

How to Publish a Book with Whitney Frick

“The devil doesn’t wear Prada. The devil wears orthotics.” That’s what a bitter employee at a publishing house said of Whitney Frick’s future boss when she became an editorial assistant. Whitney wasn’t dismayed, however. Growing up, she was always a voracious reader. In college, she would go to Barnes and Noble, pick out something from the new fiction table, and buy it as a reward for herself for getting through finals. In college, she studied English and wrote her honors thesis on Oprah’s book club and its cultural impact. Whitney was up for the challenge of working in this highly competitive and selective industry.

Whitney is the editorial director at The Dial Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House in New York. She was previously the executive editor at Flatiron Books, where she met Tiffany Dufu and helped her bring *Drop the Ball* into the world. (Tiffany has gone on record to say that she will be following Whitney to her new publishing house when she’s ready to publish her second book.) Before that, she was an editor at Scribner for seven years, where she published several New York Times bestsellers, including *Love Warrior* by Glennon Doyle, the author of the memoir *Untamed*, and *What I Know for Sure* by Oprah Winfrey. Leaning on Whitney’s decade-plus experience, here’s how to publish a book.

Know why you should write your book. Ask yourself, seriously, “Why am I the only person on earth who can write this book?” That’s what Whitney is asking when she’s reading a submission: “Could anyone else have written this book?” If she believes the answer is yes, then she moves on. If this book is unique in the reading experience and the message, then she feels it’s worth acquiring. Armed with your *why*, you can write your book with conviction and confidence.

Write your book. This should go without saying, but oftentimes, people get caught up in daydreaming about being a published author without putting in the work. There’s nothing to publish if you don’t sit down and actually write — and finish — your book.

Find your flavor. When asked, “What influences a publisher’s buying decision?”, Whitney said, “We work on instinct, and we work on taste and appetite.” If an agent markets a client’s book to The Dial Press as a “cross between *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed and *Educated* by Tara Westover,” then Whitney will research the numbers for each of those memoirs before making a decision. These books performed well, so she’ll press on: she’ll “taste” the book and see if she agrees with the marketed similarity. If you have a clear idea of what your story “tastes” like, you’ll have an easier time getting it into the hands of a publisher.

Discover your season. Editors are often specialized by genre — literary fiction, book club-style fiction, non-celebrity memoirs, etc. These genre editors then need to discern which of the three publishing seasons a book will sell best in. Fall is designated for big-name books, the kind that

will drive customers to bookstores and be bought as Christmas presents. Spring — January through April in publishing — releases books that go well with the remaining cold of winter, without the upcoming hope of Christmas; they're cozy, savory stories. Summer, of course, brings big fiction, beach reads. "Within each season, there will be the priority title, the make title, the sleeper hit, etc," Whitney said. If you understand what season will pair best with your book, you have an even better chance of getting it on shelves.

Find an agent. When it comes to traditional publishing, a literary agent is imperative. They'll help you negotiate your advance and your royalties, as well as capture the vision you have for the book and make it more palatable to publishers. To find an agent, read books that are like your book. Flip to the Acknowledgments, read the "Thank you to my agent, So-and-so" line, then look up So-and-so's contact information. Reach out to them. "If you're nervous about being an evangelist for your own work," Whitney warned, "you'll never be a published author." You have to really want your book to be published, enough to be vulnerable and put yourself out there and advocate for yourself.

Get familiar with the timeline. Whitney just published a book in June 2021 that she acquired in 2015. The publishing timeline isn't usually this long, but it does take a while to publish a book, at least eighteen months on average. First, a literary agent sends a proposal, or the full novel, to a publishing house to review. If Whitney likes the work, she makes a case for it to the publisher. Once the publisher is on board, then they schedule a meeting with the author and agent to talk about the publisher's vision. If the author's on board, the publisher bids for the right to acquire the book. If they win, then they start working with the author. *A lot* happens before editing, creating the cover, or marketing the book. Once you understand that timeline, you can relax into the process with your nail beds intact.

Learn more about publishing a book from experts like Whitney: [Apply to The Cru.](#)