

How to *write* a memoir ...

**procrastination to print
made simple**

CHRIS THRALL

**Author of the international bestseller
*Eating Smoke***

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Author's note

Dear Friends. Although deliberately concise, this free ebook took a considerable amount of time to plan and write. I put it together with the intention of saving you the months it took me to research, get to grips with and implement this knowledge into my writing and publishing experience. All I ask of you in return is to **click a 'share' or 'like' button or put the following link on your website:**

http://christhrall.com/how_to_write_a_memoir.html

Thank you!

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About the author



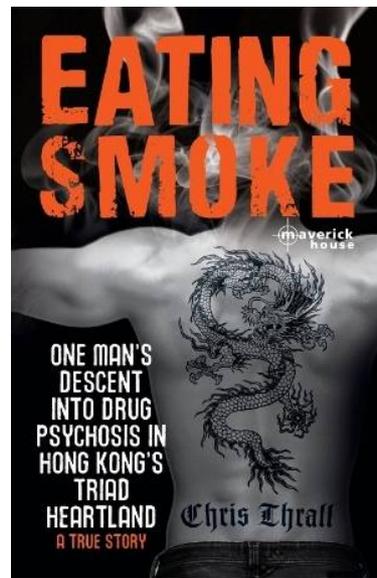
Chris Thrall was born in the UK. At eighteen, he joined the Royal Marine Commandos. Following active service in the Northern Ireland Conflict and training in Arctic warfare and survival, he earned his parachutist's 'wings' and went on to serve as part of a high-security detachment onboard an aircraft carrier.

In 1995, Chris moved to Hong Kong to oversee the Asia-Pacific expansion of a successful network-marketing operation he'd built, part-time, while serving in the Forces. Less than a year later, he was homeless, in psychosis from crystal methamphetamine addiction and working for the 14K, Hong Kong's notorious triad syndicate, as a doorman in the Wan Chai red-light district.

Eating Smoke, a humorous yet deeply moving first book, is his account of what happened ...



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To see this bestselling memoir's structure, read chapters [HERE](#)

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Introduction

My advice

First off, I don't profess to be an expert. But I did put together a 230,000-word manuscript in six months with only a high school qualification in English. Then having taught myself how to improve my writing and editing I figured a way to get a publisher to approach me – rather than the other way around. So this humble advice is for those of you who, like me with *[Eating Smoke](#)*, have a story you want to tell but limited knowledge on how to go about telling it, let alone seeing it through to print.

On writing – an important lesson

I was encouraged to retake high school English by a colleague I served with in the Royal Marines. Having completed a correspondence course, he said, 'It's easy, Chris. Passing the English exam is not about how much you know but the way you put it across.'

'What do you mean?'

'Well, it's like this. We were asked to write an essay about someone in prison. I could have written: "The prisoner sat in his cell ..."'

'Uh-huh ...'

'But what I wrote was: "Beams of sunshine poured through the cell's tiny, barred window, ricocheting around the room, filling the cold stone chamber with light, supplying the prisoner's heart with hope and freedom."'

'*Ahhh!* I see! You mean you put the reader in the story!'

'*Exactly!*' said my friend, with a grin.

Not only did his impromptu English lesson make more sense than any I'd attended at school, but it earned me straight As for the first three assignments I posted off, with a note attached to the fourth feedback informing me I should take the English exam right away instead of seeing the year-long course through. I did and passed it, and that's the only experience I had of learning English before writing *[Eating Smoke](#)* sixteen years later.

[This ebook](#)

The aim of this ebook

The aim of this ebook is to encourage you to go from procrastination to completion of your manuscript with easy-to-understand instruction and by adopting a pragmatic approach, allowing you insight into the art of good writing as you progress. It is not intended to be a comprehensive grammar, punctuation and stylistic guide. There is an abundance of these already available in the marketplace that you will naturally wish to invest in as the writing bug takes hold.

How to use this ebook

This ebook can support you to write your own memoir or someone else's. The principals are the same. The way to use this e-book is to first read it in full, then go back and complete each step, cross-referencing the advice I offer with that on the numerous writing, grammar and punctuation sites and forums on the Internet.

