WEBSITE FUNDAMENTALS

What you need to know to start, style and strategically grow your online "author headquarters".

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1 Mindset Matters

If you decide to create an author website and blog, the first step is to ensure you're doing it for the right reasons.

If you feel like you're being strong-armed into it, that it will take too much of your time, or that the benefits won't outweigh the costs – stop.

It will be impossible to bring any value to your readers or potential audience if you approach your website creation with this mindset.

This will be your home base – the hub of all your online activities – and therefore should represent your writing, your philosophy and your author "brand" in the most positive light.

You should proceed only when you feel that you can attack this foundational part of your platform with creativity and enthusiasm – not dread and loathing.

Further reading:

To Blog or Not to Blog: Is it Really Necessary?

The Set Up 2

So now that you have the right mindset in place, it's time to tackle the technical bits of setting up your site. I know it sounds awful, but it's not as bad as you think.

You'll need a host to house all your files online, and a domain name so that your fans can find you and your new author website.

I recommend setting up a self-hosted website through **BlueHost**. You'll get a free domain name (upon sign up for one year), as well as free WordPress installation with just a click of a button.

You can also choose amongst thousands of free and premium themes, customize your site to fit your brand style and add additional functionality to your site (like social media sharing) with WordPress plugins.

(Note: If you purchase a service through the links in this guide I will earn a small commission at no extra cost to you. Thanks for your support!)

Further reading:

Set Up Your WordPress Blog in Under 15 Minutes

3 Author Website Must-Haves

Your shiny new site is now up and ready to go, so it's time to add the key elements that make for a polished and professional author home base.

But before you start, take some time to develop your brand identity.

How do you want to be known? What words, ideas, concepts and feelings do you want people to associate with you? What mood or immediate impression do you want to evoke?

Do some research. Check out the sites of authors, bloggers, photographers, musicians, designers and other creatives. What attracts you?

Create a style guide that includes the colours, imagery and fonts you'll use throughout your site and other marketing materials.

Remember to think long term. Try to brand yourself and your work in a way that allows you to expand into new writing areas or extend over multiple books or freelance work.

Now use what you've developed to guide you while incorporating the must-haves (about page, book page, testimonials/reviews, email sign up, social sharing, etc.).

Further reading:

[11 Author Website Must Have Elements](#)

Book Websites and Pages 4
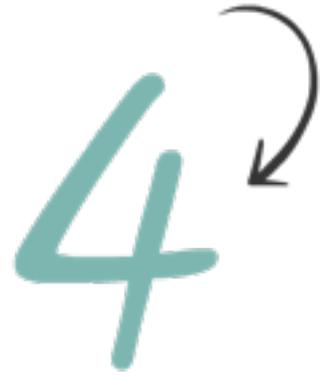
Creating a sidebar announcement for your newest book, or crafting an internal book page on your site (featuring each title's cover, a short description and a buy button) are both effective in generating interest around your newest release.

But an external book landing page or website has at least three significant advantages over an internal book page or sidebar announcement: the focus is on one book with no distractions, you get increased SEO, and social sharing is simpler.

A great page building tool that is free to launch unlimited book pages, and has content sections that you can use for book info, video trailer, purchase links, endorsements, author info and social sharing is **Booklaunch.io**.

Setup is quick, and it is very easy to customize fonts and colours, or re-order the different sections of the page.

To boost the effectiveness of your pages, you can upgrade to a premium tier, which offers custom domain naming, email capture, detailed analytics and removal of a branded footer.

Further reading:

The 9 Must-Haves for a High-Performing Book Launch Page

5 Blogging Do's and Don'ts

The mistake I see many writers make is that they see their blog or website setup as the hurdle.

But the real work comes with developing and maintaining a site that readers want to return to time and time again.

Having a blog plan, and laying out your daily, weekly, and monthly to-do's, is vital. As is developing an editorial calendar.

Do you know what you're posting when – and more importantly, why?

Are you sharing the most valuable, quality content you can muster, each and every time?

If not, you will struggle to gain traction. There are too many other options for readers than to spend time reading mediocre blog posts.

People will judge the rest of your work based on what they experience on your website, so make sure you're represented well.

Further reading:

[13 Blog Post Blunders You Should Avoid (And What to Do Instead)](#)

What to Blog About 6

This one is often the deal breaker for fiction writers, but I've seen many a nonfiction author struggle with it, too.

"What on earth do I blog about?"

In almost every case, the real question is this: **who are you trying to reach?**

By answering this question, you can more easily answer the first.

Identifying and understanding your ideal reader (their basic demographics, their preferences and interests, their social and online habits, and so on), makes it infinitely easier to create and share content that they would find compelling.

Once you've determined who's attention you're trying to get, you can then look at how their interests align with yours, and the results you hope to achieve.

Of course, how you deliver your content will also matter, so leverage some popular post archetypes (list post, how-to post, opinion post, pillar post, etc.), add multi-media (video, podcasts, images) and customize each article to capture the attention of your fans.

Further reading:

Blog Post Ideas for Writers: Solving the "What Do I Blog About?" Conundrum

7 How to Get More Visitors to Your Author Website

It's unlikely that if you've done all of the above that you would still be watching the tumbleweeds roll through the sun-baked desert that is your author website.

At this point you should be well on your way to building a thriving community around your work and a solid foundation for your writer platform.

BUT, everybody could use a bit more traffic, right?

The more targeted the traffic you draw to your site, the better your chances of turning visitors into fans.

So here's what to do:

- double check to ensure that your website, social media profiles and content are optimized.

- employ strategies to drive targeted traffic to your site (network, build your email list, collaborate, and implement other forms of outreach).

Further reading:

[How to Get Traffic to Your Author Website: 30+ Tips for Discouraged Writers](#)

Website Fundamentals Worksheet

Ready to get started? Use this worksheet (and the resources linked to earlier) to guide your website planning, set up and branding.

PLANNING

- Purpose or "why"
- Ideal reader profile
- Goals/objectives
- Main blog categories
- Types of posts (media/format)
- Post frequency
- Book landing page(s)
- create a content plan
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SET UP

- Purchase a Domain Name (Web Address)
- **Self-hosted** WordPress website + template
- Modify website template syle and layout
- Email marketing service like **Aweber**.
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BRAND IDENTITY

- How do you want to be known?
- Research "competitors"
- Create a style guide (logo, fonts, colours, images/ graphics, etc.)
- Social media accounts (profiles & photos)
- Media kit
- Business cards & other marketing materials

Who do you intend to reach, and why should they care?

Notes: