



1. How long is a book proposal? In *Book Proposals That Sell*, you recommend creating a nonfiction book proposal which is between 15 to 20 pages. The chapter from Michael Hyatt says three to five pages. That's a big difference between the two sources. Which is right?

I understand this question. You would think there would be a standard answer here but the key to a book proposal is not about the length. There is no “one” way to create a book proposal. Every guideline is different but generally each proposal will have the same elements yet possibly be ordered in a different way.

The key for a creating a successful book proposal is to answer every possible question that a book editor or literary agent could ask about your concept. The length to explain that idea will take care of itself in the creation process.

Because I've written many book proposals and worked with authors to perfect their proposals, I'm keenly aware of the challenges involved in creating an excellent book proposal. Some writers only like to talk about the fact that they have written—rather than actually keeping their fingers on the keyboard and writing. It could be harder to write the book proposal than the eventual book manuscript. Remember, the proposal is a selling document or a tool used to sell your idea to a team of people—a literary agent and the various parts of a publishing house such as editorial, marketing and sales.

Editors and agents receive massive amounts of material from writers. You want to rejection-proof your submission so your proposal will be one that receives full consideration and will not be rejected.



Some proposals receive literal *seconds* of consideration—then are rejected. Others require a full reading and evaluation from the editor. Your challenge is to compel the editor to say yes to your idea. Often this process of compelling an editor will require you to write a number of pages in the actual proposal.

Recently I closely examined a book proposal which garnered a \$1.5 million dollar advance from a publisher. It is not how I would have created a book proposal. The proposal was over 150 typeset pages with full-color on each page and in a bound hardcover notebook. The author's curriculum vita was 45 pages. To create such a book proposal took a tremendous amount of time and energy. Was it worth it? Yes! Most writers don't have such a vision of excellence with their book proposals and instead want to create something in the short term which will get them a book contract. It is simply not that easy.

In a publishing world with high volume submissions, editors are looking for a reason to say no. If you don't include a particular section such as personal marketing, then you are giving the editor or agent a reason to say "no thank you." Your challenge as the writer is to get that editor to say yes and carry your passion into the publishing house.

As you create your book proposal, strive for excellence and thoroughness to answer every question with an excellent answer. This type of attitude will lead you toward success and a book contract instead of a pile of rejections. The length of your proposal will be whatever it takes to cover the answers.



Terry's 8 Top Recommended Resources

1. [Book Proposals That Sell, 21 Secrets To Speed Your Success](#)
2. [Editor Reveals Book Proposal Secrets](#) -over 3 hours of audio teaching
3. [My WebMarketing Magic](#) (for your shopping cart)
4. [My Instant Telewebcast](#) (to build your platform)
5. [Homestead.com](#) (to build multiple websites)
6. [Straight Talk From The Editor, 18 Keys To A Rejection-Proof Submission](#) (Free Ebook)
7. [Right Writing News](#) - Terry's Free Newsletter
8. [The Writing Life](#) (Terry's searchable blog)

Terry Whalin's Background

W. Terry Whalin knows and understands both sides of the editorial desk--as an editor and a writer. A former literary agent, Terry has been an acquisitions editor at Howard Books, an imprint of Simon and Schuster and David C. Cook. He worked as a magazine editor for Decision and In Other Words magazines. His magazine articles have appeared in more than 50 Christian and general market publications plus he's written more than 60 books. His personal site is located at: <http://www.terrywhalin.com>.

A journalism graduate from Indiana University, Terry writes a wide spectrum of subjects and topics for the magazine and book marketplace--from children to teen to adult. He is an active member of the [American Society of Journalists and Authors](#) (the leading U.S. nonfiction writers group). Also Terry is the creator for a popular site for writers called [Right-Writing.com](#). Terry and his wife, Christine, live in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Frequently Asked Questions

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