



How to Write a Children's Book

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If you're interested in writing a children's book, you are not alone. It's been a goal of mine for quite some time, and I've met many people along the way who have this same goal.

There are a lot of things to consider for children's books. From story idea to illustrations and publishing, there are lots of choices. This article focuses on how to write a children's book.

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Decide Who You Are Writing For

The first step in writing your children's book is to choose your reader. Children's books encompass a wide variety from board books all the way to middle grade books. If you know what type of book you'd like to write, then it's important to make sure you're aware of the ages of the children you're writing for.

Each type of children's book is geared for kids of a certain age. Here's a quick summary of the types of children's books and the ages they are appropriate for. Thanks to John Matthew Fox of [BookFox](#) for the reference.

- Board books: ages 0 to 3
- Early picture book: ages 2 to 5
- Picture book: ages 3 to 7
- Older picture book: ages 4 to 8
- Chapter book: ages 5 to 10
- Middle grade: ages 7 to 12

Choose a Protagonist

Once you've decided on the type of children's book you want to write, it's important to choose a protagonist that matches the age of your reader. Kids relate best to main characters that they share similarities with. So, if you decide to write a chapter book, your protagonist should be in the five- to ten-year-old age range.

The better you know the children you are writing for, the easier it will be for you to create your protagonist. If you want to write books for children with disabilities, for example, then it would be best if your main character has a disability your readers can relate to.

Come Up with an Original Idea

A key to creating a story that sells is coming up with an original idea. People will not buy a book that sounds like five other stories they've already read. If your idea is similar to something that's been done before, think about how you can put your own unique spin on it.

I started thinking about writing a children's book because I wanted to explain something to my son but wasn't confident, I could do a good job. When I don't know something, I always turn to books. Unfortunately, there weren't a lot of books on the topic, so it gave me the idea to write my own.

Many great ideas are born out of providing solutions to problems. What problem or problems are near and dear to you or people you know (especially children)? Could you write a book about that problem and how it was solved?

It's important to choose a topic that interests you. You'll be working on your book for however long it takes to polish it, and if you choose something you are interested in, you'll be more likely to see it through to the end. So, go ahead and brainstorm. The more ideas you come up with, the greater the chance you will really love one. And that means the kids you are writing for will really love it too!

Choose the Type of Book You Want to Write

The age of your main character will limit the type of children's book you write. Remember, that will also be the age of the children you are writing for. Refer to the ages above and notice there is a bit of wiggle room. For example, if you've chosen a five-year-old protagonist, you could write an early picture book, a chapter book, or anything in between.

The various types of children's books have different average length requirements. Once again, I referred to the [article on John Matthew Fox's website](#) for the book lengths I've listed here:

- Board book: 0 to 200 words (yes, you can write a board book that is all pictures)
- Early picture book: 200 to 500 words
- Picture book: 500 to 800 words
- Older picture book: 600 to 1,000 words
- Chapter book: 3,000 to 10,000 words
- Middle grade: 10,000 to 30,000 words

When thinking about the book you want to write, remember your story idea. What type of children's book will present your idea in the best way? You might need a story that includes illustrations to help make a point. Or maybe you're writing for older children who understand abstract concepts which are more difficult to illustrate. In that case, you'd want to go with a chapter book or middle grade fiction.

Read a LOT of Books

If you're a parent, there's a good chance you've already read a lot of children's books like the type book you've decided to write. You probably read a lot as a kid too, but now that you know what kind of children's book you want to write, you need to read a lot more of them!

Reading a lot of chapter books, for example, will give you a really good idea of their common elements. While you're reading, you'll want to note the things that did and didn't work for you.

Don't stop reading because you don't like a book. Or, at least don't stop reading until you figure out **why** you don't like a book. I find I often learn more from the books I don't like, because they [show](#) me what I don't want in my own books.

Find a Mentor Book

Before I had a term for this, I was using my favorite books as templates for my own children's books. I wasn't copying the story idea or style, but I was analyzing what I liked about the books.

John Matthew Fox of [BookFox](#) calls this a mentor book. I love this idea. A mentor book is a book you can refer to when you get stuck with writing your own children's book. You will read this book over and over, so make sure it's a favourite.

Because I self-publish, I also use mentor books when I get to the formatting stage. It helps me have more confidence in what I'm doing. But if you're going with a traditional publisher, illustrations and formatting are things they will probably handle for you.

Further Reading

If you're interested in a more in-depth look at writing a children's book, check out John Matthew Fox's blog post "[How to Write a Children's Book in 12 Steps](#)" or his online course [Two Weeks to Your Best Children's Book](#). I took the course and found it very helpful and comprehensive.