

30 SIMPLE WAYS TO INCREASE BOOK SALES



2019

PillowTalk B♡♡KS

Introduction

You've spent hours, weeks, months—maybe even years—writing and polishing your book. You've edited it, you've proofread it, you've designed a great cover, and you've published it. Now you're just waiting for readers to find your masterpiece.

But no one's reading it.

With more than a million books published a year, including self-published titles, it's harder than it's ever been to stand out from the crowd and grab a reader's attention. The days of sitting back and letting a crisply written synopsis and a fabulous jacket design reel in readers are over. Authors looking to build an audience must work diligently to establish a fan base and, once that base is established, to keep readers engaged and enthusiastic.

Traditional book marketing efforts, such as print ads, radio ads, postal mailing lists, promotional postcards, and bookstore readings are becoming less and less effective in reaching potential readers. Print ads are flipped past, postcards are thrown out, and too many authors show up to bookstore events only to face rows of empty chairs. At a time when literally thousands of books are published each month, any author seeking to create a community of readers cannot afford to do nothing. You are your book's best cheerleader, and like any cheerleader, you need an array of approaches for drumming up the audience's enthusiasm.

There's good news: the real work of [book promotion](#) is now largely an online affair, which means there are numerous marketing strategies available to get your book in the spotlight. This guide offers you thirty easy-to-follow ideas designed to help you promote your book and develop a loyal reader base that will follow you throughout your writing career. Some of these ideas are simple and straightforward—two traits any novelist will appreciate after trying to plot a book. Others require a little more thought, a little more legwork. All have the potential to make a real difference in your publishing experience and, taken together, can pay dividends when it comes to both book sales and the grassroots growth of your fan base.

One thing is clear, however: promotion is most challenging for the self-published author. Without the publicity support most traditionally published authors enjoy, such as a dedicated publicist and a marketing budget, self-published authors are at a distinct disadvantage. However, effort pays off. A 2017 BookBaby Self-Publishing Survey found that the most successful authors, based on royalties earned, were those who “invested time, effort and possibly money to promote their titles.”

While the strategies outlined in this book will help any author, regardless of his or her publishing journey, they are geared toward self-published and hybrid-published authors, as well as the traditionally published author who finds that the publisher's marketing and publicity resources are scant. The days of simply publishing a book and waiting for readers to find it are over. In order to gain an audience, authors must go from solitary artist to a triple threat: writer, marketer, and publicist. These thirty ideas are fun, painless, and effective and will make a positive impact on your publishing experience

Create an Author Facebook Page

[Facebook](#) is often the first place, besides an author's website, that a reader looks to in order to find information about a book or series. After all, Facebook is still the most widely used social media site in the world, with 2.32 billion monthly active users. The company reports that on average, Like and Share buttons are seen across almost 10 million websites daily. And book lovers flock to the site. One Westerns-genre fan group boasts 25,000 members. A sci-fi group has 7.5 million active users. There is a vibrant audience of readers on Facebook, and any author who hasn't created a page is missing out. After all, if readers like your book, they should be able to "like" it, too.

You may already have a personal Facebook page, but it's important to create a separate page for your work. There are many how-to guides online for getting a Facebook author page up and running, but once you've got the scaffolding up, consider the following:

- Make sure your profile header picture includes a jacket image of your book or some other promotional imagery you've developed for your book: this will make it easier for your readers to find you and to identify your books.
- Include an author head shot: Unless you're writing under a pseudonym or anonymously, a head shot is a must for an author looking to connect with her readers, who are typically curious about the authors of books they read. An author photo puts a face to the name.
- Keep your event listings up-to-date and include photos from previous events, making sure to tag the venue, especially if it's a bookstore.
- Update your page regularly with information about books you might have in the works, reviews you've received, and any deals that might be running for your book. One thing to consider is Facebook's requirement that you establish a personal page before you're allowed to build an author page. Some users have grown increasingly uncomfortable with Facebook's data collection practices. You can control your presence on your personal page by making it bare bones, with only basic information, which will then allow you to create your author page. There are also privacy controls available that may create a less invasive experience on the site.

Create an Author Website

Facebook is often just the landing point for a reader interested in learning more about you and your work—and the site also has its limitations. A personal website is to Facebook what a novel is to a work of flash fiction. You can offer your reader far more information on a personal website, creating separate pages for your books, your bio, your contact information, a blog, and your events calendar. If you are the author of more than one book, you may want to create pages for each book or series, with synopses or blurbs, reviews, and ordering information, as well as links to sites where your readers can buy the book.

Some authors might choose to make a website just for their book or books rather than for themselves as an author (or a “brand”). That’s a personal decision. The key is that readers can easily find out more about you and your books if they’re interested.

Don’t know where to begin? You can hire a web designer to build your site from scratch, though this can often be prohibitively expensive. There are also numerous platform-building sites that offer easy-to-navigate site builders for a modest fee, often coupled with web hosting services. Authors often choose [Squarespace](#), [Wix](#), [Wordpress](#), or [SiteBuilder](#) due to their ease of use and competitive pricing. If you are a member of [Authors Guild](#), which recently extended membership opportunities to self-published authors, you can take advantage of their website building options. (A bonus of Authors Guild membership is free legal help with contracts.)

