Journal your brand

Use this journal to take notes, complete tasks, get creative,
or just doodle in it (that's still being creative).

Session 2; Engage verbally
Why do words matter?

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Journal your brand

Untangle Your Brand for authors
Session 2; Engage verbally

Why do words matter?

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This course was commissioned by the charitable social enterprise GLL as part of the GLL Literary Foundation, which supports authors in continuing to write, share stories, and inspire young readers.

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What to expect

Words shape how readers connect with you, beyond just the stories you tell. In this session, we explore how to craft an author brand that speaks to your audience in a way that feels natural, engaging, and aligned with your writing. You'll learn how to refine your tone of voice, create compelling messages, and develop a clear brand language that resonates across everything from book blurbs to social media.

By the end of this session, you will:

- Understand the role of verbal identity in author branding and how messaging shapes perception.
- Define a tone of voice that feels authentic and consistent with your stories.
- Learn how to craft clear, engaging messaging that attracts and connects with readers.
- Experiment with different styles of headlines, taglines, and messaging to see what works best.
- Develop a stronger understanding of how to use words to build an audience and create lasting engagement.
- This session is all about turning your writing skills into a powerful tool for branding and communication, ensuring your words work for you on and off the page.

Remember to complete the quiz and feedback form using the links provided. Your input is valuable for improving your experience, reviewing your progress against the original learning objectives, and enhancing the course overall.

Session 2 Quiz; test what you've learned
Session 2 Feedback; provide input to improve the session



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Writing to connect; turning stories into messages

Have you ever seen this in a communication?

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Morbi vitae condimentum enim. Praesent vel volutpat ante. Maecenas consequat viverra diam nec lobortis.

Or even this?

This is a good dummy text. It is not intended to be read and has no meaning at all. This is a simulation of actual copy, using ordinary words with normal letter frequencies, that cannot deceive the eye or the brain.

Both are referred to as ‘dumb text’; some designers use them in place of actual words when designing layouts for posters and brochures. This helps with layout but not with communication. We need stories. We need messages. We need communication. We need words.

As an author, words are your craft. But do you know how to use them to create engagement beyond the story itself? Writing a book and writing in a way that attracts readers, builds connections, and shapes your brand are two different things. This session is about using your writing skills to create a consistent and engaging brand message.

A picture is worth 1,000 words. But perhaps one word can communicate more than 1,000 pictures. Words create clarity and truly speak to your audience. With a strong brand ‘tone of voice’, you can connect consistently and memorably. You shouldn’t judge a book by its cover, but you can assess a brand by its use of words.



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What is the secret to creativity?

There is no secret to creativity, and you'll be instantly familiar with the five key principles, although perhaps too preoccupied to consciously put them into practice regularly. If you're too busy to read the book that these insights are based on (which you should be) then here are the nut-shells in a nut-shell.



Step 1 Gather

As well as gaining specific insights into your product/service/ consumer – always look to gain wider general knowledge.
Read more. See more. Do more.
I read The Guardian, keep notebooks, use the internet!



Step 2 Think

Capture every idea, as many ideas as possible. Focus on the bigger picture not just the finer details. Nothing is wrong. Do it individually. Do it in groups. Just don't stop.
I love a post-it-note (try and use a thick pen though).



Step 3 Forget

Incubate ideas by doing something else to stimulate your imagination. You'll continue to work on the problem, even in sleep mode. Get away from your desk. Take up a hobby.
I generally distract myself by listening to music and cataloguing vinyl (and going to the pub).



Step 4 Connect

Whilst the notion of ideas suddenly appearing isn't a proven science, try and recognise the relationship of existing thoughts to create new ideas to achieve your own "Eureka!" moment.
I've seen the birth of many great ideas in client workshops (which helps buy-in later).



Step 5 Craft

Make it beautiful and share your ideas. Allow criticism to shape and develop your thinking, they may not be fully formed but fresh input and patience can develop even better ideas.
Doing everything yourself can be limiting, so just ask others what they think as you perfect your idea.

So that's it. No big secrets at all.
Grab a copy of the book.
James Webb Young, A Technique for Producing Ideas

Or grab some post-it-notes if you're ready to just get going.

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2.1 Mind map your book

What do you know about your book? What do you know about the history of your genre? Have there been books, films, or TV series with similar themes? Are there well-known authors who inspire you or have taken a similar path? Is there a specific mood, aesthetic, or even sensory detail—like a particular sound, colour, or feeling—that defines your story?

Get creative and keep thinking about everything that shapes your book. Keep adding ideas as they come to you. If it helps, create a version on a wall or digital board to see the bigger picture. Keep exploring connections, themes, and inspirations that make your book unique.

Book/series title

Factual

Physical

Practical

Emotional

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Messaging; hierarchy

What you say matters, but how you say it shapes how readers engage with your brand. There are four key levels of messaging to consider, helping guide your audience through a journey from curiosity to connection. Instead of overwhelming them with everything at once, create layers of information that lead them to explore your books, your world, and your author identity.

