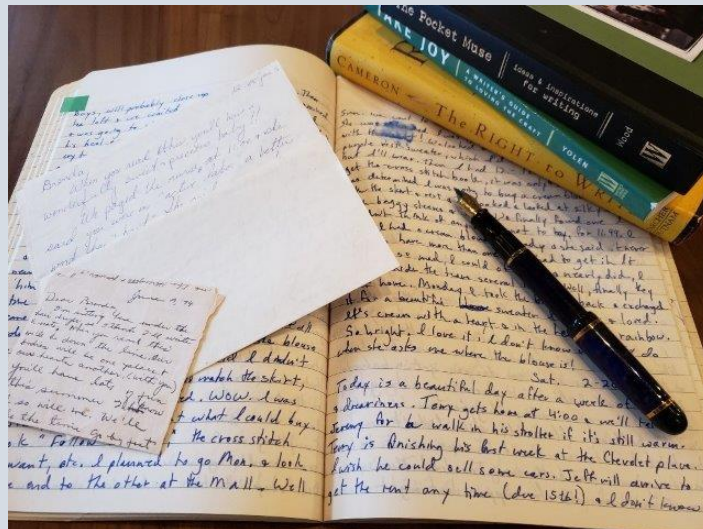


MY
WRITING
&
PUBLISHING
TIPS

Brenda Cobb Murphy

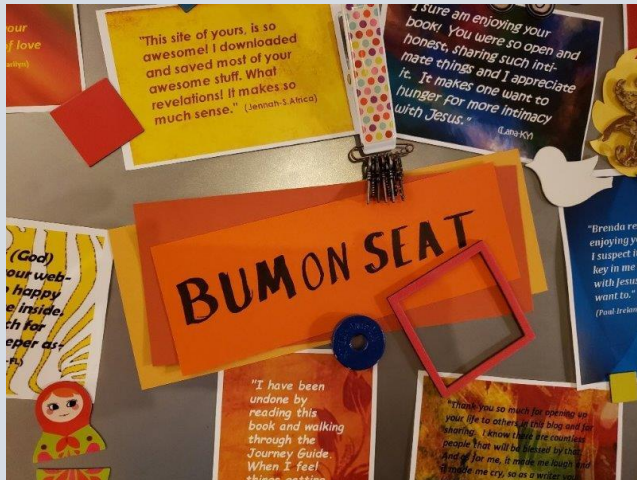


I'm occasionally asked how I do things when it comes to writing and publishing so I've put together some suggestions and tips. (Note: I have links to the things I recommend or use myself but they are not affiliate links and I do not get anything for recommending them, they're here because I like them and use them, or have heard positive things about them.)

WRITING

You will want to "catch" every idea and thought to use in your writing. I have a clipboard by my bed for dreams or notes, however, my normal practice is to open a new email on my (Android) phone and talk what I'm thinking into it (even if it's only a few words), then send it, picking it up on my laptop. (This is especially great to use in the car.)

I have emails on my phone set to automatically bcc myself so that any emails I send from my phone also come to me. That way I don't have to put any address or subject into the email, I just talk into the body and send it. (I'm not sure how this works on an iPhone.)