One way to add to the “stickiness” of your site—a term used to describe how often and how long visitors interact with your site—is to incorporate social sharing widgets. As you build your site, consider adding Facebook Like and Tweet This buttons, LinkedIn share widgets, and other ways for your website visitors to share your content.

Do a Photo Shoot for Your Book

Once you have a physical copy of your book, consider doing a photo shoot with your book as the model. There are countless fun ways to do this. You can do it the old-fashioned way, by setting the book on a table and taking photographs of it, much like a still-life painting. You could also give a friend or loved one a copy of the book and take a picture of him or her reading it. To create a sense of spontaneity, why not take the book—and a friendly reader—out into the world for your photo? Get a candid shot of your friend reading your book on a bus, the subway, a park bench, a coffee shop. Photos like this are hugely popular on Instagram, for example, posts of absorbed readers on New York City subways. In fact, there is one book marketing team, called [Books on the Subway](#), that publishers pay to take and post photos of commuters holding up copies of newly published books, then leave five or ten copies of the book on different subway cars for people to find and read. Another option for a photo shoot could be to take a picture of your book “in the wild”—i.e. in a bookstore or library.

What if your book is electronic-only? An e-book can have a photo shoot, too. Snap a picture of your book as it appears on an e-reader. You can arrange a tableau, like a cup of tea, some pastries, and the e-reader set to the first page of your cozy mystery. Or a butcher knife, some freshly chopped carrots, and your Kindle showing the jacket image of your culinary murder mystery. As a writer, your imagination is your greatest asset—don’t be afraid to use it! Thinking creatively about your “photo shoot” will enable you to come up with fresh ideas for featuring your book and compiling great promotional images for the rest of your publicity campaign.

Post Frequent Updates

If you are a user of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, or any other social site, it can feel overwhelming to post regularly. However, it's important to stay in touch with your fans through regular updates. There are aggregating applications that can make this easier. [HootSuite](#) is one option that allows you to schedule social media posts, track post performance, and analyze audience engagement, though it charges a monthly fee. [TweetDeck](#) is free option that will let you write tweets in bulk and schedule them for release. But if you want to do things the old-fashioned way, simply schedule a time once or even twice a day to interact with your social media following by posting, responding to other posts, re-tweeting, sharing relevant Facebook posts, tagging others in your Instagram post, and so on.

Not sure what to post about? Your readers are interested in anything book-related, of course, such as book signing events or readings, great reviews, news about upcoming books, and so on. But don't underestimate your reader's interest in your writing process, your hobbies, and your interests. Stephen King, for example, is a frequent Tweeter, and while he does share updates about his own work, he's just as enthusiastic about recommending the work of other writers, often tagging their handles.

However, different platforms require different approaches. Instagram is photo-centric, so sharing photos from your book "photo shoot" would be a good choice for a post. Facebook is good for photos and text, so including shots from a book event, along with a quick recap of the event would make for a very shareable post. Twitter, with its character limit, is better for quick posts about publication dates, book events, book recommendations, or links. Don't forget to interact with others on these platforms—a re-tweet, a Like, or a share is usually appreciated and often reciprocated. The key is to post regularly, even when you don't think you have anything to say or share. Even if it's just a candid admission that you've had a tough writing session, staying in touch with your readers will cement that relationship and keep your fans coming back for more.

Run Online Ads To Your Book

While print ads may be a case of diminishing returns, online ads can make a substantial impact on any book's promotional campaign. And the costs are fairly reasonable. Facebook, Reddit, Twitter, and even Instagram allow users to purchase ad space to promote their products. For the most part, these advertisements are elegantly integrated into the user's experience of the site, often mimicking user-generated content and therefore garnering more views. However, be realistic in your expectations of how many sales these ads will actually generate. A large portion of the impact will be simply making readers aware of your book. A Goodreads ad, for example, allows the author to not only track how many clicks an ad received but also how many times users exposed to the ad put the book on their to-read lists.

Facebook ads are typically highly targeted, which means the demographic most likely to buy your book will see your advertisement. When purchasing an ad, you will be able to select

keywords and even target your audience by occupation, age, job titles, and hobbies. If you've written a business book, you can design an ad that will only be shown to Facebook users who have self-identified as business owners or employees in business-related fields. An ad for your romance novel can be shown to fans of Nora Roberts. The user interface for Facebook is fairly intuitive, so it should be easy to narrow your desired audience. However, you need to have a good idea of your demographic, something that will help you in many aspects of your book promotion journey. Of course, not every author writes for a certain demographic, but looking at comparable titles and getting a sense of the most likely audience for a book like yours is important. A reader who enjoyed *Gone Girl*, for example, is likely to be interested in a book like *The Girl on the Train*.

[Goodreads](#) is another option for authors looking to buy online ad space. Geared directly toward readers—many of them voracious readers—Goodreads offers authors an audience of millions already primed for new book recommendations. If you're unsure how to create an ad, Goodreads offers a direct advertising option that will put you in touch with employees who can help you navigate the process.

If you need help creating your online ads, you can utilize the tools of companies like [Poster My Wall](#), which offers easy-to-use templates.

Make a Goodreads Page

In addition to online ads and direct marketing, Goodreads also allows authors to create their own dedicated author pages. A kind of Facebook for authors and readers, Goodreads lets readers track their read and to-read lists, as well as enter giveaways for books, interact with other users, and, ever since Amazon acquired the company, click through to buy books.

