

## Using Time Effectively : for First- Book Writers

First published as Guest blog post for Lee Kofman's 'The Writing Life'

*Covering the issues of time and energy management and how early strategic decisions can focus your writing , reduce frustration and help in later publicity.*

- *Your book in one sentence.*
- *Apt title*
- *Pitching, Synopses & BCB (Back Cover Blurbs)*
- *Covers as clues*
- *Links*

Stuck in the middle of a BIG writing project? Then you realize! You've been doing it the wrong way. There's too much stuff. And not enough TIME.

Relax. All writers, even highly experienced ones, have the same feeling mid project. Being an author is about time and energy management.

Here are THREE strategies for a BIG book, whether you are an aspiring or multi-published author.

1. Describe your book in ONE SENTENCE.

This will focus on the themes or idea threads in your story. Hint at the conflict. But you can't do this until you have a title.

e.g. Via anecdultery, memoir 'Not Just a Piece of Cake; Being an Author' shares the risks of being an author longterm when you also have a family. (26 words)

2. Choose the title, very, very carefully. Invest time here. Titles are the first clues for the reader but also for you, of what your story is about. Tag 'Working Title' onto your temporary heading until you find the BEST TITLE for that story, Be prepared to discard many. An effective title hints at conflict, genre and even the tone of the book.

The major character's name is not enough. Maybe a sub title will help?

Change the word order, Make it a question? Or re-use a phrase significant

in the book. Position an unexpected word like, 'Writing a Non Boring Family History'.

Say it aloud. For media interviews, that title must be memorable and easy to say, for you and them.

My memoir is called 'Not Just a Piece of Cake: Being an Author', the 19<sup>th</sup> choice for title. Notice reversed emphasis on cover by font size, by marketing department. The rationale was: 'Cake' is relevant to my cake-eating hippo on the roof picture book series, but the memoir is meant for adults. 'A piece of cake' is a colloquial phrase which means something is easy. Writing for children is NOT easy. It's harder than writing for adults. This memoir is about the process of creativity; being a longterm author with a family who writes in various genres. The 'Being an Author' is the factual link for cataloguing. So I played around with lots of cake titles. 'Takes the cake' 'Slice' which fits with memoir being a slice of life and cake.' 'Let hippos eat cake' was discarded.

Hint: Name not number your chapters. Take the best chapter heading for your book title.

Consider length. A one word ambiguous title where all the meanings apply is ideal but hard to find. Extra long titles can be informative but time consuming to say or write on forms.

Also has to fit the cover design.

'Celebrant Sleuth; I do or die...' was a compromise title to cover the mystery genre but also the wedding and funeral settings where celebrants work.

Fake I.D is my best title.

### 3. Pitching

A pitch, a synopsis (synopses is plural) and a back cover blurb are NOT the same.

But the idea content may be. And some of the strategic phrases can be re-used.

Different formats for different purposes.

A PITCH is a 2-3 minute outline to convince a publisher to invest in this project. May be spoken or written. Will be drafted even before book is written.

A SYNOPSIS may never be published but forces the writer to plot and format the entire story in a way to intrigue with motives, setting and fast characterization. One page only. Placed on the front of the manuscript. Handout used with pitch.

A BACK COVER BLURB is to inform the potential reader what the book is about. If written carefully, can be used for publicity.

The discipline of writing a one page synopsis of your book forces you to plan the whole project. Some writers do it in reverse.

Keep to word limit.

Until I drafted the blurb, I hadn't realized my unconventional memoir was about intellectual, physical and cultural risk-taking plus the process of using 'Anecdultery' as a storytelling structure.

Jot down the 10 most common questions you are asked about this project and write brief answers. These form a generic Q& A resource for pr. But don't use in exactly the same way for different interviews.

e.g.

### **What is anecdultery?**

Telling stories as anecdotes and using that as the structure.

Often the 'indie' author has to be the publicist too. With only 24 hours in a day, time and energy management matters. Have a generic description of less than 100 words which you can attach to any media. Could be the BCB (back cover blurb) like this but needs to be written in the style (and tone) of the book.

Not Just a Piece of Cake –Being an Author

Hazel Edwards has a cake-eating hippo on her roof , an OAM for Literature and thousands of book-children,as well as a real family, Plus the Hazelnuts she has mentored and a readership in thirteen languages.

Using 'anecdultery', Hazel explains why writing, longterm, is

[www.hazeledwards.com](http://www.hazeledwards.com)

mentally risky but vital culturally and contributes to a non-boring life. The hippocampus is where memories are kept, even those of Antarctica, where Hazel was an expeditioner. She shares her author quest and the quandary of how much to reveal.

(OAM is not for Hippo as an Outsized, Awesome Myth.)

Having this kind of information on the cover via blurb and bio is a time efficient way of sharing publicity via one file.

Then add link to your website book page

e.g.

<https://hazeledwards.com/not-just-a-piece-of-cake-being-an-author.html>

Put a hi-res magazine quality author photo ( & cover) on your website under Media Resources for easy download. Saves time, looks professional and controls the quality of the visuals.

[\*\*https://www.hazeledwards.com/book-day-resources.html\*\*](https://www.hazeledwards.com/book-day-resources.html)

Don't agonise over what you HAVEN'T written about. Save that for the next project.

[www.hazeledwards.com](http://www.hazeledwards.com) has hints for Aspiring Writers.