

Part 1. Developing a Book Plan

1.3 GUIDELINES FOR WRITING PROMOTIONAL COPY

Because readers may use the Preface and Back Cover Copy to determine whether or not to buy the book, these elements can be considered “promotional copy.” As such, your Preface and Back Cover Copy should define for whom this book is written, how you came to write and develop this book, and how it is different/better than the competition. Reviewers do a better job when they have a clear idea of the text’s focus and goals, as outlined in your Preface. Consequently, the Preface needs to be brief, well written, and interesting. Please give the Preface as much attention as you have given the rest of your book.

The items covered in your promotional copy should also be emphasized in your marketing questionnaire. Again, this will help the marketing department ensure that they are conveying the right message to the right audience when they are promoting your book.

The following guidelines have been developed to help you, the author, write a Preface that will present a content overview for those who will be using and selling your book.

Preface elements.

Not all of these elements will be applicable to your book, however, you should include as many as possible to give an accurate and complete description of the content.

- Introduction. This section should be used to answer the following questions:
 - Why did you write this book? (What is your “vision” of this book? Refer to yourself as “I” or “We,” not as “The authors.”)
 - What is the purpose of the book?
 - What is your goal in writing the book?
 - Does the book fill a void in the field?
 - What makes your book unique compared with similar texts?
 - Who is the audience?
 - If your book is part of a series, your AE should provide an introduction to the series.
 - What part does this text play in the overall series concept?
 - Rational for the series

- List of titles in the series
- Organization of the Text. Try to answer the following questions in the next section:
 - How is the book organized?
 - What is covered in your book? Here you may go chapter by chapter, mentioning the topics that are addressed in each.
- Features
 - Describe new features (required for revisions)
 - Describe “special features” found consistently throughout all chapters
 - Describe pedagogical elements (learning aids)
- New to this Edition (for revisions)
 - Describe and explain new or significantly revised content (by chapter if necessary)
 - Explain how new material reflects changes required by new legislation or regulations if appropriate.
- Supplemental Package/Ancillary Materials (if applicable)
 - How do ancillaries contribute to the strength of the book?
 - How do they enhance student learning?
 - Identify each ancillary and briefly describe its features.
- About the Author
 - Explain who you are and why you are qualified to write this book. Provide credentials, educational background, and experience.
- Conclusion
 - A concluding paragraph on the underlying theme of the book adds a sense of closure to the Preface.
- Acknowledgments
 - Prentice Hall will add the names of the manuscript reviewers. (With longer prefaces, we usually put the acknowledgments on a separate page.)

Back cover copy.

Back cover copy usually includes:

- A paragraph description of the book
- A list of features
- For revisions, a list of what's new to this edition

If you only had the back cover of your book to catch a customer's attention, what would you want it to say?