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# Book Proposal Guidelines

At Microsoft Press we’re always looking for great new ways to teach our customers about Microsoft products and technologies—and great new people to teach them! We publish books on everything from essential skills for Microsoft Office and Windows to technical references and advanced topics for IT professionals and software developers. If you have a unique book idea or are interested in writing for one of our established series, we want to hear from you.

Here’s how to proceed:

**Step 1: Quick Pitch**

As a start, please send a quick pitch (a paragraph or two) for your book to 4bkideas@microsoft.com. If we’d like to learn more, we’ll ask you to submit a complete proposal. (Note: If you’re new to book writing, read “Tips for first-time authors” at the end of these guidelines.)

**Step 2: Full Proposal**

If we ask you to submit a complete proposal, fill out the remainder of this document and email it to 4bkideas@microsoft.com. With it, you will describe your book idea, your knowledge of the target audience, how you would organize topics, and more. Insert your answers wherever you see italicized text and other prompts. A Microsoft Press acquisitions editor will review your proposal and follow up with you.

Required information:

* Résumé and contact information
* Suggested book title
* One-sentence pitch
* Book description
* Target audience description
* Key topics covered: Top 5
* Evaluation of competing titles
* Table of Contents
* Estimated writing schedule
* Additional components, e.g. sample files
* Author biography
* Author reach
* Writing sample

## Résumé and contact information

*[Please insert your résumé or curriculum vitae (CV), telephone number, and email address. If there is more than one author for your book, please insert the information for each author.]*

## Suggested book title

A strong title helps to convey what is unique about your book and includes the key software or technology being covered.

*[Insert your suggested book title.]*

## One-sentence pitch

What is the unique selling proposition for your book—why would a customer purchase this book?

*[Insert your one-sentence pitch.]*

## Book description

Please provide as much detail as possible, considering the following:

* What is the purpose of the book and why does the audience need it? *[Insert your answer.]*
* What skills will the reader need to bring to the book and what skills will the reader take away? *[Insert your answer.]*
* What software and technologies will be covered? *[Insert your answer.]*
* What is your approach to presenting the material? *[Insert your answer.]*
* Think of the back cover copy when you write this: Why would readers pick up this book and not another one? What is your “hook”? *[Insert your answer.]*
* We start work on our publishing plan 18 months prior to software launches. For which part of the software life cycle is your material best suited? For example, is it “getting started” content, or are you offering innovative ideas for working with technology that’s been out in market for six months or more? *[Insert your answer.]*

## Target audience description

Please tell us more about who needs this book, and why:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What knowledge do you assume your intended audience has? What skills have they mastered?  | *[Insert your answer.]* |
| Job Roles: What professional positions does this audience hold? | *[Insert your answer.]* |
| What information or training does your audience need? How do they usually obtain it? | *[Insert your answer.]* |
| What websites do they use? | *[Insert your answer.]* |
| What publications (magazines, journals, newspapers) do they read? |  |
| What conferences do they attend? | *[Insert your answer.]* |
| To what professional organizations do they belong? | *[Insert your answer.]* |

## Key topics covered: Top 5

*[What are the top five topics you will cover in the book, and why?]*

## Evaluation of competing titles

*[Include title, author, publisher, and ISBN for competing titles, along with a brief assessment of each and how your book is different.]*

If there is no book that competes directly on the exact topic, to what can your book be compared? What other similar books might your readers already own? What other sources does the audience use to acquire technical information (for example, white papers, TechNet, or MSDN)?

*[Explain where your book fits within the existing informational landscape.]*

## Table of Contents (TOC)

Please provide the following:

* Outline consisting of section/part titles and chapter titles
* Estimated page count for each chapter
* One-paragraph description of each chapter

*[Insert your TOC here.]*

## Estimated writing schedule

If your proposal is accepted and we sign a contract, we will work with you to fine-tune your writing schedule.

When estimating your overall schedule and hand-off dates, please keep in mind that book manuscripts tend to take longer to write and edit than anticipated. Many experienced authors use the formula of 70/30, where you can expect to spend 70% of your *total* time writing new chapters and 30% incorporating comments and feedback from your editors and technical reviewers.

For each chapter (including appendices), provide:

* If you will have coauthors, identify the author of each chapter
* Estimated page count
* Date you expect to hand off each chapter to Microsoft Press

*[Insert your preliminary writing schedule here unless you included it as part of your TOC above.]*

**Peer review**: We also encourage you to submit your chapters to peers who have expertise in the subject so you can get their feedback before submitting the chapter to our editing team. Please allow three weeks in your schedule per chapter for this process.

## Additional components

*[Describe any extra components you would like to include, such as sample files, code samples, templates, job aids, and supplementary resources.]*

## Author biography

For many readers, the author’s background and expertise are key selling points.

*[Please provide a one to two paragraph biography that highlights your credentials as a subject matter expert and as an author, plus any other relevant information. If there is more than one author for your book, please provide a biography for each.]*

## Author reach

Authors who promote their own books play an important role in building awareness and generating sales. In what ways could you help promote your book? Insert answers after each bullet.

* Do you have a website or blog? How many hits does it get a month?
* Do you have “followers,” “friends,” or other contacts through social networking apps such as Twitter, Pownce, Plaxo, LinkedIn, MySpace, et al?
* Do you podcast or video podcast? How big is your audience?
* Do you teach? Where, and to how many students per year?
* Do you speak at conferences? Which ones?
* Do you write for magazines? Which ones and with what circulation?
* Do you work as a consultant?
* Any other writing, speaking, or media experience?

## Writing sample

Authors who have not previously worked with Microsoft Press must include a writing sample. The sample can be a published work such as another book, an article, a white paper, etc., or a non-published work. If you do not have any examples available, please write and submit one sample chapter. (If there are multiple authors, each author must submit a writing sample.)

Send your writing sample along with this proposal document to 4bkideas@microsoft.com.

## Tips for first-time authors

* If you have never written a proposal before, you may find it helpful to refer to Michael Larsen’s *How to Write a Book Proposal, 3rd edition*, published by Writer's Digest Books (ISBN: 9781582972510).
* Consider being a contributor, coauthor, or technical reviewer before attempting an entire book.
* Gain experience by writing articles for Web sites and technical magazines.
* If you have expertise in more than one technology, let us know—we may have another project for you.
* Share your expertise by becoming a trainer or public speaker—many of our authors also participate at industry conferences and events.
* Learn more about your potential audience and share your knowledge by participating actively in the technical community. You might want to investigate the Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP) program. For more information, visit <http://mvp.support.microsoft.com>
* Make sure you have seen what else we are publishing and send us something different!
* A comprehensive, beginner-to-expert, everything-you-need-to-know “big book” approach is often less useful than a smaller, focused book targeting a specific information need.

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