

Children's Book Marketing Timeline

Congrats on finishing the first draft of your new book or getting a publication deal!

Part of you feels relieved to have accomplished a big milestone, but another part of you knows that you've just started climbing the mountain. You still have to polish the book to perfection *and* get started on marketing it.

You might be thinking, "Oh man, do I really need to do 'marketing'? I'm a writer, not a marketing hack. I just want to do the work, not flog it!"

I'm here to tell you: you're a professional. That means you take a holistic view of your writing/artistic career. Your job is not just to tell stories. It's to tell stories **and find the people who want and need to hear them.**

That's what this timeline will help you do. It lays out a step-by-step plan for helping you find the right audience, connect with them, and ultimately, get your book in the exact right hands.

Ready, Set, Go

○ GET CLEAR ON YOUR CORE MESSAGE.

What is your book about? What's the "elevator pitch" in 2-3 sentences?

Who is your book for?

Be specific about the type of kids who'll love your book, and the "gatekeepers" who'll put your book in their hands.

Why did you write the book? What's your mission? How do you want the book to affect readers?

○ SET YOUR GOALS.

Define your specific "big" goal for marketing this book. Is it selling a certain number of copies? Having the book available in a certain number of schools? Earning \$X from school and library visits and workshops?

Now identify three to five things you can do to reach that goal.

○ CREATE YOUR MARKETING CALENDAR.

Create a dedicated calendar where you can map out what you're going to do when. This could be a text document listing months and weeks, a spreadsheet, or an actual calendar. Start by marking the book's publication date, and work backwards to note what you'll be doing when.

What is your book's pub date?

6-12 Months Pre-Pub

○ **CREATE OR UPDATE YOUR AUTHOR WEBSITE**

At a minimum, your website should have:

- an engaging, up-to-date About page
- easy-to-find Contact information
- a Blog where you can post fresh content
- a Book landing page, where you have all the information about your upcoming book available in a user-friendly way
- A mailing list signup form (you can entice people by creating a “freebie” that they’ll receive when they sign up, such as a pdf first chapter; bookmarks; activity kit; etc)

○ **SET UP A MEETING WITH YOUR PUBLISHER’S MARKETING TEAM**

- Find out what they’ll be doing, and how your efforts can complement theirs. (Tip: the more engaged and helpful you are, the more the marketing team will probably do to help you.)

○ **COMPILE YOUR “FRIENDS AND FAMILY” LIST**

Create a comprehensive spreadsheet listing everyone you know and their contact info. You can then organize this list into priority categories for what types of marketing messages/material you’ll send:

- people who are likely to be strong supporters of the book, either because they are close to you or close to the intended audience of the book
- people who’ll be happy/intrigued to know you’re publishing a book
- “wild cards” -- people you know but have no idea whether they’ll be interested

○ **COMPILE YOUR “REVIEWERS AND INFLUENCERS” LIST**

• Identify a few “comparative titles” (i.e., “comp titles”) -- books that have a similar tone, subject, and/or audience as yours. Now search those books and make a list of everyone who reviewed those books, gave them a shout-out, or interviewed or hosted the authors:

- Bloggers
- Podcasts
- Press
- Trade journals
- Conferences and festivals
- Organizations or groups

○ **DEVELOP YOUR KEEP-IN-TOUCH STRATEGY**

Brainstorm how you’ll keep in touch with your fans. What kinds of things do you enjoy sharing—behind the scenes info, drawing tutorials, funny vignettes? What’s your favorite way to communicate—writing, drawing, talking? How often will you commit to sharing with your audience (hint: once a month is probably the minimum,

otherwise you're not really keeping in touch!)? As an example, based on these insights, you might decide to share key insights about your creative process in a weekly podcast. Or you might decide to create biweekly mini art tutorials for YouTube.

- What things will you share?
- How will you share them? (i.e., “short blog posts on my website, email to my mailing list, posts on my Facebook and Instagram accounts”)
- When will you share them? (ie., “every Monday”; “on the first of the month”)

○ DEVELOP YOUR OUTREACH STRATEGY

Your next step is to develop a plan to grow your audience beyond the people who already know you. There are many ways to do this. Choose the tactics that feel right for you.

- Organize your own events. Events are one of the best ways to gain exposure to a specific audience:
 - School and library visits
 - Writing/drawing/publishing workshops
 - Bookstore talks and signings
- Attend events. Making new connections and building relationships is critical for your long-term success.
 - Library and educational conferences
 - Book and comics festivals
 - Writing and industry conferences
- Guest blogging
 - Write guest articles for blogs that reach your target audience.
- Podcasts
 - Get interviewed for podcasts that reach your target audience.
- Media outreach/press release
 - Create a press kit and make it available on your website.
 - Contact local journalists and/or niche publications to let them know about your upcoming book launch.
- Reach out to schools and libraries. Whether it's email or snail mail, be friendly and helpful, and clear about who your book is for.
 - Compile a list of all your local schools and libraries, as well as non-local schools and libraries with which you have some sort of connection.
 - Email the librarians and/or school administrators directly with a soft pitch.
 - Create a clever postcard mailing.

○ DEVELOP A DOWNLOADABLE READING GUIDE OR ACTIVITY KIT FOR YOUR BOOK

Think about your ideal readers and their teachers and librarians. What would make it as easy as possible for them to use your book? Create a resource—or even a set of resources—to help them.