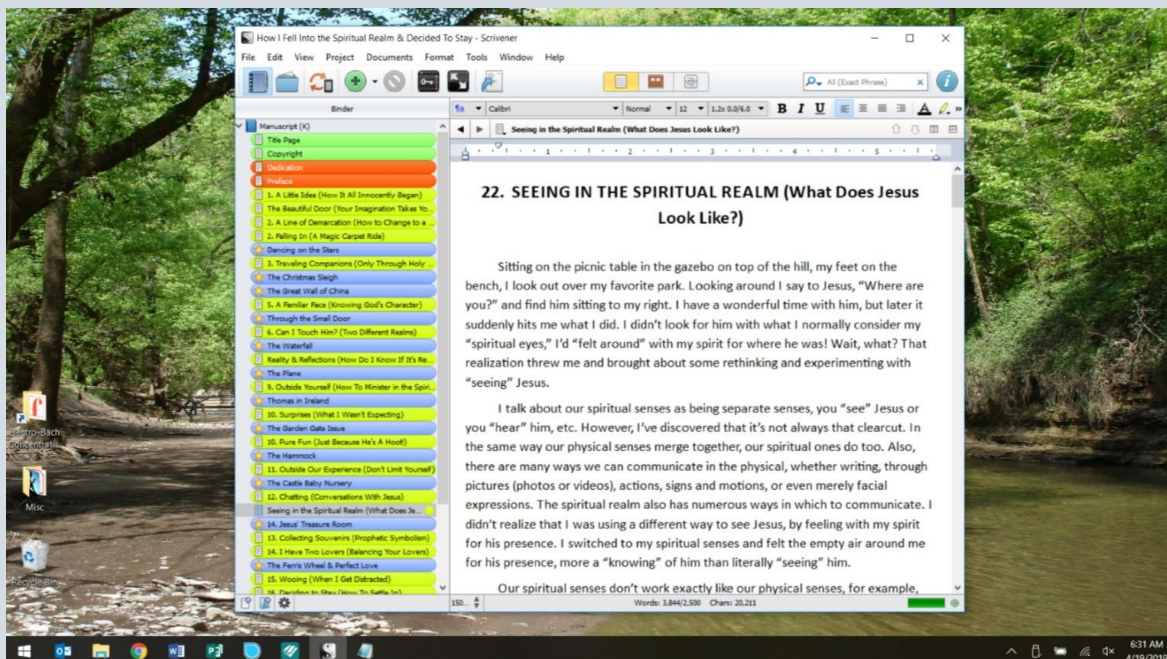


I used to write all my books in Microsoft Word and you can use any program like that to write your book. The most important thing (and the hardest) is to actually sit down and write. Writers refer to it as "butt in chair," or the British version—"bum on seat." I have it as a reminder on the bulletin board over my desk.

Scrivener

The first suggestion I have is a writing program called [Scrivener](#).

Scrivener was created specifically for writers and, while there is a learning curve, it's definitely worth the effort. Below is an example of what it looks like from writing my book "How I Fell Into the Spiritual Realm & Decided to Stay." Scrivener doesn't take up your whole screen unless you tell it to, so you can see my desktop wallpaper around it. I've color-labeled my chapter titles according to what editing stage they're in and what they are. I have set my word count for each chapter to be 1,500 words, and the bar in the bottom, right corner shows green, meaning I've reached that goal.



For a writer it replaces Microsoft Word or anything else (and I was a hardcore Word fan). If you're using a MAC then the other popular writing program is [Vellum](#), and many write in Scrivener and then format in Vellum. However, while Scrivener is available for both MAC & PC, Vellum is only MAC.

Scrivener comes with a one-month FREE trial but you can usually get a discount off the price by googling "Scrivener coupon code." Or, if you sign up for a course on how to use Scrivener you usually get a coupon code through the course.

I bought the training program/freebies/videos from [David Lee Martin](#) and got my discount but you'll also find anything you want to know online for free (though specify PC in your search or your answer will be for MAC). [Karen Prince](#) also has a great Scrivener course in Udemy that is often on sale and comes with great cheat sheets.

Here are a few links by authors that switched to Scrivener:

[7 Reasons You Should Switch to Scrivener for Your Writing](#)

Ray Edwards

[8 Ways Scrivener Will Help You Become A Proficient Writer Overnight](#)

Joanna Penn (The Creative Penn)

[5 Reasons I Switched to Scrivener for All My Writing](#)

Michael Hyatt (Author, Speaker)

Jerry B. Jenkins (of "Left Behind" fame) endorses it in his ["Best Writing Tools"](#)

However, the big thing to watch if you buy or sign up for a course is to specify **MAC or PC**.

The draw of Scrivener, besides the actual writing set-up and tools, is that it will "compile" your book for you into whatever format you need. When you're submitting your book for publishing, whether for paper or eBook version, you must upload your book in a specific form. Having Scrivener compile it into whatever you need makes that step easier. The book for a paper copy needs to be uploaded as a pdf while Kindle books need to be in a

.mobi format. In Scrivener you tell it what you want (out of any number of options) and it easily formats it for you. One big advantage of this is when you want to preview your book on a Kindle before you publish it. Once the book is in a .mobi format you email it to your Kindle and it shows up as a book, then you can flip through and see how the spacing and formatting is working before you publish it.

