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# Three Things Every Children's Book Writer Needs to Know



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# How long does it take to write a children's book?



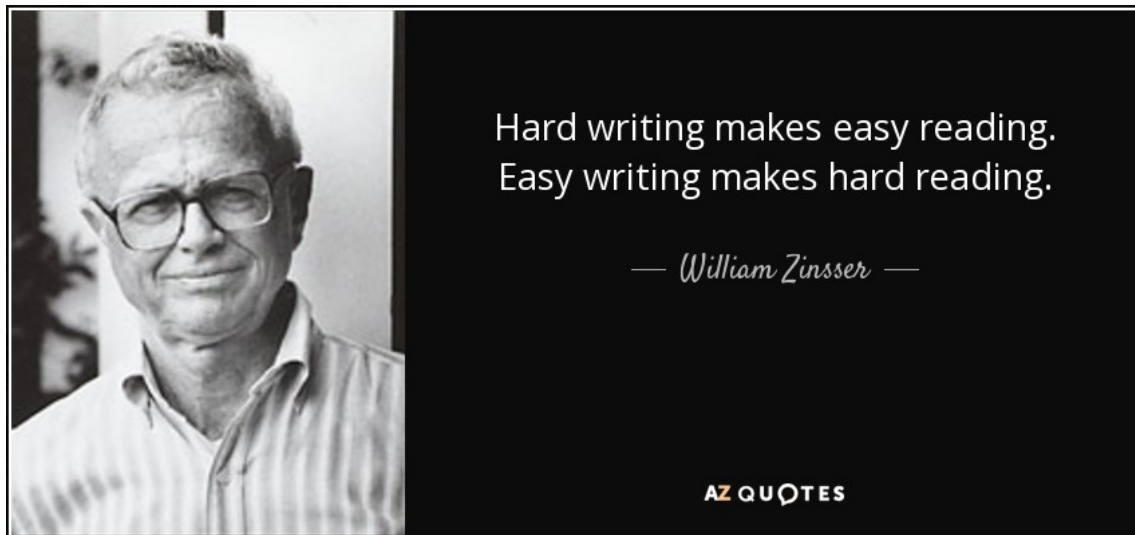
**Q. How long does it take to write a children's book?**

**A. No one knows!** What we do know is that there are three steps to becoming a published author.

1. Write the book.
2. Revise the book.
3. Sell the book.

As a rule of thumb, the longer the book, the longer it takes to write. That being said, some books take a long time to figure out even though the book is very short. Yes, it can take years to write a picture book. (*My picture book [Road Work Ahead](#) was 25 years in the making.*)

I'm **not** saying it takes years to write words on the page. Quite the opposite! It's easy to sit down and write words. Making those words into a story is the hard part. Shaping a story into a coherent narrative is what takes time.



The legendary writing teacher [William Zinsser](#) wasn't the only one who talked about easy reading and hard writing. Check out the Quote Investigator's page for [Easy Reading Is Hard Writing](#).

Don't be fooled by the size!

*If you want to write a "little" children's book because you think it will be easy, you will be in for a BIG surprise.*

Yes, you can write a picture book in an afternoon. You can write an entire novel in a month . . .

. . . but that is just the *beginning* of the process.

**Easy writing makes hard reading.**

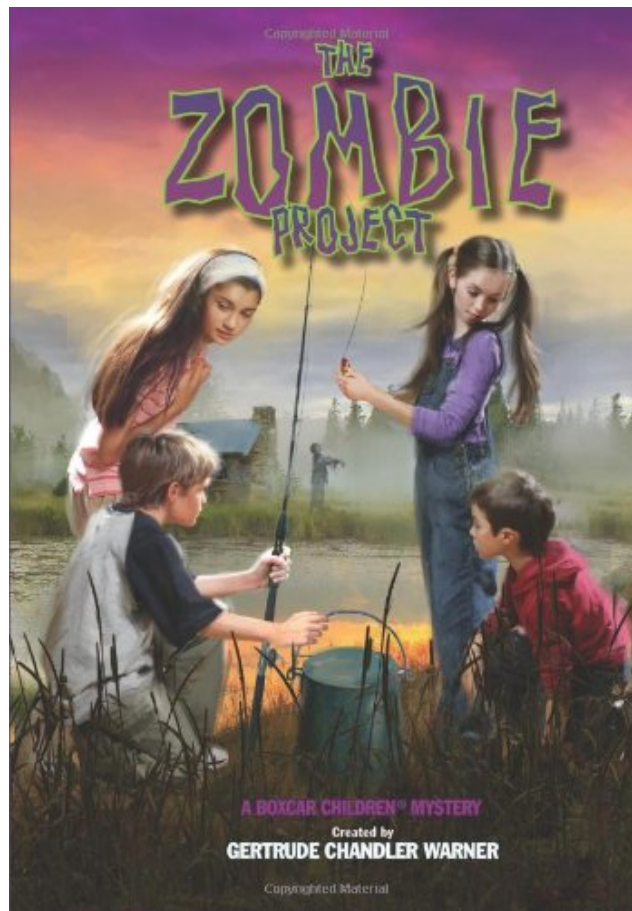
To write a book that communicates your story clearly, you have to revise. So don't write a children's book because you think it will be easy.