Author pages are free to create and offer a writer many ways to engage with readers. Once you've connected your ISBN to your author page, you can follow statistics about your books, read user reviews, see who's added your book to their to-read list, connect with fans through Q&As, and even run giveaways.

Creating a [Goodreads Author's page](#) is easy. You simply claim your author profile (your book's ISBN must be in the Goodreads database, but if it's not, you can contact Goodreads to see if it can be added) and answer the prompts provided. An author photo can be used to personalize the page and you will receive a "Goodreads Author" badge, which will help your fans follow you. It is possible to retain your personal Goodreads account while also participating in the Goodreads Author program.

One thing to know is that Goodreads members are highly opinionated, and it can sometimes be a tough place for an author to be. No one likes seeing one-star reviews from readers who didn't even bother to go beyond the first chapter, especially when the author must remain silent. Thick skin is a required part of a published author's skill set. Many authors choose not to even read

poor reviews. If you do, however, remember that like any art form, subjectivity is a hallmark of the audience response. No book is universally loved. If you need perspective or comfort, browse Goodreads and look up user reviews on classics like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *1984*. You will find countless one-star reviews of these masterpieces. In the end, most authors find that the benefits of garnering reviews outweigh these minor discomforts.

Run a Book Giveaway

Giveaways are great for drumming up interest—there are few people who would turn down a free book. One look at any giveaway on Goodreads' high populated giveaway program makes it clear just how much demand there is for giveaways and how open readers are to giving a new book a try if there's a chance to win a copy. While Goodreads does have a giveaway program for members enrolled in the Goodreads Authors program, it's far from the only way to run a giveaway.

You can utilize your social media handles to facilitate and promote a giveaway on your website. Having some kind of entry form that collects an entrant's email address for your mailing list (with his or her knowledge and consent) will allow you to add potential readers to your mailing list. Even if they don't win, they may still end up buying a copy—and, at the very least, will be far more aware of your books than they were before entering the giveaway.

If you want to “give away” an e-book, you can utilize companies like [Prolific Works](#), which can help you facilitate e-book giveaways for free or for a modest cost, depending on your needs. A more grassroots option for giveaways is to partner with a local small business and see if they will allow you to display your books at the register and collect entries for the giveaway. Sometimes independent bookstores and coffee shops will do this for a local author. It never hurts to ask.

It's important to promote your giveaway on social media, as well as your website, in order to let your fans know the contest is running. A nice bonus is the promise of a signed copy—these often garner more entrants, as a signed copy is particularly special to readers.

Publish an eBook

If you've published your book as print-only, consider creating an e-book version. While readers haven't abandoned the printed page for e-readers, there is still a healthy percentage of readers who prefer to read their books on a Kindle or other e-reading device. Frequent travelers, for example, utilize e-readers in order to avoid putting books in their carry-on. Other people simply prefer the e-reading experience because it allows them to make easy notes on the page, look up unfamiliar words, or interact with graphics or charts. Whatever the reason, readers do like to have an e-book option, so if you haven't yet made a digital copy of your book a buying option, get cracking.

Most traditional publishers today publish an e-book version concurrently with the print version. If you've self-published, you will likely have to create your own eBook. There are numerous resources for formatting your manuscript to eBook standards, including [Kindle Direct Publishing](#), which allows you to simply run your formatted text through a converter that will make the book read nicely on a Kindle. [Blurb](#) is another company that helps transform print books into eBooks.

When creating an eBook, make sure to include links to your website and all of your social media handles. These should be hyperlinked for ease of navigation, allowing the reader to access information about you as they read the book. If you are the author of more than one book, you'll want to make sure you include information in the backmatter about those titles, along with links readers can click to easily purchase those books.

Start Blogging About Your Books

A blog should be part of any author's website, because it gives the readers a chance to more deeply connect to your work. Giving the reader a glimpse into the life of a writer is a tried and true way of garnering more interest in your work. Some new authors are astonished by the level of interest among their readers in the writing process, the path to publication, the inspirations and motivations behind the book, war stories, and so on. This curiosity can be satisfied at book readings with Q&As, but a much easier and more consistent way to give fans what they want in this regard is a blog. If your readers have traveled to your website, chances are they like your writing and are looking for more ways to interact. Let your blog be part of that conversation.

It is a misconception that blogs need to be updated daily. For most authors, a weekly blog post is sufficient to keep readers engaged, especially if commenting is enabled and the author chooses to interact with comments. Topics for a blog post are endless, but many authors like to post about process, such as inspiration, plotting, research, revision, how they develop characters, and so on. Other popular topics are tips about the publishing world. Even a blog post about writing a blog is likely to garner interest among your fans. Note that you can be more expansive in a blog post than a Facebook post. Delve more deeply into topics you might just touch upon in a short Facebook update.

You can also take inspiration from questions you receive via your fan mail or your Facebook page. If one reader has a question about, say, why you chose a small Maryland town as the setting for your novel, other readers may also have that question. Make it the subject of a blog post!

