

Step 1: Comparative/Competing Title Analysis

- 5-7 books readers of your book are reading
- Published in the last 1-2 years
- First or second-time authors preferably
- 1-2 paragraphs each about how your book is similar and adds to the conversation (3-4 pages)

Some agents will ask for a list of competing title and authors, and others will ask for the comparative analysis and want those 1-2 paragraphs per title.

Heading Template

Author's first and last names. *Book Title* (Publication year). Publisher. Format \$Cost. # of pages. ISBN

Example

Juliet Kayyem. *The Devil Never Sleeps: Learning to Live in an Age of Disasters* (2022). Perseus Books. Hardcover \$24.50. 240 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1541700093

My Comparative Titles List

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Step 2: Literary Agent Search

- Search for the agents that represented your comp titles
- Look for agents that represented other books published by publishers of your comp titles
- Check databases like [QueryTracker.net](#) and [Publishers Weekly](#)
- If those agents aren't available, look for other agents at the same agency also looking for books like yours

As you find potential agents, keep track of how they accept submissions and why you think they might represent your book.

Create your Literary Agent Tracker by saving this as a copy and editing it:

[Literary Agent Tracker](#)

Step 3: Elevator Pitch

This is the 1-2 sentence hook for your book.

- Be clear what the book's central theme or topic is
- Arouse curiosity and interest
- May include comp titles or author comps, but doesn't have to
- Have a sense of who the reader is and why they care about this book

For inspiration, look at books like yours, and their hooks are most likely the first sentence or two of the book description on the sales page or back jacket cover.

Create Your Word Bank

- **What** is your book's working title?

1.
2.
3.

- **WHO** is the one person you're writing this book for?

1.
2.
3.

- **WOW** amazing outcome they want that your book helps them achieve...

1.
2.
3.

- **HOW** do you do that thing you do?

1.
2.
3.

Author Pitch Templates

Template 1:

_____ is for _____ so they can _____ with _____.

(My book title) (target reader) (outcome achieved) (how you help)

1.

2.

3.

Template 2:

My book is _____ meets _____ and is like them in that _____ and different in that _____

(title)

(title)

(these ways)

(these ways)

1.

2.

3.

Step 4: Target Market

If no length is specified, at least ½ page to 2-3 pages

Seek to answer these questions:

- Who are the people that read books like yours? (should be the same as who you're writing this book for)
- Why do they want your book? (may include gaps your book fills, identified in the comp title analysis)
- Where in the media does the conversation around your topic exist? Where do your readers hang out that you can reach them?

You may submit these paragraphs when they're requested, and you might use them as a basis for your query letter when you demonstrate an audience for the book.

Step 5: Marketing Plan

If this is requested, 2-3 pages is good, but if you have more to say, go as long as needed.

As you write, seek to answer these questions:

- What is your author platform, including accounts, follower count (and who is this audience), and how engaged they are?
- How do you intend to support your book launch? (Think about preselling and bonuses and your own marketing efforts)
- What relationships with the media, speaking stages, and influencers in your space can you leverage?

Get inspired by seeing what your comp title authors are doing/have done for their book marketing.

Step 6: About The Author

1-2 paragraphs written in third person that someone might read aloud before you give a speech.

These paragraphs should demonstrate that that you have the experience and expertise to write your book—and are uniquely suited to do so. If your topic doesn't relate to your work experience, what does it relate to?

Get inspired by the author bios of your comp title authors and see how their author bios are written.

Step 7: Table of Contents

If required, this page should include your book's title. Then, include a list of all your chapters, given in numerical order and including the titles.

These are not commonly required for memoirs.

Do not list your chapter sub-topics. Save that part of your own Table of Contents (which should include bulleted lists of sub-topics you will cover) to use in Steps 8 and 9.

If your book is separated into parts, include the parts numerated as Part I, Part II. List each part's chapters in numerical order. It's possible this exercise will help you improve your chapter titles.

For example:

Part I: Clarity

Chapter 1: Declutter Your Sentences

Chapter 2: Specific Word Choice Matters

Chapter 3: Misunderstand-Proof Your Writing

Part II: Voice

Chapter 4: What's a Writing Voice?

Chapter 5: Find Your Writing Voice

Step 8: Book Overview/Synopsis

This is 1-2 pages unless otherwise specified.

