-\\$40,000](#) and go up from there to \$75,000 and more. Remember, your writer will devote 4-6 months of their life, nearly full-time, to creating your masterwork.

Obviously, a shorter book or one created from pre-existing materials will cost less.

What you'll pay depends in part on the services and track record you want in your ghostwriter.

The \$75K earners usually have a track record of selling book proposals to traditional publishers or have ghosted major-list bestsellers. They may also have niche expertise such as celeb memoirs or knowledge of complex industries.

“But wait—I’ve heard I could get my book written for \$3,000.”

Certainly, you could. There are plenty of websites online where you can find desperate people willing to write for a pittance.

But this is a serious ‘you get what you pay for’ situation. If you’re trying to build authority or inspire others with your book, it needs to be great writing, not hackwork. This person holds your future and legacy in their hands.

You want them to care that this book is amazing, life-changing, and impressive to readers. And \$3,000 does not buy a lot of care. Don't be shocked if the resulting book isn't even grammatically correct.

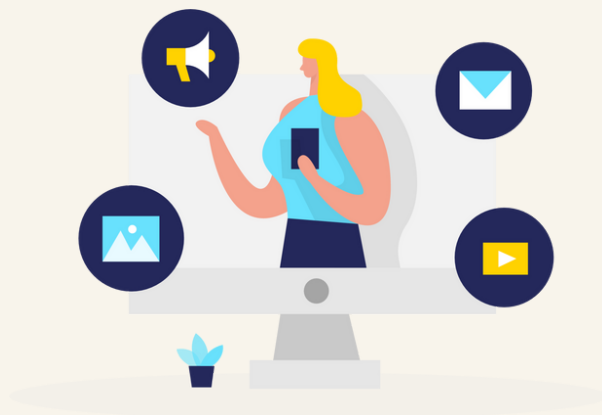
If getting a brilliant book written for tiny money sounds too good to be true, that’s because it is.

## 10. What additional services might you need?

A book is a business launch. Most first-time authors have a million questions about how they will get their book edited/designed/printed, and how they'll sell their book and make money with it. You may be looking for additional help such as:

- Introductions to agents or publishers
- Marketing or PR help
- A referral to a book editor
- Leads for cover design / book production / publishing
- Insights on building successful Facebook / Goodreads / Amazon ads
- SEO expertise
- Content strategy or blog-post writing

None of these things are included in the book ghostwriting fee. That fee covers ghostwriting the book. Period.





Your ghostwriter may not offer any of these other services—or they may have some additional skills.

**What I bring:** I've successfully used lead-gen e-books to build a blog-based online business (that I sold in '21) and that earned \$60K+. So I usually include an hour of book-marketing tips in my writing contracts.

Over the years, I've built a referral list of editors, book designers, and PR people that I share with my authors.

Since I have a strong track record driving traffic with blogging and SEO for Forbes and my own biz, I'm sometimes also hired to write promotional content in book marketing campaigns.

Think about your needs—then, ask a few questions to get a full picture of what additional services your ghostwriter might be able to offer beyond writing the manuscript.



## I Can't Afford This. What Now?

If you're having sticker shock right now, take heart. There are a few budget ways to work with a pro ghostwriter.

One great way is to do a [book outline project](#), to make sure you have a strong narrative structure and your book gets read. With this detailed road map (including subheads within chapters), you might then try to write the book yourself.

I usually charge \$5,000 for a full-length book outline, with a substantial portion of that fee creditable towards the writing, if I also write the manuscript. It may sound like a lot, but a ton of information-gathering is needed to create a detailed outline that sets up your book for success.

You might also write a rough draft of your book and hire a ghostwriter to do a rewrite or polish. Alternatively, you could work with a developmental editor to improve your draft.



# Questions Authors Should Ask a Ghostwriter

A first meeting is a two-way street. You should have questions for your ghostwriter, to help you understand what they bring to the table. A few good questions to ask:

## How many titles have you ghostwritten recently?

Ideally, your ghostwriter does this full-time and has worked on multiple titles. Watch out for first-timers and for dabblers who last wrote a book years ago. You want a writer whose book-writing muscles are getting regular exercise.

## What genres of books have you ghostwritten?

The more similar past titles are to the book you want written, the better.

## Can I see samples of your ghostwritten titles?

You likely won't see ghostwritten titles on a writer's website, but many ghosts have permission to share samples privately. They should also have bylined work you can review.

## Can I talk with past authors you've worked with, or see recommendations?

This is a must. Successful ghosts have rave reviews to share with you, and can readily connect you with past authors they've worked with who can share their collaboration experience. You can see my author reviews on my [LinkedIn profile](#).

## Ready to Hire a Book Ghostwriter?

If reading through this list of questions made you realize your moment to hire a book ghostwriter has come, then I'm excited for you! Getting your book out there is an amazing feeling—and can be transformative for your career and your life.

I hope you find the perfect ghostwriter for your book, and that you're able to realize your dream of becoming a published author.

Wondering if I'm a fit for your book ghostwriting project? Let's talk. Check out my books at <https://www.caroltice.com>, or email me at [carol@caroltice.com](mailto:carol@caroltice.com).