If you've written a nonfiction book—true crime, how-to, business, self-help, health—your blog posts might better be centered on the topic itself. New research published about diabetes, for example, for a book on managing the disease. Developments in the business world for a book about starting a small business. Because blog posts are typically no more than 250 words, they are easy ways to keep your readership engaged.

Write Guest Blog Posts On Other Author Websites

Some authors occasionally turn their blogs over to other authors or industry veterans in order to keep their content fresh and to strengthen their own network. It works out well for everyone involved—the blogger gets a free post and perhaps some new traffic, the guest is exposed to a new audience and gets free promotion of his or her book. Writing a guest blog also has a positive impact on your own search results. The more guest posts you do, the more links featuring your work (and mention of your book) will show up in search engine queries.

How to get started? This is where social media networking comes into play. In order to strike a guest-blogging deal, you need to have an existing group of fellow authors or readers with whom you interact. Be the first to make an offer—ask a fellow author if she'd like to guest post on your blog. Chances are that she will return the favor at some point. And don't stop at authors. If you have a particularly bookish contact with a blog, reach out to him or her and see if she'd be interested in writing something for your blog.

When it's your turn to do the guest blogging, write about an aspect of your publishing or writing experience, without spending too much time talking about your own book. You want your blog post to come across as authentic, not as a sales pitch. The link to your book in your bio and the blog owner's discussion of your book will do that job for you.

Start an Online Group

Online groups are a great way to stimulate discussion about your book and stoke interest in your next one. Sometimes these discussions start spontaneously among readers, but most often it is the author who sparks them. Readers are usually very excited to be discussing a book with its author—you'd be surprised how deep the interest in a writer's motivations and inspiration runs in thoughtful readers. Keeping up an ongoing conversation with your readers is an excellent way to strengthen that connection and keep them invested in your career. After all, once a reader has had a peek into a writer's process, she is much more excited to delve into that writer's next project. Wouldn't you be?

Both Goodreads and Facebook allow authors to initiate group discussions about their books. Within Facebook, creating a group is easy. You will be its moderator, unless you choose to hand that task off to another user. As moderator you can create discussion topics and then let your users run with it. These topics can be about the book specifically, but they can also be about issues or topics related, even tangentially, to your book. If you've written a novel about a florist, for example, you can spark conversations about the narrative within your novel, of course, but you can also begin a discussion about woman-owned businesses, about the dying art of small-scale florists, about the impact of climate change on the flower business, and so on.

Goodreads' group offerings run the gamut from online book clubs and fan clubs to discussion groups centered on a certain genre of books.

One thing to keep in mind when you create and moderate discussion groups is not to do any hard selling. This can be a turn-off. Discussion groups are meant to create bonds, stimulate discussion, and get the reader invested in your work. If they've joined your group, they might already be a fan, or at least be primed to become one. Discussion members can find direct sales pitches off-putting, so keep your discussion groups mostly free of this kind of thing.

Hold a Virtual Book Signing

These days it can be difficult to land bookstore events. Even bestselling authors have found that bookstore visits and readings are hit-or-miss. Sometimes it's standing-room only, but more often, attendance is sparse. That doesn't mean you can't hold a book signing. One fun and creative way to do this is to set up a live stream for your signing.

You'll want to choose a specific date to do this and use your social networks to notify your fans well in advance. Be sure to keep plugging this date from time to time. Logistically, you'll have readers pre-order books, which you will hold until the event, sign them on live stream, and send out. You can also have extra copies on hand that attendees can purchase while watching.

One of the benefits to doing this is being able to interact with your readers. A live stream allows you to sign books and personalize them for readers or as gifts. Just like at a bookstore reading, you will have the opportunity to talk to your readers as you sign, learning a little about them as they learn a little about you. It creates a bond between reader and author that can be quite powerful, and plants the seeds of interest in your subsequent work. In addition, the novelty of a virtual book signing might attract the merely curious, who may then become buyers.

Make sure your logistics are all in place before launching a virtual book-signing. There are numerous teleconferencing options, such as [Free Conference Call](#), [Zoom](#), and [GoToMeeting](#).

You'll want to make sure you have a webcam or a laptop with a webcam before announcing a signing.

Read an Excerpt of Your Book

Since you've already got them for the signing, why not treat your fans to a virtual reading? Bundling a signing and a reading may attract even more readers—perhaps you have fans who already have signed copies of your books. They may not want to watch you sign books for others, but if you couple the signing with a reading, they may hang around, and maybe even bring friends. (A virtual reading is also a good choice if you don't want to do a virtual signing.)

Treat your reading as you would any bookstore reading. Choose a short excerpt and speak clearly. Ensure that all your equipment is working and that your background is non-distracting. One of readers' favorite parts of bookstore readings is the Q&A. Encourage questions. You can

ask attendees to submit questions ahead of time or you can be more spontaneous and accept questions from your online audience.

If you've written a how-to or other type of nonfiction book that could benefit from a PowerPoint presentation, feel free to integrate that into your reading. Many teleconferencing sites offer seamless integration of visual aids.

If you don't feel comfortable doing a live virtual reading, another option is to record a video of you reading an excerpt from your book and posting it on YouTube. In order to let your readers and fans know it's there, you'll want to link to it from your various social media accounts and, of course, make it available on your website.

