

Welcome to the Write Publish Market podcast. If you're an entrepreneur considering writing a book to serve your business, you're in the right place. Or maybe you've already decided — that's even better. I'm your host, Jodi Brandon, book publishing partner for entrepreneurs and 20-year veteran of the book publishing industry. On the Write Publish Market podcast, in addition to learning from me, you'll meet entrepreneurs just like you and hear about their experiences as we explore all facets of writing, publishing, and marketing a book that will help your business grow in ways you might not even have dreamed up yet.

Hello, hello, author-entrepreneurs. Welcome to today's episode. Today we're talking about book frontmatter. What that is, is basically anything that comes before the main body or main text of your book. So just like you learned in English class in elementary or middle school, the three parts of a story are the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. A book is structured similarly. You have the frontmatter, the text, and the backmatter. It's not that the front matter is necessarily setting up the text, although in a way some pieces of it do, but it's really just everything that comes before the text itself — that is, the body of the book. You are looking at things like the title page and the copyright page. If you're having a discussion with somebody in the book publishing industry, they sometimes refer to the frontmatter as prelims. My understanding is that that came from a shortened version of preliminary matter, which is what what used frontmatter to be called. Frontmatter is pretty commonplace terminology today. And it's basically everything before the main body of the text. You sometimes hear described as everything before the table of contents, but that's not totally accurate. You have the table of contents and then if you have a preface, a foreword, an introduction — any of that — that's also considered frontmatter, because it's before the main text itself. Chapter 1 is where we're starting there. So you're looking at all of those pieces of material that come before that. Some of these are optional, and some of them are not. A half-title page, for example, with just the title — you don't have to have that in your book. A copyright page, you do have to have. You don't have to have a table of contents; it would be awfully foolish to not have a table of contents, though. But you don't have to have a preface, you don't have to have an introduction, you don't have to have a foreword. You might have one of those, or you might have all of those. You might have an epigraph, that right-hand page that just has a quotation, a Bible verse, or something like that. Lots of nonfiction books do not have an epigraph; lots of fiction books do. But then of course, vice versa is also true. So I thought we would break down what would be included in the frontmatter, what could be included in the front matter, and how that is set up today.

When you open a book, and crack the spine on a book — an actual, physical book — that first right-hand page could be a half title page, which again is just the title, or it could be a title page. The title page has the title of the book, the subtitle of the book, the author's name, and the publisher name or imprint, if the book has one. Let me back up for just a second: If you have a half-title page and a title page, those are both right-hand pages, and the left page in between them would be blank. And then behind the title page, on the left side, is the copyright page. We've talked about [the copyright page before this podcast](#), so I'm not going to get into that too much. The copyright page does have required elements.

The rest of the frontmatter has lots of optional pieces. So if your book has a disclaimer, the copyright page is where it sometimes goes. If you have an author's note, sometimes that goes on the copyright page, sometimes that goes on the right-hand page opposite the copyright page by itself, almost like an epigraph. If you have a praise page, a page of early testimonials and book reviews that you've gotten, you might include those on a right-hand page, or, if you have quite a few, on the back of it the left hand page. If you have a dedication, that's included in the frontmatter. Acknowledgements always used to follow the dedication in the frontmatter, but it's becoming almost the norm — and probably will continue this way and will be the norm before too long — for the acknowledgments to appear at the back of the book. The thinking for that is it makes sense to me. I know some people prefer the acknowledgments in the front of the book, but I think a lot of that just has to do with the book publishing industry not liking change and being very slow to change. But the common thinking is the dedication is a sentence or two or even just a line (e.g., To Mom; Dedicated to my children, whom I love dearly). It's a short, sweet sentiment that nobody really minds reading. Acknowledgments, on the other hand, sometimes are a few pages. To be frank, nobody really cares about them. Unless you're mentioned in the acknowledgments, most readers aren't reading them to see who an author is thanking. That's between the author and those acknowledgments recipients. So a lot of times now they're moved to the back of the book, as part of the backmatter — in other words, out of the text proper, for those people who are interested to dig into that. So acknowledgments could be frontmatter or could be backmatter.

Then you've got your table of contents. And then your preface, introduction, and/or foreword, if you have one or all of those pieces. The way we break these down is this: The foreword is written by someone else — not the author. Lots of nonfiction books use a foreword to get credibility for their book. If there's someone that you know, or have a connection to, or could be introduced to who could write a foreword for your book, and lend some credibility to it, if that's

someone who your audience would recognize as an expert in whatever your book is about, that's a great thing. If you don't have someone like that, no big deal. A foreword is absolutely not necessary. The preface and introduction get confused a lot. The preface is typically about the book: *why* you wrote this book, or the origin story of your book — versus the introduction, which is the *what*, which is what is this book about. The introduction is about the actual contents of the book.

There are people who say that anything after the table of contents is considered the body of the book, and not part of the frontmatter. I sort of subscribe, obviously, since I'm talking about it in this episode, to the theory that anything before that first chapter really is frontmatter. And then you get into the body of the book with the start of the text proper Chapter 1. So that's the order of the elements of the frontmatter. Again, you may have some of those, or you may have all of those. It's really the discretion of you, as the author of your book. Other than having to have a title page, copyright page, and table of contents, all of the other pieces are optional.

The other thing to know about the frontmatter is that before the table of contents, on those first pages of the book, there are no page numbers. So if you look again — if you crack open a book and look at those first few pages — there are no page numbers before the table of contents. Often page numbers for the preface and introduction will be Roman numerals versus actual numbers. It'll be the lowercase "i" for page one, and then once you get to the regular body of the text, we start with the regular page numbers. You will sometimes see those Roman numerals, just to keep things confusing. And you will sometimes see those page numbers, those Roman numeral page numbers before the table of contents, but you won't see them on the dedication, a praise page, a title page, or a copyright page. Those do not have page numbers. We like to keep things as confusing as we can in the book publishing industry. That's just one more way that we do it. So that's what frontmatter is.

Frontmatter and backmatter, you can think of them as bookends to the body of your book. A lot of times authors don't pay much attention to them; they really focus on the text of the book, and then the frontmatter and the backmatter end up being put together quickly at the end. I urge you not to do that. These are elements people are used to seeing in a book. The average reader doesn't know necessarily that the praise page should come before the dedication. Does it matter if that gets jumbled up? No, not really. But you want to follow — like we talk about all the time on this podcast — the norms of the industry. One of the norms of the industry is having

these elements of the frontmatter in this order. That's what readers' expectations are, and we want to meet those expectations.

The frontmatter is this front bookend to the body of your book. And in the next episode, we will talk about the backmatter, which is the other book and that closes things up — wraps the present up with a nice little neat bow before you close that back cover. Today we're opening the front cover and seeing what we have there, and then next week, we'll flip to the back of the book and get to that back cover and close the spine at the end of that episode.

I hope this has been helpful. Let me know if you have any questions; you know where to find me. I thank you for listening today. And until next time, keep on writing.

Thanks for listening to this episode of the Write Publish Market podcast. I know just how busy entrepreneurs' schedules are. I'm grateful you've taken some time out of yours to journey into the world of book publishing with me today. If you enjoyed this episode, take a quick screenshot and share on social to let others know you're listening. Use the hashtag #writepublishmarket to spread the love. Until next time, friends, happy writing.