

HOW TO

HOW TO WRITE A KID'S BOOK (AND PUBLISH IT, AND TRY TO SELL IT, AND ALL THAT OTHER STUFF TOO)

SO YOU WENT AND GOT YOURSELF A KID. MAYBE BY ACCIDENT, MAYBE ON PURPOSE. EITHER WAY IT GOT INTO YOUR HOUSE AND CHANCES ARE YOU REALLY LOVE THE LITTLE THING AND JUST CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER WAY TO PROFESS YOUR LOVE THAN THROUGH A STORY... YOUR OWN STORY. YES, JUST LIKE THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PARENTS BEFORE YOU, YOU HAVE SPENT EVERY NIGHT SINCE YOUR CHILD'S BIRTH READING BOOK AFTER SIMPLY-DRAWN, MINIMALLY-WORDED BOOK AND THINKING "HEY - I COULD DO THAT". WELL, TAKE IT FROM A FELLOW PARENT AND FORMER ASPIRING KID'S BOOK-AUTHOR. YOU CAN! AND YOU SHOULD. HERE'S HOW:

Step 1: Have an idea. This is a crucial step. If you do not have an idea - a concept, a message, a thought - you shouldn't bother making a kid's book. This isn't to say an idea is prerequisite for making things, we all know plenty of popular artworks have been crafted from no idea whatsoever and made many people much more money than you or I might ever see but...well... just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. Besides it'd be quicker and easier for you to make a blog at this point. Save the trees.

Step 2: Once you have an idea, try to imagine communicating that idea to a child. Children, like most of your friends really, love it when you mask a big powerful thought with a lot of small pictures, simple words and fun colors. Don't believe me? Have a look through all of your favorite movies, books, music, photos, and fine art. All of them, at their best, match big themes with simple hooks. Star Wars, The Beatles, Dr. Seuss, rap music - all big ideas are expressed in a way that everyone can understand.

Step 3: Write it. Fast. Before you get scared. Chances are if you have a kid you have passed the point in your life where you can still jump down a set of stairs without first considering the consequences, but in this case you can't worry too much about what's going to happen. You weren't worrying about that when you were making the kid were you? Of course not. And look how rad that turned out! Just put it down on paper.

Step 4: Draw it. Okay, so this might be tricky for some of you. Maybe you're not an artist, maybe you are but you don't think you are good enough. Who knows, and honestly who cares? It's for kids! Have you ever seen a kid draw a picture? It's always totally crazy and messed up - like a cat with one big body and no head and four stick legs all on the front. But guess what - You can still tell it's a cat. Kids don't care. That's why they are awesome.

Step 5: Put it on a computer. Scan it, size it, lay it out... I assume since you are reading this magazine you know the drill, but if you don't just find someone who does. They are EVERYWHERE. Art colleges and coffee shops especially. This step might cost you a few bucks or some clever bartering but it will be worth it in the long run because once you have a nice PDF of your book laid out you'll never have to do it again.

Step 6: Print it. You are in luck, for you have access to (drumroll) THE INTERNET!!! Yep, all that separates you from printing a book is a series of phone calls and emails. You have to decide what you want: what size, what color, how many pages, what cover and paper stock. Then you have to try and find someone who will make it for you. This might take one try or it might take 20 but most places worth dealing with will send you an online quote and samples of their work for free, all you have to do is ask

Step 7: Test pressing. After you decide on your printer and agree on how many books you want (more books = cheaper price per book but also = greater chances of getting stuck with a living room full of books you can't sell) you will send off your PDF and get a test proof made. Your proof will likely have at least one thing wrong with it, and you will make adjustments and then pay your printer (half up front) to send it off to be printed.

Step 8: Don't freak out. Your printer will take anywhere from two weeks to three months to ship your finished books to you. In the meantime you are going to want to think about all of the things that could go wrong: What if it comes back upside down? What if the colors are wrong? What if it's in Chinese? What if this printer steals my money and closes shop? Hey, there's nothing you can do now. Just chill. Go get some fresh air. Take a trip. You just wrote a book, fool. That's badass!

Step 9: The arrival. Holy crap! That's what 1,000 books look like? They can't even fit this truck up my street! I live in an apartment! What a glorious day it will be for you, unwrapping those first boxes and looking inside to realize "Woah...what the hell am I going to do with these?"

Step 10: Sell 'em! How, you ask? I don't know man, how does anyone sell anything? There are lots of people in the world, and you probably only know about 100 of them and the rest, just like you, all like to buy things from time to time - hotdogs, cocaine, designer jeans. Why should your children's book be any different? Disneyland isn't going to build itself! Go knock on some doors (or at very least virtual web-based doors) and start sharing. After all, this all started with a good idea (see step 1) that you wanted to tell people. So don't get all bashful now that it's done. You are a kid's book writer now. Go change the world! - Dallas Clayton