Have an E-mail Address Just for Fan Mail and Respond to Your Fans

Authors receive a surprising amount of fan mail—as well as the occasional note from a disgruntled reader. It's all part of the game. But if you don't have a way for readers to get in touch, you might be missing out on a wonderful opportunity to connect with them and cultivate that reader-writer relationship. Instead of directing your fans to a personal e-mail account, which may be cluttered with business and household-related e-mails, consider opening a dedicated e-mail account for fan mail.

An e-mail account reserved only for reader-related e-mails will allow you to better organize your correspondence and allow you to respond in a timely manner, since these emails won't be lost in the shuffle of the day-to-day correspondence we all have to sift through. If you have a personal website, you can typically create an email address utilizing the domain name. For example, if author Joan Smith's website address is www.joansmith.com, an email address such as joan@joansmith.com adds a professional touch.

Be sure to check this account every day in order to stay on top of your fan mail. Respond to a kind note with gratitude and perhaps some information about upcoming titles. You can also ask fans who write you to sign up for your e-mail list or to visit your Facebook page. Do not be surprised or even dismayed if you receive a less-than-kind e-mail—this happens to all authors, including bestselling authors (and perhaps especially them). There are several schools of thought on how authors should handle rude e-mails. One option is not to respond. Another option is to respond graciously by saying "I'm sorry you didn't like the book." One thing an author should never do is engage, argue, or respond in a similarly rude manner.

Ask for Fan Photos With Your Book

Engage your fans by encouraging them to take photos and post them to your Facebook page or Instagram. These can be photos from readings or book signings or they can be fun, candid shots of your fans reading your book or visiting a setting from your novel. If you've written a how-to book, you can ask your fans to send photos depicting them working on a project. For example, if you've written a book on knitting, fans could post photos of their finished projects. A coffee shop romance set in Chicago might inspire a fan to snap a shot of a Chicago-area coffee shop.

One easy way to drum up enthusiasm for this kind of thing is to run a contest for “Best Photo” related to your book. Ask your readers to submit photos to your various social media accounts—tagging you on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and so on—and make the prize something fun, like a free signed copy of your book. Another great prize idea is a gift card somehow related to the topic of your book. If your book is a memoir about working retail, make the prize a Target gift card. If your book is about self-care for new moms, consider a gift card for a massage.

Whatever the prize is, make sure to promote the contest on your website and social media accounts.

Run Extra Campaigns

Once upon a time, traditional publishing wisdom held that a book's promotional period was six weeks. If, after six weeks had passed, the book hadn't “broken out,” it was left to languish. This is often still the case in the traditional publishing world, where publicists are under pressure to move on to the next book and

However, authors can thwart the six-week curse by running a second or even third promotional cycle. The key to success for multiple promotional periods is timing. These bursts of promotional activity should never be run back to back. Take what you've learned from your first cycle and make the second one better. Which ads performed best? Which social media platform seemed the most engaging? Was your reading well-attended? Did you get a lot of interest in your virtual book signing?

As far as timing goes, the first promotional period should run either before publication date (a pre-publication/pre-order campaign) or on publication date. The second should run at least a month after the book has gone on sale. A third promotional cycle could be tied to a current event, or some cultural touchstone or viral news story. For example, if Twitter is abuzz with a wedding proposal made at a baseball game, it might be a great hook for your Bull Durham-style romance novel.

If your book has a seasonal tie—such as a Christmas romance or a winter workout routine—you can also time another promotional cycle to that season. Always be looking for opportunities to make your book relevant, and utilize that relevance in a promotional campaign, even a short one.

Create an Email Newsletter

If you have an active fan community and a regularly updated blog, you might consider building a newsletter. These can be especially helpful for authors who do a lot of events, have a series, or have authored a nonfiction book that touches on current events or business issues. These newsletters needn't be lengthy—in fact, it's better if they are succinct. You might include updates on scheduled events, news about publication dates, promotion of a contest or giveaway, little news items relevant to the topic of your book, and so on.

Building a mailing list is important, but it's equally important to collect email addresses in a responsible manner. A good place to collect email addresses are from your fan mail account, your virtual signings, any in-person events you do (simply set out a notebook for interested readers), a sign-up form on your website, and so on. However, never add anyone to your list without their permission, even if they've written you a fan letter. Remember that federal law requires that anyone creating a mailing list include an “opt-in” step, which is designed to protect people from unwanted spam.

There are several easy-to-use newsletter builders available online, such as [MailChimp](#), and once you've designed a template, writing and sending your newsletter takes little time. Be sure to promote your newsletter on your social media posts.

It's important not to send newsletters out too often, as readers can sometimes interpret frequent mailings as spam. Once a month is the most often an author should mail out a newsletter, though once every other month is probably better.

Get Your Book in Other Newsletters

Consider sending review copies to the editors of other newsletters (or other authors with newsletters), especially if the newsletter is connected, even tangentially, to the topic of your book. Newsletter editors are often looking for content, and a book review or an interview with an author is often an easy way to generate that content.

Nonfiction writers often have a leg up when it comes to this marketing tool, because while newsletters geared toward fiction readers have a wealth of options to choose from, newsletters about specific topics often do not have a large list of books or experts to tap. If you've written a book about managing eczema, that skin care newsletter might be interested in featuring you and your book. If you're writing about building your own greenhouse, a gardening newsletter may be receptive to running an article.