Notepad

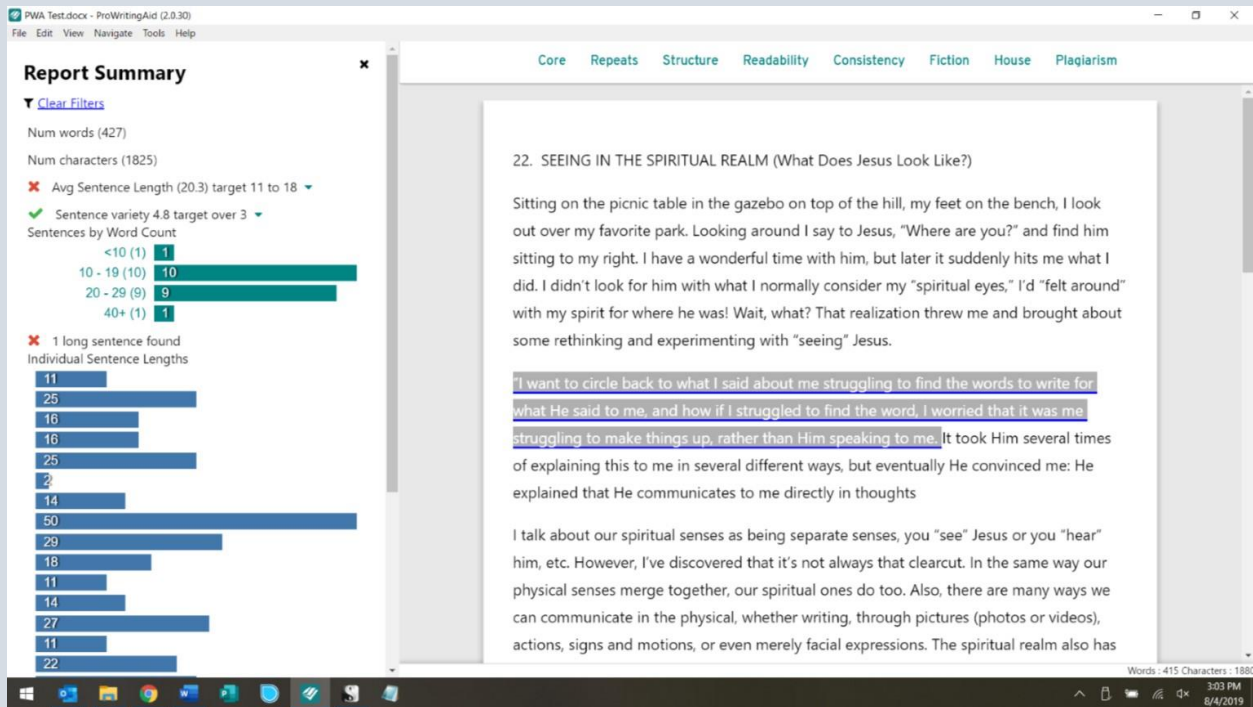
When you're going to copy-and-paste you will need something like Notepad to remove the formatting from what you want to paste. By doing that it won't potentially mess up the formatting you're merging into. Notepad is a basic program that comes on all PCs. I use it because I already have it but you can use any note program that removes formatting. You will need to paste anything you copy from elsewhere into Notepad, then copy it out of Notepad before you paste it into WordPress, Scrivener, etc.

Pro Writing Aid

The other major program I use is [Pro Writing Aid](#). This one is pricy but I consider it worth the money if you're seriously writing, as in, more than one book and/or blogging. There's a difference in being a writer, and writing. A writer feels compelled to write, whether it's journaling, taking notes, or doodling words. It's as much about the *act* of writing as it is what you produce. If you're a writer, *not* writing isn't an option.

Writing (as opposed to *being a writer*) is when you have a story burning inside of you that you have to get out, but it's more about telling that particular story than about the act of writing. You can write your story and then never pick up a pen again and be fine with that.

Pro Writing Aid is a great editing program and no matter how well we write and/or edit, it is amazing how we can miss words or not recognize our writing weaknesses. For example, I thought I did well until I learned through this program that my sentences are waaaaayyyy too long (plus it points out other ways I get bogged down, like in "sticky sentences"—a sentence that doesn't read smoothly). It will give you all sorts of "reports" on your writing, specifically showing what the issue is and suggesting changes. Below is a page of my writing showing which of my sentences are too long.



The trick here, before you purchase it, is to google for coupons or specials and if you don't see any good ones hold off until you do. By doing that I got my lifetime license for a much lower price. Jerry Jenkins endorses this and has taught a workshop on using it.