Grab – headlines (typically 3 to 6 words)
These are the book titles, taglines, or author bios that instantly capture attention.
Engage – introductions (a short paragraph, maximum 2 sentences)
This is what draws readers in, whether it's a book description, social media post, or website intro. Keep it concise and compelling.
Inform – the main body of text (as long as you need it to be)
This is where you expand, whether in book blurbs, newsletters, or interviews. Give depth, but keep it readable.
Instruct – calls to action (important but don't make it too small)
Direct readers on what to do next—follow you, buy the book, join a mailing list. Make it clear and natural.

Experiment with different styles of messaging. You're not always selling—sometimes you're building intrigue, engaging emotionally, or inviting readers into your world. Consider your audience: what do they need, and how do you want them to feel when they interact with your message? Think about your favourite books or authors—what drew you to them? Will your messaging create the same connection for your readers?



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Messaging; reader journey

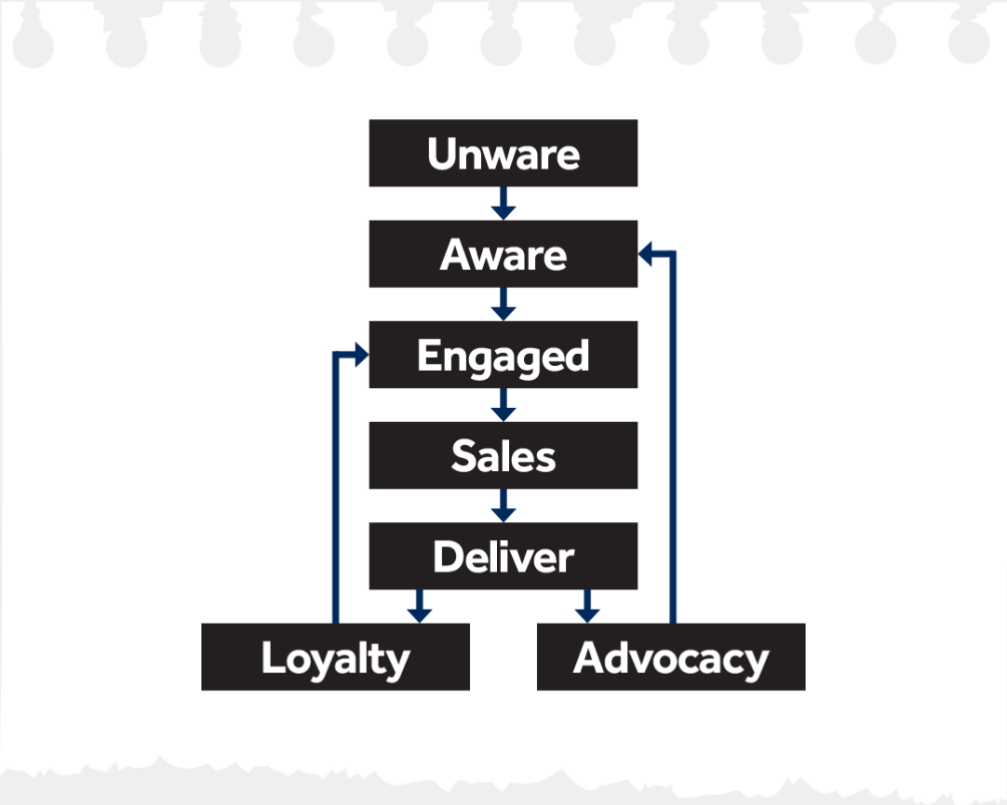
When crafting messages, consider where your audience is in their journey with you. Readers don't buy books the way customers buy products—they discover, explore, and connect before committing.

Build phase (let them find out about you)
Unaware – They stumble across your book in a shop, see a post online, or hear your name for the first time.
Aware – They've seen your book a few times, read a review, or heard a friend mention it.

Conversion phase (hook them and keep them interested)
Engaged (Curious) – They check out your website, follow you on social media, or read a sample chapter.
Sales (Invested) – They buy a book, sign up for your newsletter, or engage with your content meaningfully.
Deliver (Experience) – They read the book and experience it and hopefully enjoy it, you can find out what they enjoy, or maybe don't enjoy.

Retention phase (keep them engaged)
Loyalty (Fans) – They've read multiple books and keep up with your new releases. They comment, share, and interact with your content.
Advocates – They love your work, recommend it to friends, review your books, and actively support your career.

Readers move through this journey at their own pace. Messaging should meet them where they are, whether introducing your work, keeping them engaged, or turning them into long-term fans.



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2.2 Define your tone of voice

Use your Brand Doughnut and core idea to shape your tone of voice. Think about who your audience is and where they are in their journey when they engage with your writing. Your tone should reflect your identity as an author while feeling natural and consistent across all your communications.

This task will help you define the style of writing you use in book descriptions, social media, websites, and reader interactions. Keep it authentic, engaging, and aligned with your brand.