Research the topics related to your book, whether it's a novel, memoir, how-to, self-help, or health book, and identify publications that specialize in that topic. There are countless niche newsletters that search for content.

Post on Forums

Sometimes building a reader base can require a brick-by-brick approach, and small things, like including your website and book titles in your e-mail signature can act as those bricks. If you are active on forums such as [Reddit](#), or any number of niche-interest sites such as weight-loss support groups or true crime forums, post a link to your book in your signature without explicitly promoting it.

Get active in that community if you're not already and answer questions. The more active you are, the more people who will see the information in your signature. That exposure might stoke curiosity and lead to more website visitors and, therefore, more people aware of your book.

Many forums prohibit self-promotion, so be careful to stick to the topics at hand and avoid mentioning your book explicitly. A good signature will do the talking for you and is a nice, subtle way of making people aware of your work and your brand. Of course, as a writer, your main job is to write, so make sure your time in forums is not eating into your writing time.

Write a Press Release

Press releases are an excellent way of notifying local, regional, and even national media about your book. A strong press release contains all the information media members need to write about your book, from price and page count, to synopsis and author bio. News outlets are typically looking for a hook—a way to make news relevant to the local community—and good press release writers do this work for the journalists. Often, just the “local writer” angle is sufficient, especially for community newspapers. Other times, the topic of the book might be relevant to an ongoing issue in the city in which you live—for example, a memoir about living on the poverty line while working a minimum wage job might be of particular interest to a community considering an increase in the minimum wage.

There are many press release templates available online, but you'll want to make sure that you always have the following information on the release:

- Title, author, publication date
- ISBN, price, page count
- Synopsis or summary
- Author bio
- Contact information
- A hook or local angle

These press releases can be faxed, e-mailed, or mailed to media outlets. You will also want to have a copy of the press release available on your website. Shorter is better when it comes to press releases—try to keep it under one page.

Get More Book Reviews

With shrinking review space in newspapers and magazines, it can be a challenge to land one. And even if you get one, it doesn't always translate into increased sales. Peer-to-peer recommendations have become far more important, and this is one reason that Amazon and Goodreads reviews have become key to a book's success.

Encourage readers who liked your book to leave a review on both Amazon and Goodreads. The more reviews an author has on Amazon—good or bad—the more prominent the book becomes in search results.

You can also offer to provide readers with a free review copy of your book for an honest review. This is an especially good approach with book bloggers. Know that these individuals do receive quite a few books and design your approach with thought rather than utilizing a template. Become familiar with the book blog, with the reviewers' interests or her favorite books, and then reference those in your letter offering a review copy.

At book readings or signings, when you're interacting with readers and fans, ask them to review the book on Amazon and Goodreads. Most readers understand the importance of these review sites and will gladly oblige.

Be a Guest on a Podcast

Podcasts grow in popularity every year. Nielsen researchers found that 50% of all U.S. households have at least one podcast fan. The potential audience is huge—and so are the numbers of podcasts available. Apple Podcasts alone host over 500,000 different podcasts in more than 100 languages. One of the most robust subjects for podcasts are books. These range from podcasts like “By the Book,” which focuses on self-help, to romance podcasts like “Smart Bitch, Trashy Books, all the way to “Hey YA” (young adult literature) and “Black Chick Lit.”

While it can be harder to break into some of the better-known podcasts, newer and lesser-known podcasts looking to build audiences are often very open to featuring new authors. When it comes to podcasts, a little research goes a long way. Look for podcasts that feature books from your genre—science fiction, horror, romance, literary fiction, journalism, self-help, and so on—and pitch your book.

But don't stop there. Maybe your book has a certain setting, issue, or hook that would be a good match for a non-book podcast. Perhaps your book on Reiki would find an enthusiastic audience

on a holistic health website. A memoir about serving in the military overseas might be a good fit for a military-focused podcast.

When you pitch, include a good pitch letter, a press release, any reviews you might have, and an offer to send a copy of the book, along with mention of any previous experience you have being interviewed on air.

Record an Audio Book

Although there has been a great deal of anxiety in traditional publishing about a diminishing pool of readers, there has been one undeniable area of growth: audiobooks. Audiobook sales have been increasing by double digits for seven years straight and show no signs of slowing down as accessibility improves. No longer stuck with audio tapes or even CDs, readers are downloading audiobooks from sites like Audible or even checking them out from their local libraries. The demand is high and if you haven't created an audiobook for your title, you will probably be asked by potential readers if one is available.

If you've been published by a traditional "Big Five" publisher, chances are that you already have an audiobook deal in place or else your agent has sold those rights for you. Not every author is able to sell these rights, though, and there are plenty of options for those who have not, including those who choose to self-publish.

If you have the budget to hire a narrator, this can enhance the quality of your audiobook immensely. The majority of audiobooks created by authors (as opposed to audiobook publishers) are done through tools like [ACX](#). With simple step-by-step instructions, you can turn your existing book into an audiobook in a short period of time. For most authors it is a worthwhile investment.

Once you've created your audiobook, be sure to add a buy button to your website or a link to where it can be purchased, as well as featuring it on your social media accounts.