Other Apps/Programs I use

I use [Evernote](#) (free version) to have access on my PC and phone to things I want to reference, like experiences, quotes, and notes. Steve Scott has a great Kindle book on using this called ["Master Evernote."](#)

[Notebook](#) (free version, by Zoho) is my "on my phone" app to reference things I need when I'm away from my computer (though it syncs with the app on my computer). There I keep medical info, trip notes, my packing lists, and my favorite recipes.

[Todoist](#) is my all-time favorite writing/life app, also syncing between my devices. There is a great free version but because this is my go-to app it's worth it to me to pay the yearly fee for the pro version. In here you can create To Do lists and Projects, checking them off as you go, even creating recurring Tasks for habits and regular items. I have all my writing projects laid out in here and broken down into steps (along with everything else in my life). Steve Scott has a great Kindle book on using this called ["Master Todoist."](#)

Editing

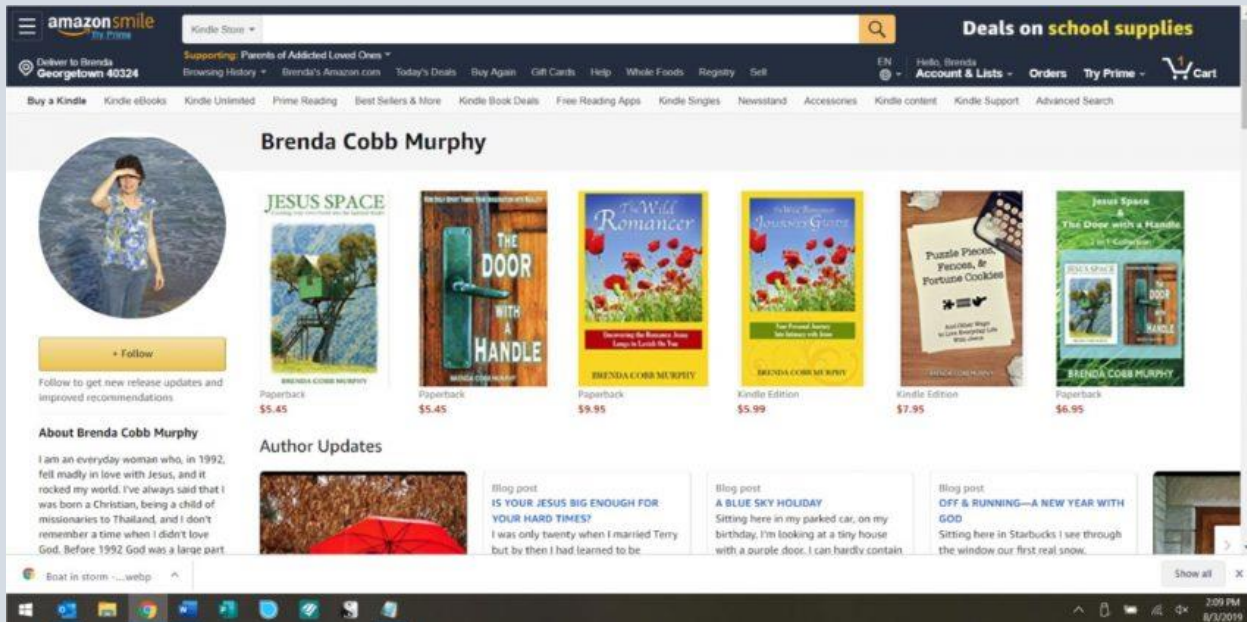
Before you begin the publishing process be sure to have your book finished and well-edited (seems like a “well duh!” but it isn’t). If you don’t use a professional editor then get some others to read it for you (and/or run it through Pro Writing Aid), read it over and over, then put it down for a week or longer and read it again. You should have edited your book so many times that you’re sick of it, then read it again. One trick that helps is to read what you’ve written out loud to yourself (I’m doing that now as I reread this), because you can feel and hear how smooth it reads.

Another thing I do to make sure I don’t end up with typos is, when I’m finished with a book, I then copy and paste it out of Scrivener into a Word doc. Word’s editor is amazing and detailed. With both the spelling and grammar-check turned on scroll through the book, looking for their red-flagged words or blue underlined grammar suggestions. That will catch a lot that you might miss otherwise. It’s more work but there’s nothing more unprofessional than typos and mistakes in your book or blog. This also creates a good back-up copy or when you need to go back and search for something. (Yes, you can search in Scrivener but it’s easy to do searches later on a PC when you’re looking through multiple Word docs.)