3-6 Months Pre-Pub

○ **START TEASING YOUR UPCOMING BOOK RELEASE TO YOUR EXISTING AUDIENCE**

Most of your “keeping in touch” should be content that is inspiring and/or helpful in some way. But as the pub date draws near, you can start adding more “promotional” content (ie, things like a cover reveal; the launch of your author website; quotes or excerpts from the book). You should send this promotional content as many ways as you can:

- Via personal emails (yes, emailing individual people one on one!)
- Via email campaign (group emails to your mailing list)
- Via social media

○ **CONNECT WITH INFLUENCERS**

Reach out to the specific bloggers, reviewers, librarians, and bigwigs who seem like they'd might be interested in your book.

- Ask them if they'd like a review copy.
- If they seem interested, pitch them on an interview or Q&A with you.

○ **SCHEDULE EVENTS TIMED WITH BOOK LAUNCH**

- School and library visits
- Launch party
- Book signings

○ **SEND ARCS (ADVANCE READER COPIES) TO TRADE JOURNALS, LONG-LEAD PUBLICATIONS**

If you are being published by a traditional publisher, they will handle this for you. But you can supplement their mailing with your own outreach. Just make sure you coordinate so you aren't duplicating efforts.

If you're self-publishing, of course, you need to take care of this critical step yourself.

○ **ASK MAILING LIST, SOCIAL MEDIA FOR “BETA READERS”**

“Beta readers” are friends, acquaintances, and supporters who are not professional reviewers. Invite people to support your publishing journey by offering them an advance copy of the book and encouraging them to leave you a review online when the book is published.

○ **WRITE GUEST ARTICLES AND/OR COMPILE BOOK EXCERPTS FOR PUBLICATION IN INFLUENCER BLOGS/JOURNALS**

○ **COMPILE A LIST OF AWARDS TO SUBMIT TO**

This is another task you'll want to coordinate with your publisher. Unless you're self-publishing... in which case you'll take care of it yourself!

6-12 Weeks Pre-Pub

SET UP AMAZON AUTHOR PAGE/ACCOUNT

CREATE BOOK TRAILER VIDEO

This is not an essential step, but if you have the time and technical know-how, it can be a nice way to shine another spotlight on your work.

SEND ARCS TO INFLUENCERS AND OTHER REVIEWERS

This is the “short lead” mailing to bloggers and other influential people who don’t need to see the book months in advance of the pub date.

SEND ARC PDF TO BETA READERS

Set up follow-up emails to remind beta readers to post a review on pub day.

PURCHASE AND SCHEDULE LAUNCH WEEK ADS (GOOGLE ADS, SOCIAL MEDIA ADS), IF DESIRED

I don’t think ads are usually a good investment for selling books (especially for debut authors), but if you have a unique strategy, go for it!

SUBMIT GUEST ARTICLES TO BLOGS/JOURNALS, WITH REQUEST FOR PUBLICATION DURING BOOK LAUNCH WEEK

- Mark all guest blog publish dates on your marketing calendar

RECORD PODCAST INTERVIEWS, WITH REQUEST FOR PUBLICATION DURING BOOK LAUNCH WEEK

- Mark all interview publish dates on your marketing calendar

WRITE AND SCHEDULE SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATES

You’re going to be very busy over the next few months, so it will be helpful to schedule a batch of social media posts so you don’t go silent during your busiest times.

2-5 Weeks Pre-Pub

SHARE ANY EARLY REVIEWS RECEIVED

- On your website
- Send to your mailing list
- Share on social media

REVIEW AND CONFIRM ANY UPCOMING INTERVIEWS, GUEST POSTS, AND PODCASTS DATES

Make sure your marketing calendar is up to date with all upcoming media appearances.

Week of Publication

- **SEND "LAUNCH WEEK" EMAIL TO MAILING LIST**
- **REMIND SUPPORTERS TO LEAVE A REVIEW**
- **CREATE TRACKING/SALES SPREADSHEET**

It's helpful to track your sales meticulously. Keep track of how many books you sell at your own events, and input all sales data you get from your publisher.

Day of Publication

- **SEND "LAUNCH DAY" NEWSLETTER TO MAILING LIST**
- **SEND PERSONAL EMAIL TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY**

Your closest friends and family deserve a personal email, not just a generic email sent to a list. Let them know how excited you are, and what they can do to support you!

- **SCHEDULE FOLLOW-UP UPDATE TO MAILING LIST FOR END OF WEEK**

Week/Month after Pub

- **CELEBRATE BOOK LAUNCH WITH SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS**
- **RESPOND TO COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION ON ANY GUEST ARTICLES AND PODCASTS**
- **SEND FINAL FOLLOW UP EMAIL TO BETA READERS**
- **SOLICIT REQUESTS FOR IN-PERSON APPEARANCES (USE REVIEWS AS SOCIAL PROOF)**

Now that your book is published, it's time to set up another round of signings, school appearances, library visits, and workshops.

- **CONSIDER OFFERING AN ONLINE Q&A SESSION**

This can be a great way to connect personally with your biggest fans. Invite your mailing list and post on social media.

1-6 Months after Pub

- **SUBMIT BOOK FOR AWARDS**
- **CONTINUE ENGAGING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE**
- **START YOUR NEXT BOOK!**