Commission Artwork

During the days of Dickens and Conan Doyle, illustrations were an expected and much-anticipated part of publication, certainly not reserved for children's books. These days, it's rare to find illustrations in novels. However, that doesn't mean that the reader's hunger for a depiction of settings or characters has diminished. One fun way to spice up your promotional campaign is to hire an artist to draw images connected to your book: the small-town car repair shop where your rom-com is set, the creepy cabin deep in the Alaska wilderness where your ax-murderer is hiding out, a portrait of your protagonist or antagonist (or both). If you're artistically inclined, you could even draw these yourself.

Once you have these in hand, you can use them the way you used fan-submitted photos or the images from your book photo shoot—on social media, on your website, in any promotional materials you send out with your press release, even on promotional postcards. This is the kind of unusual and creative promotional technique that can make your book stand out.

Another fun idea is to ask your readers to create art based on your book and highlight it on social media. You could even tie a giveaway to the promotion, encouraging your readers to share their artistic talents while also highlighting your book.

Make a Book Trailer

Book trailers have exploded in popularity in the last few years and can be a fun way to grab a reader's attention and increase her interest in your book. Like a movie trailer, book trailers are a visual summary of your narrative, with a pithy storyline, a few lines from the book itself, relevant imagery, and appropriate theme music. Trailers work especially well for thrillers, sci-fi, horror, romance, and other genre fiction, but can also be effective for memoirs and various types of nonfiction.

Although production of trailers can seem intimidating, there are countless tutorials and applications that make it a breeze. The hardest part will likely be coming up with a script—we all remember how hard it was to summarize our books for a synopsis, query letter, or elevator pitch! For fiction, your trailer script should be tight, with very little background information, focusing almost entirely on plot, and should not give away any major plot points. Trailer scripts for nonfiction are a little different, highlighting the main topics covered in the book and why the book, or topic it covers, matters.

Trailers should typically run no longer than a minute to two minutes. Once you've produced it, you can upload it to YouTube, creating a link that can become part of your email and forum signatures, your personal website, your Facebook page, and so on.

Understand and utilize SEO

As creative types, phrases like Search Engine Optimization (SEO) might make our eyes glaze over, but these kinds of tools can make an enormous difference in how visible our work is on the web. SEO is essentially a technique designed to train search engines like Google or Duck Duck Go to feature your content more prominently, making it easier for people to find. You can imagine that with the amount of data and content that these search engines need to crawl each and every hour, your website or blog post might get lost in the shuffle.

With numerous resources online geared toward helping writers optimize their content, it's easy to integrate keywords into your website text in a way that isn't obvious or that disrupts the reading experience for your visitors. First, who are you trying to attract? Readers of sweet romances?

Spy thrillers? Health nuts? The idea is to match your keywords with words your target reader is using in a search. There are many free tools to help you do this, including [Google Ads' Keyword Planner](#).

Another thing to keep in mind is that search engines also pay attention to linking—that is, legitimate sites that link to your site. Think of it as a recommendation letter. This is one reason for ensuring your website address is always part of your bio when you guest blog or cross-post.

SEO simply brings more traffic to your website, and with more traffic, you can expose more potential readers to your work.

Use Your Non-Writing Online Network

It's great to lean on the generous writing community to spread the word about your book, but looking beyond it can yield potential promotional opportunities. Have you sat down and made a list of all of your affiliations? Did you go to college? If so, where? Are you a member of its online alumni group, as well as its local chapter? What about professional organizations? Are you a member of your local chamber of commerce? The local arts center or community center? What about community education—have you considered teaching an online class?

Spend ten minutes to write down all of your memberships and group affiliations—including those that might not immediately seem relevant to your book. Once you've done that, take a fresh look your list and see if there are any opportunities to network. If you're a member of your college has a local alumni group online—most universities do—reach out and see if the group leader might be interested in doing an event with you. Oftentimes, university alumni groups partner with other alumni groups to do events. An evening with an author might be up their alley—and you can sell books at the event, too.

If you're writing about a nonfiction topic, search your affiliation list for organizations that might have a unique interest in that topic. If you've written a book about how to improve public speaking and you're a member of Toastmasters, you have a built-in audience. If you're a psychologist who has written a book geared toward practitioners, you might consider becoming more active in your professional online forums, making sure to have your website linked in your signature. On the other hand, some authors like to keep their writing personas separate from their professional personas. For example, a schoolteacher who writes erotica on the side may not want to trumpet her latest publication on LinkedIn. Consider how you want to blend (or not) your writing career with your professional career.

Utilize Book Review Sites That Aren't Goodreads

Not all authors are going to land a New York Times review. Sometimes even our local newspapers are short on column inches and can't review every book by a local author. Still,

online reviews beyond Amazon and Goodreads can be important in an online marketing campaign, and there are ways to get your book into the hands of reviewers. Kirkus Reviews offers a paid reviewing service for authors who might not have been lucky enough to have their books reviewed by Kirkus' editorial staff. Called [Kirkus Indie Reviews](#), it provides authors a way to see their books reviewed in a highly respected trade magazine. Although the authors pay for reviews, there is no guarantee of a good review—the magazine's honesty is what makes the paid reviews as meaningful as its regular reviews.