You can edit your book at any time, even after it’s published, so don’t panic (but catch every typo or repeated word you can beforehand!). If you upload your manuscript and in looking it over you see something to change, you can go back and change it, then upload it again before you move on in the process. If you discover a mistake after it’s published go back and change it. It will take up to 24 hours to go through the approval process again and get republished, but it’s worth it to have a professional copy.

A side note: After my book [“The Wild Romancer”](#) had been out for several years I noticed one day that I had spelled a chapter title wrong! It wasn’t something others would have noticed but I changed it, both in the paper copy and the Kindle version. It was the “Afterward” at the end of the book, and it’s supposed to be spelled “Afterword.” I cringed, but it’s changed.

PUBLISHING



It is now possible to publish any book, paper or eBook, for free. My first book cost \$650 to publish. An amazing friend raised the money to make that happen. Then I had to pay over \$7 each to buy my own books, so the fact that this can now happen for free is huge! To order my own books now, depending on the number of pages, costs me between two and three dollars each. Also, in the past I had to sell my books off my [website](#), a real bear and a lot of trouble, now Amazon or whoever does it for me. :)

Kindle Books

My experience with eBooks has been publishing Kindle books through Scrivener. (if you're not using Scrivener there are plenty of posts out there on anything you need to know about other methods). To publish a Kindle book you will need a .mobi file.

I publish all my Kindle and paper books through [Kindle Direct Publishing](#) (KDP). They will walk you through what to do but it's important to have your info ready before you begin. That will include your Title, Tagline, Description, Keywords (5 or 7), Bio & picture, and Categories (or BISAC, for example, I use these: *Religion > Christian Life > Personal Growth*, plus *Religion > Christian Life > Spiritual Growth*.) You can stop during the publishing process to go back and figure this out or get it ready, but it helps to be as ready as possible when you begin publishing.

Paper Books

In the past I've used an Amazon company, CreateSpace, to publish my paper books and I've been happy with them. Unfortunately, Kindle Direct Publishing recently took over CreateSpace so it's no longer an option. I have no experience with publishing a paper book through KDP. However, I expect the process won't be much different than it was before and you will need the same basic information as you do for publishing a Kindle book. They transferred my six current books over to KDP and all have merged smoothly so I have no reason to expect any issues.

WRITING & PUBLISHING RESOURCES

A word of caution—don't allow yourself to get bogged down in buying books and signing up for newsletters and watching lots of videos (though you can get helpful, free resources that way). Many of these books and sites are for further down the road when you've got a website or blog or book to market. I've cut back a lot on what I read or follow because it can be a big distraction and time-leach, resulting in no "real" work done. It's easy and exciting to "gather information," plus it's motivating, but in the end it isn't going to get your work done. Here are some books and sites I've enjoyed and learned from.

BOOKS:

[Mini Habits: Smaller Habits, Bigger Results](#)

By Stephen Guise

[You Are a Writer \(So Start Acting Like One\)](#)

By Steve Scott

[The Miracle Morning for Writers: How to Build a Writing Ritual That Increases Your Impact and Your Income](#)

Hal Elrod & Steve Scott

[Slicing the Hype: A Simple Formula for Finding Great Nonfiction e-Books](#)

By Michael Stawicki

While I learned so much from this book and still use what I learned, I found this book to be much more than what the title implies. You will also learn about the shift the book market has undergone, from traditional publishing

to self-publishing (or Indie publishing). This book left me feeling like a real part of the writer's world. It's one of my favorite books.

[Let's Get Digital: How To Self-Publish, And Why You Should \(Third Edition\) \(Let's Get Publishing Book 1\)](#) (And his others in this series)

David Gaughran

[The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results](#)

By Gary Keller & Jay Papasan

PEOPLE I FOLLOW THROUGH BLOGS OR NEWSLETTERS:

[Writing Resources](#) (Jeff Goin's amazing list of resources that covers everything about blogging and writing)

[David Grughran](#)

[Jerry Jenkins](#)

[Joanna Penn](#)

[Stephen Guise](#)

[Steve Scott](#)

[Jeff Goins](#)

[Angela Lauria](#)

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