

WHY RESEARCH MATTERS IN NONFICTION WRITING

Writing nonfiction is so much more than just weaving words on a page; it's a balancing act between storytelling and facts, creativity and credibility. At the heart of this type of writing lies its most essential element—research. In the world of nonfiction writing, research isn't just a tool; it's the compass that guides you, the writer, through the vast sea of knowledge, ensuring your narrative is based on truth.

Let's explore the specifics of why research is so important, examining exactly why it is the cornerstone of compelling and authoritative nonfiction writing.



1. IT BUILDS TRUST WITH YOUR READERS

Imagine reading an article about the migratory patterns of monarch butterflies written by an author who claims to be an expert but fails to provide any references or citations. Would you trust the information presented? Probably not.

Or maybe there is a book on the intricacies of how the brain responds to reading. This is precisely the topic of Bill Birchard's *Writing for Impact: 8 Secrets from Science to Fire Up Your Readers' Brains* which is about the fundamental principles behind fulfilling the desires hard-wired into the human brain. What if Bill Birchard had just made this stuff up? What if it wasn't grounded in science and he hadn't researched the subject? We'd chalk it up to speculation and dismiss it.

Research then is the bedrock of credibility in nonfiction writing. It's the mechanism through which you show your readers that your work is rooted in a solid foundation of facts and thorough exploration. It shows you did your due diligence before presenting your work for the masses to ingest and hold as true.

Citations and references aren't just academic formalities; they're the breadcrumbs leading back to your research. They allow readers to trace the origins of your information. When readers see that what you've written stems from reliable sources, interviewed experts, or extensive fieldwork, they're more likely to trust your insights and perspectives.



2. IT ADDS DEPTH AND AUTHORITY

Nonfiction writing is about providing depth and nuance to your subject matter. Whether you're exploring historical events, dissecting scientific theories, or delving into cultural phenomena, research equips you with the tools to present a comprehensive view.

Consider an article on climate change. Without solid research, it might be nothing more than a regurgitation of general knowledge. However, with in-depth research, you can delve into specific data, historical climate patterns, and expert opinions. Research strengthens the argument, deepens the reader's understanding, and gives veracity to the topic. It adds layers to your narrative while establishing you as an authority in your field.



3. IT AVOIDS THE QUAGMIRE OF INACCURACY

In the age of information, a simple online search can result in a plethora of data—true and not. For a nonfiction author, the risk of misinformation looms large. That means you must dig deep to ensure you have found the truth. One of the biggest responsibilities of nonfiction writers is to sift through the noise to present accurate information. Going deep with your research means you can strain out inaccuracies. It means you can ensure that what you are presenting to your readers is *reliable* and *verifiable*.

Imagine writing an article about the health benefits of a new superfood or supplement without researching its potential side effects or consulting

nutritionists. You would be presenting an incomplete picture of the subject at hand, thereby misleading readers into making uninformed choices. Thorough research protects your readers from the deep bog of inaccuracy.



4. IT HELPS DISCOVER UNEXPECTED TREASURES

There is more to research than just validating what you already know; it also provides a journey of discovery. As a nonfiction writer, diving into research can open doors to unexpected information. Whether it's stumbling upon a little-known anecdote that brings your historical account to life or finding a groundbreaking study that reshapes your understanding of a scientific concept, research can take you to places you didn't know you wanted to go and never could have planned for. It adds an element of surprise and fascination to the process of writing—and to the readers' experience.

Imagine you're writing a biography. Through meticulous research, you may uncover personal letters, interviews, or archival material that reveal dimensions of your subject's life that were previously unknown, all of which you now get to weave into the story you're telling. These unexpected treasures can enrich your narrative and captivate your readers in ways you might not have otherwise been able to accomplish.



5. IT HELPS CRAFT ENGAGING NARRATIVES

Research isn't just about collecting facts; it's about arming you with the tools you need to craft a narrative that engages and resonates with your audience. It's the difference between presenting a dry recitation of information and weaving a compelling story that draws readers in.

Let's say you're writing about the history of a particular city. Instead of bombarding your readers with a chronological list of events (akin to memorizing a bunch of facts and dates in high school that we've never needed to know since), research allows you to unearth captivating *stories*,

anecdotes, and *personal accounts* that can breathe life into your narrative. It's these stories that people will remember. Research offers you the opportunity to transform your writing from a mere compilation of facts into a vibrant tapestry of human experience.

CONCLUSION



To wrap up, we cannot overstate the importance of research in nonfiction writing. It is the linchpin that holds together the credibility, depth, accuracy, discovery, and engagement in your piece. As nonfiction writers, our commitment to our readers is to not just tell

a story but to tell it truthfully, comprehensively, and ideally with a sense of wonder. So, let research be your North Star as you write, leading to you being a beacon of trust and authority for your readers, and for your writing to have a lasting impact.

