

THE ROMANCE AUTHOR STARTER GUIDE

Everything you need to write your first book and what can wait.

You do not have to learn everything today. Every published author started with a blank page, and the best next step is almost always simpler than publishing makes it seem.

AT A GLANCE

- Learn the craft and write consistently
- Invest in editing before advertising
- Build relationships with other authors
- Skip expensive extras on day one
- Focus on finishing the book first

A NOTE FROM BECKY

When I first started working in publishing, I thought success came from having all the right tools, the perfect marketing plan, or knowing exactly what came next. After working with hundreds of authors as an editor, publishing consultant, acquisitions manager, formatter, podcaster, and reader,

The most important thing you can do is finish the book.

Every day, I meet writers who feel like they need the perfect website before they have a manuscript, the perfect social media strategy before they've written Chapter One, or thousands of dollars in marketing before they've found their voice. Publishing has a way of making us believe we have to do everything all at once.

You don't.

Your job today is simply to take the next step.

Learn the craft. Write consistently. Find people who will cheer you on and challenge you to grow. Invest in editing before advertising. Build relationships with other authors. Celebrate every milestone, even the small ones.

Most importantly, don't compare your beginning to someone else's middle. The bestselling author you're looking up to also had a first draft, a first rejection, a first review, and a first book launch.

Publishing isn't about one book. It's about building a career. Every manuscript teaches you something new, every release helps you grow, and every reader you gain is someone who chose to spend time with your words. That's something worth celebrating.

I hope this guide gives you a place to start, but remember that no checklist or resource can replace the one thing every successful author has in common:

They wrote the book.

So write the story only you can tell. The rest will come, one step at a time.

