

How to Write a Professional Bio

presented by Jeniffer Thompson

A professional bio is your chance to control the narrative of YOU. It's your introduction to the people who need you most—your audience. Your bio is your pitch! And finally, here's something to think about: You're pitching you because your audience *needs* what *you* have to offer.

You want a bio that:

- brags about you without coming off as self-important
- fully represents who you are, but is really about your audience
- reveals a polished and professional presence
- establishes trust and credibility
- creates engagement by speaking to the needs of your audience
- and attracts the people who matter most—your future fans.

No wonder authors feel overwhelmed by the process. But fear not, I will guide you through ten steps to write and polish a stellar bio—a bio you will be proud of.

I promise you this: You cannot afford to put off the creation of your best bio any longer. Today is the day. As an author you will be asked for your bio over and over again. I can recall many occasions when out of the blue someone asked me to speak at a conference or contribute an article and they needed my bio (of a specific length) and they needed it *now*. Scrambling to get a bio off quickly will inevitably result in one that doesn't speak to its intended audience, or worse, is riddled with typos. Every subpar piece of content you send out will chink the armor of your personal brand.

Here are the steps:

1. Establish Your Goals.
2. Find Your Superpower.
3. Know Your Audience.
4. Identify Your Influencers.
5. The Information Dump.
6. Find Your Gold.
7. Plug Into the Formula.
8. Shitty First Draft.
9. Spin Your Story.
10. Connect the Dots.

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Workbook Bio Building Block Questions:

Step 1: Setting Your Goals

- What are your professional goals?
- What does success look like for you?
- Where do you want to be in three years? Five years? Ten years?
- What do you want your bio to accomplish? You may have more than one answer, and that's ok, you'll have several versions of your bio. Each bio version will target a specific audience and have a unique set of goals.
- What do you want people to do once they've read your bio?

Step 2: Finding Your Superpower

- What is your voice? (outrageous, funny, blunt, honest, dry, practical, reserved, critical, smart, gritty, wry, witty, academic, professional...).
- What type of content do you most enjoy writing?
- Do you feel that you have to hold back for fear of offending people?
- Do you write from an authentic place, or do you create a persona for yourself when you write?
- What is your biggest strength?
- What is your biggest weakness?
- Why are people attracted to you?
- Why do people work with you?

Step 3: Identifying Your Audience

- Identify at least three comparable titles.
- Who is reviewing those comparable titles on Amazon on GoodReads? What do they want and need?
- Who will most benefit from your book?
- Who needs your books right now?
- Create a persona to identify your ideal client/fan/reader. As you make future decisions, always check in with that "person" to see if your bio and message resonates with him/her. No, it's not a real person, that's true, but you can get surprisingly intimate with the needs of your audience when you think of him/her as a real, live person with needs, desires, fears, likes and dislikes.

Step 4: Identifying Your Influencers

- List your top three to five influencers.
- What are they doing that you agree with?
- What are they doing that you disagree with?
- How can you do it better?
- What makes their bio shine?
- Where does their bio fall flat?

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Step 5: The Information Dump

It's time to lay it down. Just dig in and start writing.

Don't Panic. Don't even think about it. This is not a test—seriously, just lay it all down.

Go wild. Say it all.

Be you. Include everything. Include cliches with abandon. Be funny. Be sarcastic. Be honest. Be You.

Next, let it sit for awhile. A week or two.

Step 6: Find Your Gold

It's time to revisit your work with fresh eyes and highlight anything that jumps out as particularly relevant. You can literally print out your information dump and highlight, circle, or underline anything that sounds good. High-five if you don't want to waste paper, I admire your sense of environmental awareness—go ahead and highlight the text digitally. Do what works best for you, as long as you find your gold.

At this stage, you are highlighting and identifying the best of you.

Step 7: Jeniffer's Smart Author Bio formula

1. **Your Focus:** What do you do exactly? Examples: Thriller Author, Researcher, Speaker, Serial Entrepreneur, Political Scientist, Branding Expert, Writing Coach, Chief Inspirational Coach, etc. This is the thing that people need to know right out of the gate, the thing that sets the stage and gives your reader context.
2. **Your Grabber:** This is the thing that grabs me as your potential reader. How does your focus affect me? What makes you unique? Feel free to inflate and throw in some keywords like passion, purpose and vision.
3. **Your Credibility:** What gives you the right to be an expert? What dues have you paid? Include education, awards, and experience. Know this: experience is big-time important, you don't have to be a Harvard graduate to know what the hell you're doing. I never went to bio-writing school, and look at me, I'm writing a book on it. Why, because I've written thousands of bios (and you can too).
4. **Your Promise:** How will you help your reader? What (specifically) do you offer your potential reader or client? Name it: a specific service or offer, your book, your blog, weekly podcast, a workshop or course you teach, etc. This will be something you are proud of that your audience will benefit from now. It's ok to name more than one, but keep it brief and on-point—the thing you are most excited about and that your reader will be excited about too. I like to think of this part as an information gap: you have information that your readers want, make it clear what that is so they want more of you.
5. **Your More:** this is where you beef up your street cred—these are things that go beyond your education: associations you belong to, boards you serve on, places you teach,

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organizations where you have spoken, more books you have written, and places where you have been featured (like newspapers, magazines, TV Shows, podcasts, and other books that mention you). List a few reputable clients, but only if your audience will recognize them. And finally, do you have any shining endorsements from influencers in your area of expertise? Clip a few words (and only a few words) and use them to tout your deliciousness. Something like this: Time Magazine says “she’s the best thing since sliced avocados.” (Seriously, avocados are delicious!).

6. **Your CTA (call-to-action):** What do you want people to do: visit your website, follow you on social, follow your blog, buy your book, take your class? Tell your readers what you want them to do and how they can get more of you—or you’ve wasted your hard-earned money on this book, not to mention the time it’s taken you to read it, and write a bio!

Step 8: Your Shitty First Draft

Begin by getting your bio to a place where it’s pretty good, or even pretty shitty. It doesn't have to be great, not yet, the main thing is that you just get it written. Once you feel reasonably confident that you’ve got it all there, go ahead and run it by those who know you best, will be honest with you, and won’t shoot you down or trip up your confidence. This is key. Destructive criticism kills our creative spirit. Protect yourself.

Be prepared to consider the advice that makes sense, and throw out what doesn’t. Then, focus on the shape of your story. It’s all there, but does it have a clear message? Reach out to supporters, mentors, clients, fans, and colleagues to get their feedback.

Step 9: Spinning Your Story

Review the formula. Did you remember all your juicy details? Is it all there? What’s missing?

Consider. Revise. Rinse. Repeat.

- Does your bio reflect your goals?
- Does it reflect your superpower?
- Does it include the best of you?
- Did you hold back?
- Is it honest?
- Does it reflect your joy and your voice?
- Does it speak directly to your audience and tell them why they need you?
- Does it provide a call-to-action?

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Step 10: Connecting the Dots

It's time to build your arsenal of bio versions so that you're prepared for any situation that requires a bio. For most professionals, two versions is standard: a long and a short version. However, I'd like you to think beyond the typical. Be exceptional in every aspect of your brand.

You never know how someone will discover you. That's why the nuance of each bio you put out there is so important. This is your opportunity to establish a good first impression and engage your potential audience, get them to want more—no matter the situation.

Every version of your bio will have a specific purpose. Preparing for all possibilities puts you in control of your story. Below I provide a list of possibilities to consider, from your casual to your professional, from LinkedIn to Twitter, it all counts.

- Website bio
- Book jacket bio
- Media bio
- Speaker bio
- Byline bio
- LinkedIn bio
- Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/etc.

Need a little more help and bio examples? Buy Jeniffer's book:

*How to Write a Professional Bio:
For Authors, Speakers, and Entrepreneurs*