*Write the children's book story that **only you** can tell.*

The stories that only you can tell are worth the time it takes to write hard . . .

. . . so the book is easy to read.

# How long is a children's book manuscript?



**The Zombie Project:** A Boxcar Children Mystery  
(ghostwritten by Anastasia Suen)

**Q. How long is a children's book manuscript?**

**A.** The length of the book depends on the age of the child who will be reading it. **The older the child is, the longer the book will be.**

There are six different children's book formats and each one is for a different age. What a toddler wants to read is not the same as what a teen wants to read. Children change as they grow. The psychological needs of each age group are very different. These varying psychological needs are one reason children's books are divided into different ages.

Here is a general age and word count guideline:

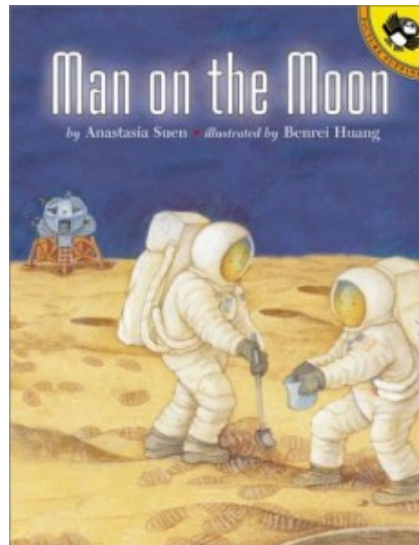
1. **Board books** (birth to 2) 8-50 words
2. **Picture books** (2-7) less than 500 words
3. **Beginning readers** (4-8) 500-1,500 words
4. **Chapter books** (5-10) 5,000-20,000 words
5. **Middle grade** (8-12) 20,000-55,000 words
6. **Young adult** (12-17) 55,000-70,000 words

*The most accurate way to figure out the word count that editors prefer is to [read](#) recently published children's books like yours.*

Count the number of words on a few pages, figure out the average, and multiply that number by the number of pages in the printed book.



# Why should I read new children's books?



## Q. Why should I read new children's books?

A. [Reading new children's books](#) will help you see what editors are buying.

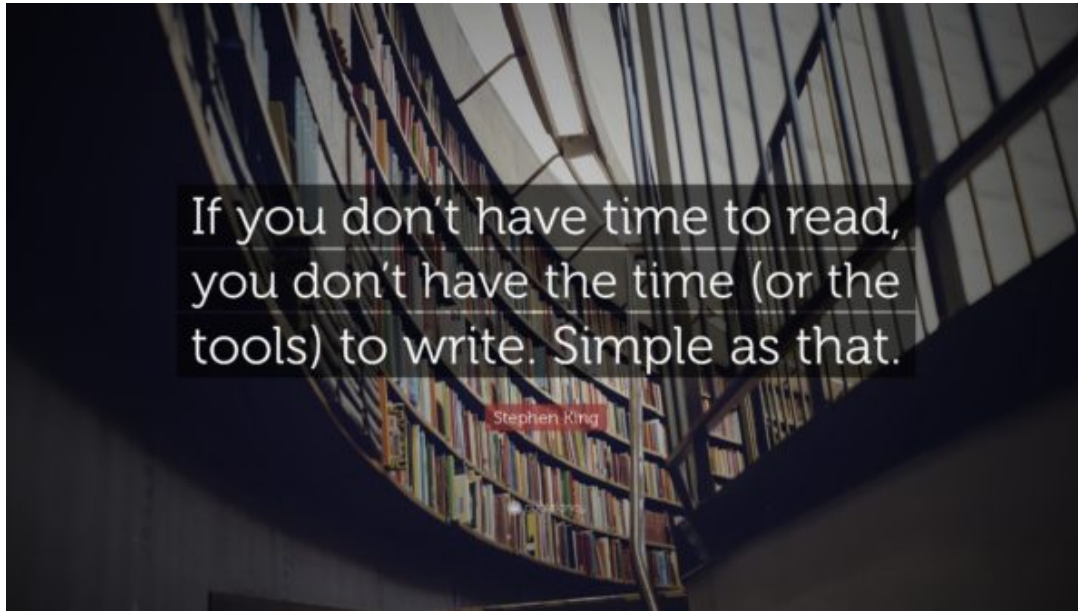
Editors look at [other books on your topic or theme](#) to help them decide if they will buy your book (or not). They don't want to buy a book exactly like one that is already on the shelves.

*(If your book is not unique in some way, why will anyone buy it?)*

Finding [comps](#) (other books like yours) for your manuscript before you send it out will help you make sure your book is unique.



What does a *New York Times* bestselling author say?



If you don't have the time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that.

— Stephen King

# Work with a developmental editor.

Are you looking for a workshop to help you start your book or take your work to the next level?

CLICK  
HERE