

How to Write a Book
by David Einhorn, author of the book “Civil War Blacksmithing”

If you examine the information available on the Internet about becoming an author and perhaps even examined some books on the subject you will likely find standard advice about developing a story's plot, organizing poetry, writing children's books and further advice on selling those types of books to mainstream publishers that market to bookstores. However, if you look at books that have been written and sold to the specialized market of blacksmithing, you may notice that many if not most of the books started out self-published and then marketed not to stores but directly to the public by the author and/or specialty distributors of books catering to blacksmiths and technology buffs. You will also observe that blacksmithing books don't have story plots, so writing a book about blacksmithing or related technology books have little in common with most books that authors write, and do not benefit from a lot of the advice normally provided to authors.

Some of those reading this article may have already written a book and not know it. If you have regularly posted to forums, blogged, and answered people's questions, then there is a pretty good chance that those hundreds if not thousands of sessions at the keyboard have produced enough paragraphs to be organized into a book. The best advice that I ever read was from an author who explained his writing process. His advice was to simply write every day. Don't go back and polish the first few pages that you wrote, save that till you have enough pages for a book. If you stop and review what you have written, especially when you first start writing, then you have fallen into the biggest trap for writers, the never ending revising of a handful of pages. There will be plenty of time later **after** you have written your book to edit and improve your manuscript.

I remember years back communicating with a recognized expert on a non-blacksmithing subject who was a prolific poster to the Internet. He would regularly respond to people's questions with answers from two to five pages in length, posting almost every day. He agreed that the two of us would jointly write a book. I created an outline and wham, he developed writer's block. When relaxed he could write and post pages and pages of highly intelligent information on his area of expertise. But when faced with writing a page or two towards creating a book, his mind locked-up and he could only produce a short paragraph.

The key to writing a book on blacksmithing is to write, sketch, and/or take pictures about whatever comes to mind. Keep the word “book” out of your thoughts. Since you naturally will be writing about your interest and experience, you automatically have a theme for the book and a topic area. If your main interest is knifemaking, art objects, tools or some other area of blacksmithing, then keep detailed notes about what you are doing and take lots of photographs. As you learn about, experience and produce ironwork, the pages of notes and writing will keep accumulating. I can not emphasize it enough, don't stop and proofread or polish your notes, don't think book, and just keep writing. Only when you have an enormous pile of stuff as thick as a manuscript do you go back to organize and edit.

That is how I began writing the book titled “Civil War Blacksmithing”. There was originally no plan or outline, I simply kept detailed notes, photographs and sketches on what I was doing, especially writing down steps and calculations used, as well as the little details and tricks that made the project successful. Then came the wow moment when the pile of notes started to look like a book.

When that wow moment arrives start reorganizing the pile into some sort of logical order. Sort your notes into categories of information and then order those categories into a logical arrangement. In organizing my book I found that the notes fell into the categories of introduction, historical stuff, simple ironwork, knifemaking, etc. I then moved the introduction to the front and organized the rest of the sections according to the level of skill needed to complete projects in that section. Once the information was organized, I went back and filled-in any information that I felt was needed to complete a section.

So my method is pretty simple, keep lots and lots of notes, photographs and sketches of what you are doing. Keep writing and taking notes until you have a massive pile of stuff. Then logically organize the pile, edit, fill-in what is missing, and edit again.

Everyone has a book within them of useful information to share with others. Don't let your life go by without sharing that special information to both inform and inspire others.