Disclaimer

In this ebook, I will pass onto you the techniques I learnt while writing, editing and publishing my memoir. I cannot guarantee you a book deal with a traditional publisher. However, with the advent of numerous self-publishing mediums, the future holds many possibilities for you.

Getting started

1. Work out the timeframe for your story

Work out which part of your story the target audience will want to read about. This may sound obvious, but you should decide if you're writing a memoir – a *period* in your life – or an autobiography – your *life story*. This will help you to keep focussed and save time on editing.

2. Understand the role backstory plays

Backstory is your history – everything that has taken place in your life until now. Backstory can add valuable insight into your character(s), but it can also sidetrack the reader and become boring. If you are writing a biography, it's all going to be backstory. If you are writing a book entitled *My Month in Tibet*, then backstory isn't going to play such a prominent role. Either way, backstory doesn't need to be volumes; nor does it have to be set out in chronological order like a diary or journal. You can take snippets of appropriate backstory and slot them into the manuscript at pertinent moments.

Example from *Eating Smoke

I picked up the receiver and heard Sarah's voice for the first time in what seemed ages. It must have been close to midnight back in the UK – maybe she'd had a drink and got a bit sentimental.

Nineteen when we met in the club in Plymouth, we went out together for three years ...

3. Make a list

Spend time typing up everything you can remember that you feel is relative to your memoir. This might require some research and should include incidents, events, characters, conversations, relationships and appropriate backstory. Get it all down, in no particular order, and then arrange these key recollections into a rough timeline of events using cut and paste. Then you have to be ruthless with the delete button by applying a *rule of thumb*.

Note. If you spend a couple of evenings making your list over a glass or two of your favourite tippie, you'll find that embarking on a memoir is easier than you thought. Not only is this a fun way to go about it but you'll leave the 'I'm-thinking-of-writing-a-book' mindset and join the 'I'm-writing-a-book' one.

4. A rule of thumb

A *rule of thumb* is to leave out narrative that doesn't take the story forward by adding to the understanding of your character(s), the situation you are describing or the outcome of events. This includes irrelevant anecdotes, unnecessary backstory and other off-subject matter. In short, no one needs to know your favourite colour or read about the kid who had a crush on you in high school (*unless it adds to the understanding of your character(s), the situation you are describing or the outcome of events*) but they might like to learn that falling out of a tree as a child gave you a fear of heights if your story is about conquering Mount Everest.

5. Write a prologue

Even if you don't intend to have a prologue, I'd suggest writing a short one. You can always delete it later. The reason being it's an easy way to slip into the writing process. It will give you an idea of what your story's focus and selling point is and you can show it to friends and start getting feedback as a 'writer'. Tailor your prologue to suit your type of book. Short and to the point appears to be the current trend.* A bit of humour can work, too.

* *If at all – hence, you can delete it later.*

***Here is the prologue to [Eating Smoke](#)**

In 2004, I worked in a mental health unit. People often asked, 'How can you stand it with all those nutters?' I'd quote from the textbook: 'It's a misunderstood condition affecting one in four people at some stage in their lives.' I never told the real reason. I worried that knowledge might confuse them.

You see, in 1996, I went mad

Now, this isn't necessarily as bad as it sounds. The UK has plenty of systems in place to help people who throw wobblers – doctors, medicine, hospitals, not to mention Incapacity Benefit and God. Unfortunately, these comforts were in short supply when it happened to me. Therefore, I must warn you: If your mind is planning on playing an away game, taking a sabbatical or simply f##### off, don't for Christ's sake let it happen while working as a nightclub doorman in Hong Kong's red-light district ...

6. Consider making your first chapter the 'hook'

If you're not an A-list celebrity with a top-notch publicity team behind you, you might want to make your first chapter the 'hook' – a harrowing, pertinent or exciting moment – to engage readers, agents, publishers *and* yourself.

***Here are the opening lines from [Eating Smoke](#)**

The Man in the Mirror ...