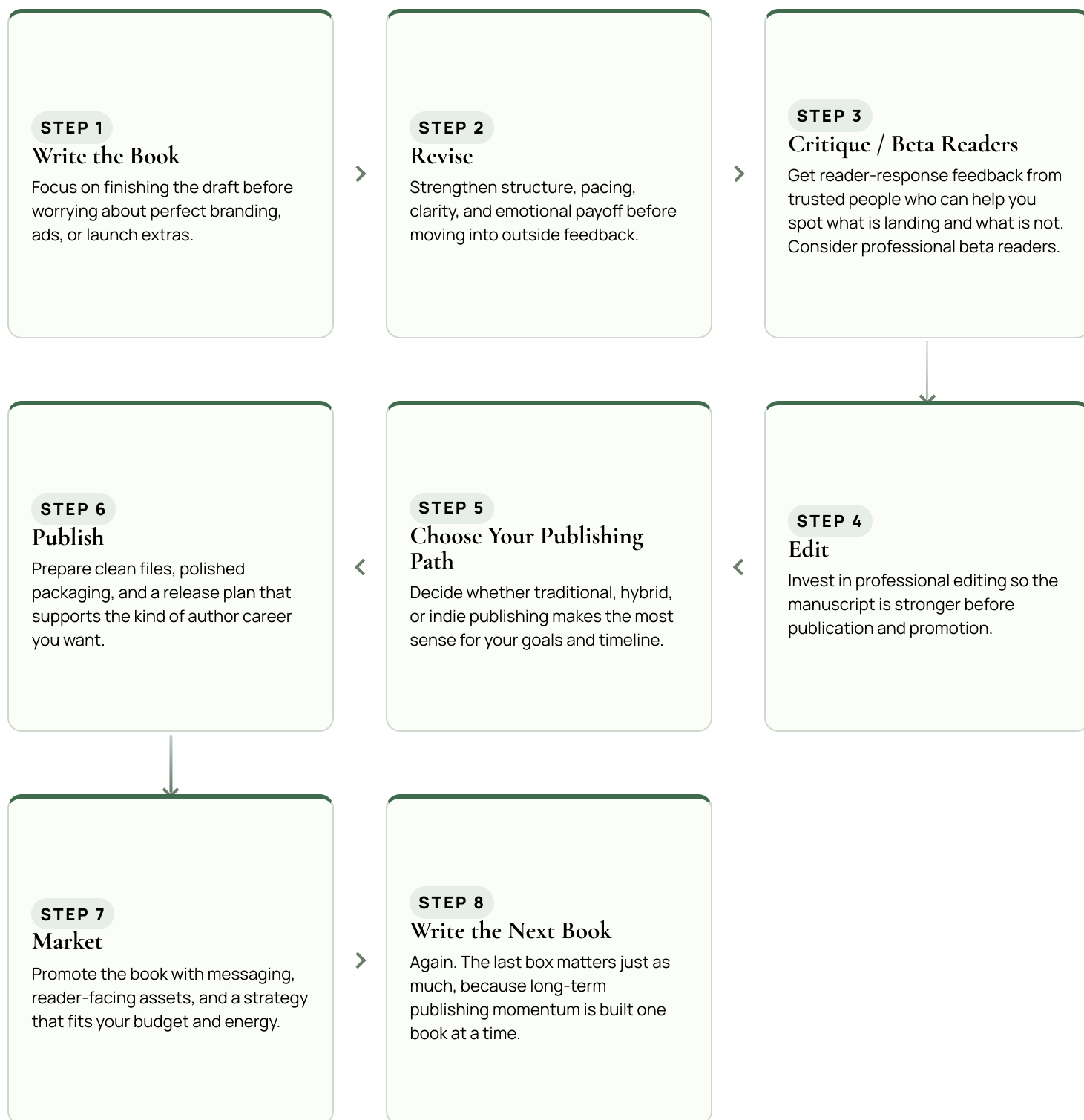
**Happy writing,
Becky Burrier**

ABOUT BECKY BURRIER

Working in publishing since 2018, Becky Burrier has helped hundreds of authors through editing, acquisitions, formatting, and publishing. She holds a B.A. in Art Education and Art History, professional editing certifications, and has worked with two major publishing houses.

Today, she is Vice President of Acquisitions for 1852 Literary, owner of Bookcase Media, and co-host of Buzzing About Romance.

THE AUTHOR JOURNEY



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PUBLISHING CHECKLISTS

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Finish your manuscript
- ☐ Revise
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Research agents
- ☐ Write your query letter
- ☐ Prepare synopsis
- ☐ Prepare first pages
- ☐ Build your submission list
- ☐ Query
- ☐ Keep writing the next book

I cannot emphasize that last one enough. It is the advice agents repeat constantly.

INDIE PUBLISHING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Finish manuscript
- ☐ Developmental/Line/Copy Edit
- ☐ Proofread
- ☐ Cover Design
- ☐ Formatting
- ☐ ISBN decision
- ☐ Upload files
- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ ARC Team
- ☐ Launch
- ☐ Keep writing

Again... the last box matters just as much.

THE ROMANCE WRITER'S TOOLBOX

ROMANCE-SPECIFIC CRAFT BOOKS

- Romancing the Beat by Gwen Hayes
- The Heroine's Journey by Gail Carriger
- The Tropoholic's Guide to Internal Romance Tropes by Jennifer Hilt

CHARACTER & EMOTION

- The Emotion Thesaurus by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi
- The Emotional Wound Thesaurus by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi
- The Positive Trait Thesaurus by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi
- The Negative Trait Thesaurus by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi

PUBLISHING & CAREER

- The Indie Author Revolution by Matty Dalrymple
- Write. Publish. Repeat. by Sean Platt, Johnny B. Truant, and David Wright

STORY STRUCTURE

- Save the Cat! Writes a Novel by Jessica Brody
- Story Genius by Lisa Cron
- Wired for Story by Lisa Cron
- Story Grid by Shawn Coyne

DIALOGUE & SCENES

- Writing Dialogue by Tom Chiarella
- The Art of Styling Sentences by Ann Longknife and K. D. Sullivan

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

WRITING

- Word
- Scrivener
- Google Docs

PLOTTING

- Plottr
- Notecards
- Whiteboard

FORMATTING

- Vellum
- Atticus
- Reedsy

Don't want to learn formatting? Hire a professional.

NEWSLETTER

- Flodesk
- MailerLite
- Mailchimp
- Substack

GRAPHICS

- Canva

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Invest Here First

- 01

Editing
- 02

Community
- 03

Craft
- 04

Consistency

KEEP PERSPECTIVE

Things You Don't Need on Day One

Fancy merchandise

Expensive ads

Thousands of ARC readers

A perfect website

Every social media platform

Twenty software subscriptions

Things I Wish Someone Told Me

- 01

Finished is better than perfect.
- 02

Readers can't buy the book you never finish.
- 03

Your first draft is supposed to be messy.
- 04

Comparison steals joy.
- 05

Publishing is a marathon, not a sprint.
- 06

Build relationships before you need them.
- 07

Editing is an investment.
- 08

Marketing gets easier with more books.
- 09

Every author you admire once had zero readers.
- 10

Keep writing.

PRIORITY ONE Spend Money Here First	Editing Formatting (or learn it)	Cover Design Website/Newsletter
WHEN THE FOUNDATION IS READY Spend Money Here Later	Ads Fancy branding Swag Book boxes	Merchandise Stickers Conferences PR packages

NEXT STEP

Need help deciding
what matters now
and what can wait?

Bookcase Media can help you sort through your next steps, whether that means story development, editing, formatting, launch support, or simply building a smarter first-book plan.

VISIT BOOKCASE MEDIA



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