

Template for a Non-Fiction Book proposal

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Cover Page

A nice optional extra. It can look like a book cover, or just contain the book's title, your name and contact information, and the bookstore category under which the book will be shelved (e.g. Health/Self-Help)

Summary

Write this last. It's the executive overview. Short, no more than two pages double spaced. Purpose: if the editor reads nothing else, she'll at least know what you have in mind. Ideally, it will be sufficiently compelling to make the editor read the rest.

The Market

This section shows that you have thought through the question of who will buy the book and why.

Audience

How many people would be interested in this book? Give demographics if possible, citing your sources. Show that you've done your homework.

Other Books

The competition: how many books are out there on the same subject and how your book will be different.

The Book

Take as much space as you need to give the editor a clear picture of what you have in mind. You might write this with an eye to using some or all as the book's introduction. Set the stage for what you're going to tell the reader, provide a bit of factual material (with references if appropriate.) Describe any features that will make the book unique.

Content Overview

Chapter by chapter, describe the contents of the book, one or two paragraphs per chapter. Give samples; e.g. if you're going to use personal case histories, make up a couple and put them with the appropriate chapters. If you're going to use quizzes, make up a few sample questions. Indicate whether there will be appendices and what they will contain. Mention that the book will be indexed (if it's a non-fiction book, an index is a must.)

Book Length, Illustrations, and Delivery

For example: "A manuscript of about 95,000 words will be delivered within one year after the signing of a contract. Illustrations will consist of line art. Color will not be required."

Marketing and Promotion

The publisher wants to know that you will be vigorous in promoting your own book. Here you tell what activities you intend to undertake. Spend time researching and writing this section. It and the one on the market are the most important parts of the proposal, from the publisher's point of view. Show that you have the savvy, energy, and enthusiasm to make your book a success (even if you don't always feel that way.)

Author's Qualifications

Who are you, what have you written, and what motivates you to write this book? This is not the time to be self-effacing. Exaggeration is not useful, but an honest statement of your qualifications is essential.

Appendices and Supporting Material

May not be necessary. Depends on the nature of the book.

Note: I've sold nine books using this format. I hope it works as well for you.