I STARED INTO THE LARGEST SHARD of blood-splashed glass.

'Do I know you?'

'You've never known him at all...'

Sitting on the filthy concrete, I convulsed occasionally and whimpered like a sick dog. I hadn't slept for days, the crystal meth pulsing through my veins denying all refuge from the madness enveloping me.

Now that the anger had passed, I found myself suspended in a ghostly calm, trying to focus my mind and piece together a life as fragmented as the mirror I'd smashed. I needed to make sense of what happened and put a stop to the Voice.

I leant forward, slowly, to examine the claw marks in my scalp and a haunted face I hardly recognised.

'Is this me?'

The only thing still familiar was the eyes – although now they were bloodshot and yellow with pupils raging deep and menacing. I wondered if these black abysses could dilate further, triumphing over the turquoise rings around them, heralding the madness had claimed my soul.

Get writing!

7. Get writing!

Pick the first event in your timeline and write about it. Ask yourself, 'Does this anecdote take the story forward or add special interest to it?' But most of all, **WRITE! WRITE! WRITE!** Go for it! Get as many words down on paper as you can every day. Before you know it, you will have a manuscript. Don't worry about getting it perfect, as you'll glean a lot from books, Internet sites and your own intuition as you progress. You can then employ your newfound knowledge in the editing process when it all starts to make more sense.

8. Setting the scene

Introduce the sights, sounds, smells and atmosphere of major locations so the reader feels as if they are in your shoes. You can include a few facts to add depth such as geography, weather, history, language and local statistics – but don't overdo it! In the sub-scenes, your descriptions can be brief – ... *the nightclub had an underground feel to it ...* – or you can leave them out altogether as most people can picture a *cheap motel*, a *modern hospital* or a *local police station*. Don't forget to say how the scene affected you on a personal level: *I stood there wide-eyed ... full of hurt ... filled with a sense of trepidation ... couldn't wait to explore more ...*

*Examples from Eating Smoke

I STEPPED OUT OF THE STATION into Mong Kok, the most heavily populated square mile on the planet, and began to make my way past the myriad of shops and businesses lining Nathan Road. This six-lane highway stems the length of Kowloon's sky-scraped peninsula like a main artery flowing with corpuscles of bright red taxis.

As I steered a course through what seemed a frenetic mass of pedestrians, I soon realised it wasn't the people that were chaotic – they moved surprisingly slowly – it was the surroundings. The sights, sounds and smells of Cantonese culture and exchange bombarded my senses as elaborate façades sold everything from

Rolex watches to dried tiger penis, steam poured out of noodle shops and a cacophony of traffic noise complemented the vivid clashing colours of signs anchored to the buildings' lower walls.

Rick's Café was a nouveau-style cocktail bar on Jaffe Road, just around the corner from the Big Apple and Joe Bananas on Luard.

The look of utter shock on their faces said it all. I couldn't quite believe what I was seeing.

9. Introducing characters

For characters that feature briefly in the story, you don't need to sacrifice valuable page space describing them in detail. Instead, you can say ... *he looked the part of a vagrant ... she had the fashion sense of a bingo queen*, and so forth. When introducing key figures you can give a brief outline of height, weight, clothes, hair, face and demeanour – but don't make it *too* clinical. *A short, squat chap with curly brown hair, he dressed in a cheap suit and had a smile that made me feel welcome* is sufficient in the first instance, allowing the readers to conjure up their own image of the person. In subsequent liaisons, you can drop in the ... *narrow brown eyes ... and ... humble personality*. Avoid the trite ... *strong jaw ... a figure to die for ... a thousand-yard stare*. Equally, if not more, important is to highlight subtle nuances such as ... *he couldn't look me in the eye ... I smelt alcohol on his breath ... her grin spoke volumes* as the manuscript progresses and the characters come into their own.

***Examples from [Eating Smoke](#)**

As I went to board the bus, an overly made-up crone, stinking of cheap booze and dressed like an Eastern Bloc prostitute, thrust a business card at me.

