

# Elements of a Great Nonfiction Book

By

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## Elements of a Great Nonfiction Book

Checklist: By adding some of these (many are optional) vital elements your manuscript is sure to impress agents and publishers.

\_\_\_ Decide on a Preface and/or Introduction:

- A Preface is a defense for why and how you wrote the book. Two pages max, or else it comes across as navel-gazing. Most will not read it anyway.
- An Introduction is also short and contains info necessary for understanding the book's content or why you should read it.

\_\_\_ A Foreword (optional) is written by an expert in that field who is introducing you to the world or telling readers how awesome you are or how impressive the book is. It's a marketing element to convince people to buy it. It's not necessary but could cause buyers to pick it up.

\_\_\_ Include stories or anecdotes to illustrate your points.

\_\_\_ Use dialogue, if you can, to add interest.

\_\_\_ Research and interviews enrich the project (but record them). Fact-checking is vital, so make sure you go back to clarify with the interviewee if needed. Do your own research to ensure what you were told was accurate.

\_\_\_ Develop trust with your readers by being transparent/vulnerable.

\_\_\_ Use a conversational tone. Come alongside readers with a warm voice; don't preach, especially if it's a devotional book.

\_\_\_ Create great hooks for each first line/paragraph of a chapter. Good ideas for hooks are one-word sentences, quotes, facts, stories, or questions. Try to have cliffhangers at the end of each chapter to keep readers turning the page.

\_\_\_ Takeaways/Action Points are a great way to keep the reader engaged—practical things the reader can do to apply it to their life.

\_\_\_ Answer all loose ends by the end of the book and deliver what you promised readers on the back cover.

\_\_\_ Footnotes or Endnotes:

- Footnotes are found at the bottom of the page and are referenced through a superscript number within the main body of your copy. It is not always a citation—it's sometimes a note or clarification by the author.
- Endnotes are the same thing but appear in a list at the end of the chapter because they can be much too long for a footnote. It's the info you want the reader to see right away while the topic is still on their minds, right after they read about it.
- Don't mix footnotes and endnotes in the same book: choose one or the other and use them consistently.

\_\_\_ The bibliography pages are the last section of your book and include the resources you used to research and collect information for your book. Whether it was TV programs, magazines, books, lectures, or your best friend's opinion—your research material is listed here.

\_\_\_ Appendices are good for adding extra resources, definitions, diagrams, or maps.

\_\_\_ Join a reputable critique group: check out [word-weavers.com](https://www.word-weavers.com).