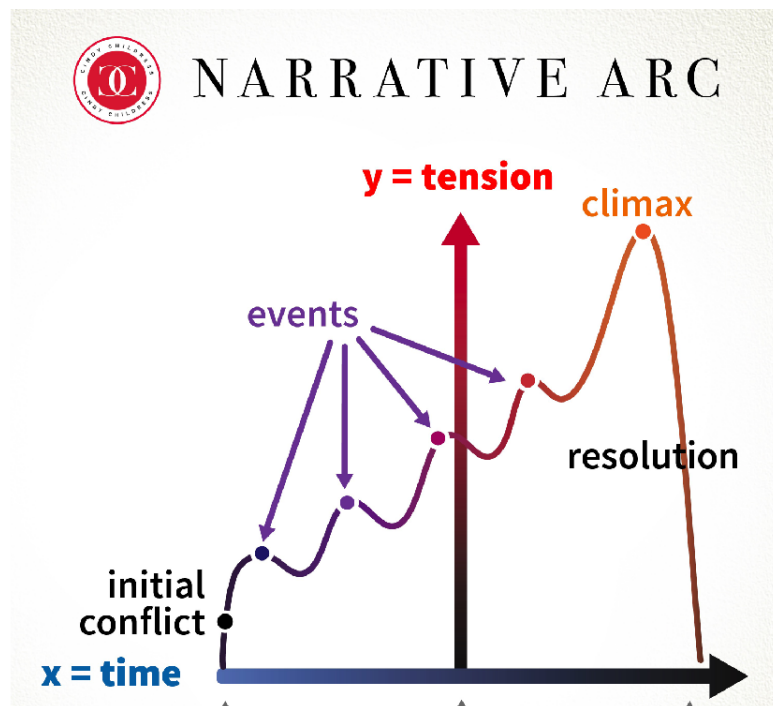
Think of it like your book's Cliff Notes. Lean heavily on your Table of Contents.

Look at book descriptions of your comp titles on their back jacket covers and sales pages for inspiration.

- Tell what happens in the book and give away all the surprises, no coyness
- Write with confidence. No "I seek to." More of "I do/provide xyz."
- Be specifically braggy. Are you ground-breaking? Is it a heartfelt tell-all?
- The details should match up with what you say about your book in the comp title analysis, detailed outline, and query letter
- Build value in your research, if applicable
- Follow your book's narrative arc, beginning with the initial conflict through the thread of events to the climax and resolution

Instead of just stating the topics or events, be sure to convey why things matter—the emotional reactions or the stakes/tension—and what happens next as result.

Even if your book isn't a memoir, it should be structured to flow with a narrative arc as pictured below:



Draft Your Memoir Overview

1. Where does your book start with the central conflict/problem your book solves?
2. Write a sentence or two describing the major topics/events in your outline
3. Show the relationship between one idea/event and the next in a way that increases tension and demonstrates a logical flow of events and information
4. Less is more, so avoid mentioning minor characters and limit sub-plots and sub-themes
5. You may or may not want to provide bullets of major events
6. After the climax, quickly end the overview with the reader now experiencing the “wow amazing outcome” from the elevator pitch exercise

Draft Your Self-Help or Expert Topic Overview

1. Create a hook with your elevator pitch for the introduction
2. Build value in your credibility and authority on this topic
3. Describe how your book is organized and any uniform chapter organization, including any digital resources
4. Give bullet points of the takeaways in your book (major benefits of the content)
5. Less is more, so avoid mentioning minor characters and limit sub-plots and sub-themes
6. Promise by the end the reader will experience the “wow amazing outcome” they desired.

Step 9: Detailed Chapter Outline

This most likely won't be required for memoirs.

1-2 pages per chapter.

Number the chapters and list them by name (unless you have a large amount of short chapters, in which case you may group them by parts. Describe the parts and then list the chapters).

Each chapter's details should include:

- How it relates to what came before and what comes after (your cliffhanger conclusions and bomb-dropping openers)
- Benefits or takeaways of the material (I often look at the detailed Table of Contents bulleted sub-topics for inspiration)
- Purpose of this content, reason it's important and relevant to the reader

You MAY include, as relevant selling points: Brief anecdotes or dialogue from stories, visuals (pictures, graphs, or charts), exercises, research sources, etc.

Step 10: Sample Chapter (s)

This can be 10-50 pages or even 100 pages, depending on the agent.

They are reading your sample for these things:

- Does the book deliver as promised?
- How much editing is needed? (the less, the better your chances)
- Is the conflict compelling? Original?
- Does the writing fit the genre?

Edit your sample so the answers to these questions make the agent want to speak with you or see the whole manuscript.

Step 11: Query Letter

This must be one double-spaced page.

Include your title, total word-count and the genre of your book (business book, cookbook, memoir, etc.).

Mention your author platform and any compelling numbers that demonstrate interest from your target readers.

- First Paragraph: Open with your Elevator Pitch and a personal message why you queried them
- Second Paragraph: Set the stage for the existing conversation your book is entering in terms of Comp Titles and Target Market
- Third Paragraph: Say what your book is about and how it's different (borrow from Comp Title Analysis and Overview)
- Fourth Paragraph: Give highlights of your Author Bio and Marketing Plan

Conclusion: Suggest a next step, like a phone call or sending the whole manuscript. I like to say, "I look forward to your feedback and thoughts on this book proposal."

It's possible that the first and second paragraphs may be combined.