When I arrived the next day, one of them, a short stocky chap with curly fair hair, was already at his desk. He stood up immediately and with an idiotic grin spreading a ridiculous amount of freckles, and flashing sky-blue eyes, bounded over like an excited puppy.

As he looked at me, contempt radiating from his narrow eyes, the finality of my situation slammed home...

Still looking away, he muttered, barely perceptibly, 'I think the world of you, Chris.'

Another point to consider here is that introducing too many characters will complicate your story and dilute its pace. You may wish to amalgamate two or three lesser players into one to make your memoir more readable. *However, if you decide to do this you must state so in the author's notes!*

10. Introducing dialogue

Dialogue not only adds a dimension of realism to your work but it provides valuable insight into your character(s), their motivation and the direction your story takes. However, there is a knack to writing realistic speech,* but for the first draft just write it as it comes to you and edit it later.

* *See the section on 'Dialogue' below*

The personal touch

11. Narration

It's your story, or the person's you're writing, so people should experience it from that perspective. As you narrate, don't forget to include your thoughts, feelings and observations so the reader can see how a particular scene affects you and subsequently relates to the outcome of events.

***Example from Eating Smoke**

'Those two, Duncan...' – I swelled with pride – '...are the best DJs in the world!'

I had a feeling, there and then, that I wouldn't be in that job much longer.

12. Be creative

Remember, you're not telling the facts; you're describing the scene. You're not regurgitating the tale diary fashion; you're putting the reader *in* the story.

*Example from [Eating Smoke](#)

When I got outside, chuck the box I did – but not in the skip. I couldn't give a backflip in Beijing where that thing ended up. All I had in my mind was sprinting down the alley. I think it cut through all the blocks and would eventually get me home.

'They're waiting for you...'

I checked myself.

The pitch-black of the alley was a real contrast to the dazzling disco lights of a moment before, the sounds of booming beats and rapturous vocals fused with fever-pitched conversation a distant memory as I stealthily made my way down it expecting to see a chopping blade glint in the moonlight at any moment.

13. Do you need an original take?

With so many people putting their experiences into print, should you employ a writing style that makes your memoir unique? How about narrating the story from the perspective of a pet or writing it as a series of letters to people you are close to, or incorporating internal dialogue?

*Example from [Eating Smoke](#)

I was shaking, my heart pounding a mass of drug-and-fear-induced adrenaline through my veins to send me high up to a place I'd never been before ... a place where I was able to look down from above the rooftops and see a young man way below I felt strangely akin to ... threading his way through a tunnel laden with suffocating menace ... violent killers ... laired mutants ... bonded by a web of horror and permeated by the terror ... and it wasn't until I neared the end of the second alleyway that I felt myself coming back down, like returning from an out-of-body experience, yet still as frantic as ever.

14. Be humorous

Adding in the occasional witticism can make even an everyday tale interesting to read. It can render your character(s) more likeable and add an element of levity to otherwise dark situations. Dry wit seems to work well in non-fiction, but it has to come naturally – don't force it.

*Example from [*Eating Smoke*](#)

He puffed out his pigeon chest and waddled across the room towards me. With his feet pointing outwards, he looked like a fat duck with a grievance.

15. Be truthful

As a first-time writer keen to secure a publishing deal you might be tempted to 'expand' on the truth. It didn't harm James Frey's career at all. But in the Internet age exposure is highly likely. Could you live with this reputation? If you present your story honestly with an engaging narrative, fabrication won't be necessary. Alternately, you can state in the author's note that certain incidents have been dramatised for the readers' enjoyment.

16. Be yourself

As human beings, we often share certain thought, fears, aspirations and prejudices – at least to a certain extent. Being honest about these can bring your reader closer, seeing them tune in to you and more empathic to your experience. However, this doesn't mean you have to disclose every private detail, and don't write anything that might be overly offensive to minority groups – religion, ethnicity, disability, for example. Keep some things back for yourself; otherwise, you may regret it when you see it in print.

*Example from [*Eating Smoke*](#)

As he walked off up a short flight of stairs to retrieve the records that would show me to be a total fraud, I turned and fled the scene, feeling wretched that I'd tried to cheat this hardworking man.

Editing

17. How many edits?

‘How many times should I edit my work?’ The answer is ‘As many times as necessary’ or ‘Until it’s beyond your skill to do any more’ – at which point you should consider employing an editor. Obviously, you will keep back-up copies of the manuscript, so you can always change it back again.

The first edit

18. Pare it down!

This is the best advice I received when editing *Eating Smoke*. Did you ever end up writing a 3,000-word essay when the required word count was 1,500? You then had to delete duplicate and surplus material and cut twenty-word sentences down to ten and generally get rid of your own ego. It’s the same with a manuscript. Imagine you are panning for gold. It’s tempting to scoop up a load of pebbles, grit and sand from the riverbed and say, ‘It’s in there *somewhere*, so I’m keeping it all!’ But it’s not until you’ve carefully washed away the redundant matter that the true value shines. In the first edit, be ruthless and apply the *rule of thumb*. Streamline your work by removing any text that doesn’t add interest to the storyline or take it forward by giving insight into your character(s), and scenes and the outcome of events, such as irrelevant anecdotes, unnecessary backstory and off-subject matter.

The second, third, fourth ... edit

Here are some examples of what you can do to polish your manuscript, thus making it concise, smooth flowing and readable.

19. Avoid pre-emptive statements

If you are telling your story as it happened and you want it to be fast-paced and suspense-filled, avoid justifying your position by saying *If only I'd known at this point ... Looking back, I should have ... Knowing what I know now ...* This can be irritating. You didn't know it then so let the story play out in its own time.

20. Avoid the obvious

He sat 'down' in an 'empty' chair in the corner.

He sat in a chair in the corner.

21. Avoid repetition

'T' woke up 'and' 'T' put the kettle on 'and' 'T' made a cup of coffee.

Upon waking, I put the kettle on and made some coffee

Word repetition can appear ugly and amateurish, not only in sentences but in paragraphs, chapters and even whole books, depending on the commonness of the word in question. *Is*, for example, can be used three times in a sentence without drawing attention to itself. Whereas words like *bland* you wouldn't want to use twice in a chapter and *ubiquitous* you'd only want to use once in a manuscript. The same goes for certain phrases you might be in the habit of using without even realising it.

Needless to say ...

The fact that ...

If in doubt, use your software's 'Find' function to check your usage.

22. Avoid unnecessary adverbs

He hurled his dinner plate across the room 'angrily'.

He hurled his dinner plate across the room.

Better still:

As the dinner plate shattered against the wall, his flushed face said it all.

23. Avoid dangling participles

Sitting on the veranda, a man jumped into his car.

Or did you mean:

Sitting on the veranda, 'I saw' a man jump into his car.

24. Avoid excessive adjectives

A super-fast, black, sleek-lined, turbo-powered, six-litre sports car

Better:

A black sports car

In black, it was a petrol-heads' dream

A top-of-the-range black BMW

Dialogue

25. Create realistic and to-the-point dialogue

'Hello, John. How are you?' asked David.

'I'm fine, thank you, David,' replied John.

'And how are the family?'

'They're okay.'

'I'm glad I bumped into you. I've been meaning to catch up with you for a while as I wanted to know how the new job was going.'

Better:

Pleasantries over, 'How's everything going?' asked David.

'Fine, mate, thanks.'

26. Remove redundant dialogue tags

Only use a dialogue tag when it would be unclear who is speaking without one. The 'replied John' in the example above is unnecessary, as it's obvious that it is John speaking.

27. Use *said*, *replied* or *asked* in dialogue

Avoid the use of *retorted*, *responded*, *inquired*, *interjected*, etc, in dialogue, as these are overkill and can sound amateurish. Use *said* in most cases (and only if you need to clarify who is speaking). You can use *replied* or *asked* sparingly, too, to avoid unsightly repetition on the page.