Other online review sites can be utilized as well, including [The IndieView](#) and [Midwest Book Review](#), which prioritize indie books, including self-published titles. Submitting your book for review is a great way to build buzz around your book—excerpts from these reviews can be used on social media and on your website or even on future printings of your books. In addition, you can incorporate these reviews into any press kit you put together, which will grab the attention of podcasters, book bloggers, and bookstore event planners.

Pay it Forward

The writing community is vibrant and chatty, but also highly dependent on goodwill. There is a great deal of generosity among writers, readers, librarians, reviewers, bookstore owners, and other literary denizens. It's what greases the wheel. Highlighting a fellow writer's success by retweeting news of a book deal or a positive review is a big-hearted thing to do, but it also creates a feeling of fellowship among you and other writers in your online social sphere. If you're quick to congratulate other writers for their successes, chances are you will be able to dip into that social capital when it's your turn to trumpet some good news and enjoy the support and attention of your fellow writers via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and so on.

Doing this is among the easiest, and most gratifying, things an author can do. Some ideas for paying it forward include:

- Retweeting news about book deals, publication dates, good reviews, news about subrights sales, etc.
- Liking and sharing Facebook posts by other writers. Bonus points for commenting on them.
- Adding jacket images to your Pinterest page and tagging the authors.
- Taking photos of yourself reading another writer's book, uploading it on Instagram, tagging the author (and her publisher) and utilizing hashtags like #booksofinstagram and #amreading
- Using social media to share your own rave reviews of another writer's book, especially if that review is unsolicited. Again, be sure to tag the author.

Write Another Book

This may seem obvious, but writing another book is an important next step to cultivating your online (and offline) fans. Some readers are voracious and are eager to buy an author's next book. Keep them in the loop as you work on your next project and listen to feedback if you're writing a series, although don't use it to dictate what you write. Many readers will fall in love with an author and her characters, and will happily buy an entire series.

For some authors, the first book or two will meet with limited success, but as times passes and more readers discover their work they find their audience grows with each published title. Of course, this means more readers to discover your entire body of work. If you write nonfiction, pay close attention to the conversations that pop up around your book—perhaps there are other potential book ideas to be found in those conversations. You can even engage your readership and fan base and ask them what they might want to see next.

So, while you are promoting your recently published book, make sure you create time to work on your next book, as well as plan out more titles down the line. Sometimes promotion and publicity efforts can feel like a full-time job for an author, but always remember that your most important job is writing. After all, if you play your cards right, you will have a hungry audience eager to read your next book.

Conclusion

Zig Ziglar once said, “Confidence is going after Moby Dick in a rowboat and taking the tartar sauce with you.” As a writer who has done what many have only daydreamed of—writing a book and seeing it published—you can't stop at half measures. The publishing landscape is vastly different than it was in the days of literary lions like John Updike, Joan Didion, and Norman Mailer. Where once authors could focus entirely on craft and output, they now must hit the pavement, promote their books, drum up interest in unique ways, and get their masterpieces into the hands of readers. There is no publicity and marketing machine behind the books that are published today, save for a very few books written by authors who have already made millions. Instead, promotion and marketing is either a partnership between a traditionally published author and her publishing team or it is a solitary endeavor by the self-published author. For both kinds of authors, it is a crucial element of the publishing process.

The strategies outlined in this book are effective and easy to deploy, and when utilized with diligence and consistency, they can build your readership. But don't stop at thirty. Continue to brainstorm and use your writerly imagination to develop even more online strategies to promote your book. Be persistent, even when it seems like the return on investment is modest. Gaining a readership is a slow build, but once you've earned a reader's loyalty, you typically have it for life. Above all, keep writing.

Additional Resources

Magazines and Publications

- [Poets & Writers Magazine](#): great resource for marketing ideas for indie authors, as well as home to a large online community of authors. Create your own author page on the P&W site.
- [Writer's Digest](#): another excellent resource for authors looking for advice on book promotion and networking.

Author Organizations

- [Authors Guild](#): the book industry's leading membership organization, which advocates for author's rights. Membership is required and includes free contract reads and legal advice, as well as very low-cost web hosting and website design.
- [Romance Writers of America](#) (RWA): a 9,000-member organization geared toward aiding romance writers to protect their business interests and grow their careers.
- [Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators](#) (SCBWI): With local chapters across the country, SCBWI is the only authors' organization geared specifically toward children's and YA writers.

Social Media Sites for Writers

- [Instagram](#): great for photos, including promotional shots from your "book photo shoot."
- [Twitter](#): Perhaps the most-used social media site for writers. Utilize hashtags like #amwriting, #amreading #books #romance, #scifi, and so on to reach a more targeted audience.
- [Facebook](#): Build an author page and connect with readers.
- [LinkedIn](#): Great site for authors of nonfiction books, like business, health, how-to, and so on. Write blog posts on your area of expertise.
- [Pinterest](#): Pin images from your personal website, including jacket images, while also supporting other writers by pinning jacket images from their books and tagging them.

Book Review Sites

- [Goodreads](#): Amazon-owned book review site with the largest audience of readers in the world. Build an author page on the site in order to connect with readers.
- The [IndieView](#): online book review site that prioritizes indie books.
- [Midwest Book Review](#): another online review site that will review all kinds of books, including self-published titles.
- [Kirkus Reviews](#) Indie: a paid review service from one of the top trade review magazines in publishing.