

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT NONFICTION GENRE FOR YOUR WRITING

Nonfiction is a vast and diverse genre. From memoirs that peel back the layers of personal history to investigative journalism that exposes societal truths, the nonfiction genre offers quite a few options for storytellers. So, if you have a story to tell—a tale rooted in reality, a journey through the tangible and the true—how do you choose the right nonfiction genre for your story?

Before you can figure out the answer to that question, it's important to understand the different sub-genres under the nonfiction umbrella. Read on to learn about each one.



## **AUTOBIOGRAPHY/MEMOIR**

At their core, autobiographies and memoirs invite readers into the author's world. They provide an up-close look at the author's triumphs, challenges, and transformative moments. Whether you're recounting a specific period of your life or reflecting on the broader scope of your journey... and whether you are telling your stories for yourself, your family, or a broader audience... autobiographies and memoirs are a powerful means of connecting with readers on a deeply personal level. If your story is a personal exploration of your own experiences, emotions, and reflections, then the autobiography or memoir genre may be the perfect fit.



## **BIOGRAPHY**

Biographies extend the storytelling canvas beyond the author's life, offering a glimpse into the experiences and impact of other individuals. If you find inspiration in the lives of remarkable people, whether historical figures, cultural icons, or everyday heroes, biography is the way to go. You get to immerse yourself in research, conduct interviews, and exercise a

comprehensive exploration of your subject's life all to craft a narrative that captures their essence and significance to your life, your town/city/state, the world, or to something more specific like the arts, politics, or history. If you like digging deep into someone else's life, being a biographer is the way to do it.



## **HISTORY**

It has been said that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. To learn from it, we need to understand it. If you have a hankering to either understand it for your own edification or to inform others, historical research and writing might be for you. Exploring the events that have shaped our world is what history is all about. Whether you're delving into a specific era, documenting a cultural phenomenon, or examining a pivotal moment in time, writing about history offers you the chance to excavate the past and reveal its lasting impact.



## **JOURNALISM/INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING**

Do you possess a keen eye for uncovering hidden truths? Do you want to be like the "Spotlight" team at the Boston Globe and shine a light on societal issues? In short, do you want to ask the tough questions? If you answered 'yes', then journalism/investigative reporting is calling you. This field of nonfiction writing allows you to delve into the heart of complex issues. Research, fact-checking, and a commitment to presenting the truth are the essential tenets of this path, and the opportunity to make a difference with the power of your words is real.



## **SELF-HELP**

The self-help genre provides a platform to inspire and guide others. If you have overcome adversity, mastered a particular skill, or experienced



personal development through a shareable process, the self-help genre is a way to share your insights. You can offer practical advice to readers who are seeking their own paths to improvement.



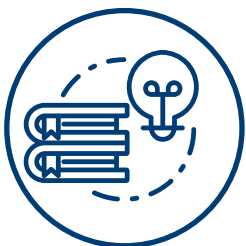
## SCIENCE AND NATURE

If the natural world, scientific discoveries, or environmental issues inspire you, science and nature writing may be the direction to take your writing. Science and nature can lead you to unravel the mysteries of the cosmos like Neil deGrasse Tyson, chronicle your adventures in the great outdoors like Cheryl Strayed, or advocate for environmental conservation like Al Gore. This genre allows you to share your passion for the world, the universe, and our place within it.



## HOW-TO GUIDES

Do you possess a particular skill, craft, or area of expertise? The how-to guide genre provides a platform to share your knowledge with an eager audience. Whether it's cooking, writing, gardening, or mastering the art of effective communication, crafting a how-to guide allows you to present your expertise in a practical and accessible format, giving others the chance to learn from you.



## BLENDING GENRES

Your story may not neatly fit into a single genre, but that's perfectly okay. Nonfiction genres often overlap. This allows you to blend and create a unique and compelling narrative. For example, Cheryl Strayed's *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*, is a memoir that incorporates science and nature. This makes it not only a personal story offering insights and lessons learned along the way but also incorporates the trials and realities of surviving nature.

# CONCLUSION



Take time to reflect on the essence of your nonfiction story and your writing voice. Are you passionate about sharing personal experiences, imparting knowledge, or uncovering hidden truths? Discerning the heart of what you want your narrative

to be and understanding your storytelling style will help you identify the genre that aligns with your storytelling goals. Ultimately, you want to write the genre that feels most authentic to your story and your voice. You've got this, writer!