28. Accents

Being true to indigenous speech can add authenticity to your work, but don't overdo it or it may become patronising and hard to wade through. Just add in the odd hint on certain words. Be consistent with each character and make sure it sounds realistic. YouTube is a wonderful medium for getting accents down to a tee.

*Example from [*Eating Smoke*](#) of a conversation with a Chinese man

Benny took a conspiratorial glance all around before continuing in almost a whisper. 'You know, Quiss (Chris), when I was'a young boy, juss finish school, juss statted working, I live in a village long way from here. Sma' village, not like Hong Kong.'

'Uh-huh.'

'One day, I get sick ... with the fever. You know the fever? ... The one from the fish?'

'Hepatitis?'

'Yeah yeah! This the one. Hepatitis. Well, I have the hepatitis an' I cannot even to get out of bed, you know? A'm so sick that my mother have to wash me, feed me. Cannot get out of bed for three month'a?'

'Uh-huh. Go on.'

Getting it right

29. Choose your words carefully

Would you really *snatch* a (sharp) knife out of someone's hand – or would you *prise* it from them?

Would you run though a *door* – or through a *doorway*?

30. Structure your paragraphs respectively

As with a manuscript and its chapters, paragraphs generally have an *introduction* followed by *information* and then *closure*.

***Example from Eating Smoke**

I'd been reading up on the way that drug rings operated in Hong Kong in a book I found in the junk room. At some point during its estranged life, it had lost its front cover, so I didn't know its title. But poring over the information inside was fascinating nonetheless.

31. Paragraph length

As a rule, a paragraph should end when the story switches focus. In an action-packed narrative, they can be short – sometimes a single line – like commentary during a tennis match. If it's a descriptive piece or deep inner thought, they can be longer, up to a page. In dialogue, begin a new paragraph when each person speaks.

***Examples from Eating Smoke**

I locked myself in a cubicle, but just as I had it all sorted and was taking a first inhale of the sweet-tasting fumes, I realised I wasn't alone.

I could hear footsteps ...

There was a knock on the door ...

My heart stopped ...

'Let us in!' whispered Laurel.

'*Jaldi! Jaldi!*' whispered Hardy.

'You *freakin'* idiots!' I hissed as loudly as I dared.

I think burning the candle at both ends would be the euphemism I'd use to describe my Hong Kong experience, thus far, to family and friends – but trussing said candle up in dynamite, wrapping it with Semtex, soaking it for a month in a cocktail of rocket fuel and ether before hurling it into a flaming volcanic pit would be a slight more truthful. But international phone calls being the price they were and ignorance being blissful, the 'both ends' thing would be better for all concerned.

32. Punctuation and grammar

If you are unsure about punctuation and grammar, invest in a guidebook and learn the basic rules alongside the editing process. When you get to a sticking point in your sentence or paragraph construction, if your book don't cover it, you can visit the growing number of Internet forums and websites to find your answer. The instruction may seem daunting and hard to grasp initially, but stick at it and you will become proficient.

33. Vocabulary

Use the word that comes to mind if it does the job. Being overly scholarly in your selection can look out of place and seem as if you are trying too hard. Remember you are telling a story not writing an academic paper. You don't want to frustrate the reader. But in order to avoid repetition and demonstrate a reasonable grasp of the English – or other – language, you should make good use of a dictionary and thesaurus. There are many available online.

34. Similes

Similes can be a great way of introducing humour and conjuring up a picture in the readers mind, but avoid the clichéd ... *he ate like a pig* ... and ... *as white as a sheet*. Be original. Have some fun thinking up your own, but make sure the subject and simile match!

***Example from [Eating Smoke](#)**

The Chinese bodybuilders all stood like Easter Island statues staring across the sea to a far rising sun...

35. Anonymity

As a courtesy, seek permission from individuals and organisations before naming them in print. If you're disclosing potentially sensitive or defamatory information, substitute names, places and other identifying material with pseudonyms and/or paraphrasing where possible. In the age of online networking, search engines and Facebook reunion groups, you should assume that anyone still alive that you write about will get to hear about your book. The last thing you want is a lawsuit after all your efforts.

36. Copyright

When it comes to using others' material – song lyrics, film script, lines from books, etc, – you will need to obtain permission from the rights holder. However, you can use a small sample under 'Fair Use' policy. Your publisher can advise you on this, but you are ultimately responsible under the law.

37. Taking advice

It can be rewarding to get feedback from family and friends, but bear in mind that they might not risk hurting your feelings or be best qualified to spot your errors. A better way to get constructive criticism is to upload your opening chapters to a website where you meet fellow writers and critique each others' work with a view to accumulating enough 'points' to attract the interest of a publisher. You might also consider contacting an author published in your genre and ask if they would be kind enough to read your first chapters. You'll be surprised at how supportive they will be and their advice can improve your work immeasurably – or see them forward it to their publisher!

38. On Writing

I would strongly advise you to get hold of a copy of Stephen King's *On Writing*. I bought the audio edition and listened to it repeatedly during car journeys while editing [*Eating Smoke*](#). As well as imbibing the art of creative writing from a master, I was pleasantly surprised how much of Stephen's instruction I had worked out myself.

Getting published

39. The back door

Search for books on Amazon in the same genre as yours. Buy a selection and then visit the authors' websites to get their email addresses. Send a short and polite message to say you have started reading their book and wondered if they would be kind enough to read of your first two chapters. (This is why you should consider making your opening passage the 'hook'. You don't have to. It might not suit your type of memoir. But it worked for me). I contacted two published authors. The first gave me invaluable advice on restructuring my manuscript; the second arranged a publishing deal on my behalf.

40. The traditional route

When taking the traditional route, unless you are completely confident in your writing and editing ability or your story is guaranteed to sell more books than a Chilean miner, your manuscript should be polished by an editor before submission, one that suits your budget and is willing to work in partnership. Your relationship with an editor will involve compromise – but don't be pressured into accepting amendments you strongly disagree with. Editors are only human and won't always share your experience and humour or understand why a word, sentence or paragraph plays a key part in the overall story.

41. Approaching an agent or publisher

You can approach a publisher directly but the larger houses usually only accept manuscripts via an agency. *The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook* (UK) lists many such organisations along with their submission guidelines. Your cover letter should be brief, explaining what your memoir is about, why it suits a particular audience and what makes you qualified or sufficiently experienced to tell it. Include a synopsis that is short and to the point and your first three chapters, unbound with 1.5-spaced lines. Make sure to visit the agent or publisher's website for their exact requirements and don't ask them to proofread your work. It shouldn't need it at this stage!

42. Be tenacious

Agents and publishers are busy people. If you haven't received a reply, it does not mean your book is a no-goer. Follow up your submission by telephone and if unsuccessful ask the reason(s) why.

43. Generate a 'buzz'

You might consider starting a Facebook page, Twitter account and blog or signing up to a writers' website to create interest in your work – but keep in mind that a thousand-or-so people 'liking' your book page does not necessarily mean it is marketable. Another option could be to release your memoir as an e-book to generate sales to show you have an audience. Bear in mind that with ever-decreasing marketing budgets, publishers appreciate authors who are willing to do all it takes to promote their own books. But don't press this as your selling point.

44. Good luck!

I hope my humble advice spurs you on to start that story you've been meaning to write – or contains some tips to support the one you have begun. It may not all be relevant to your non-fiction piece – and others may have different views – but it worked for me. If you would like to see the above put into practice, pick up a copy of [*Eating Smoke*](#). I look forward to reading your memoir.

Thank you for reading.

PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO 'LIKE' OR 'SHARE'!

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Resources

45. Books

Eating Smoke

Penguin Guide to Punctuation

Penguin Writer's Manual

Oxford Paperback Thesaurus

On Writing

World Wide Rave

The Writer's and Artist's Yearbook

46. Websites

www.christhrall.com

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www.grammarbook.com

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www.grammar-monster.com

www.thefreedictionary.com

www.writing-world.com

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use

47. Networking

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