How to define your tone of voice

Step 1; pick a word from each row that resonates with you (the white boxes)
Step 2; add up your score that corresponds to the column (1 to 5)
Step 3; review if you have a low or high score (unless it's right for your audience)
- – score below 7, it's probably too functional, maybe swap one
- – score above 18, it's probably too emotional, maybe swap one

Step 4; select
- – any functional tone (blue box)
- – any emotional tone (pink box)

Functional	1	2	3	4	5	Emotional
Matter of fact	Direct	Clear	Calm	Warm	Passionate	Enthusiastic
Respectful	Trustworthy	Empathetic	Kind	Open	Edgy	Irreverent
Formal	Professional	Informative	Concise	Conversational	Chatty	Casual
Serious	Authoritative	Firm	Smart	Witty	Playful	Fun

My tone of voice

Brand core	
Word from row 1	
Word from row 2	
Word from row 3	
Word from row 4	
Functional tone	
Emotional tone	

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2.3 Create headline messages

As a starting point, consider three phases of the reader journey: promotion, conversion, and retention. Write a message for each stage, thinking about when and where your audience will see it. How does the timing and placement of your message influence their response?

This task helps you think about how to engage your readers at different points in their journey and how to tailor your messaging to encourage action.

Pssst... have you heard?

Build message (when your audience isn't aware of you or has only recently discovered you).

Where will they see this message?

Ermmm...let's try it

Convert message (when your audience has engaged with you and is deciding whether to purchase).

Where will they see this message?

Wooooh...gimme more

Retain message (when your audience has bought from you and you're offering them something new).

Where will they see this message?

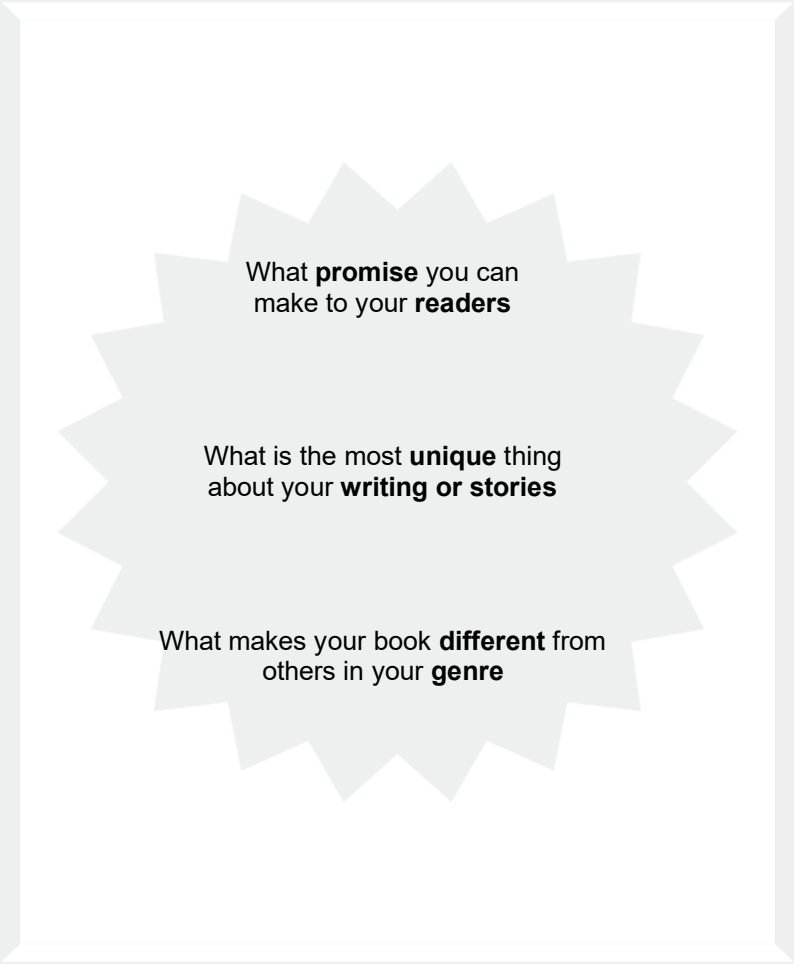
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2.4 Create a strapline

All big brands have taglines—short, memorable phrases that stick in people's minds. I'm loving it. Just do it. You can do it when you B&Q it. These businesses spend billions embedding their message in your subconscious. But does an author brand need one? While you may not have a huge advertising budget, a strong tagline can be an effective way to communicate your author brand and make a lasting impression on readers.

Top tips
Create a descriptive tagline that focuses on your positioning and offer. It should be 5 to 10 words long, clear, and literal—but not boring. Avoid business jargon.
Create an emotive tagline that reflects your brand core, values, and mission. Keep it short—5 words maximum (3 is better). Use humour only if relevant to your brand.
Whether descriptive or emotive, a great tagline helps readers instantly understand what your books are about and why they should care.



Final strapline

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2.5 Crafting your messages: a final check

Your messaging is an extension of your storytelling. It should feel like a natural part of your author brand, whether in a book blurb, a social media post, or a reader email. Use this checklist as a guide to ensure your words are engaging, consistent, and aligned with your brand.

Before you finalise a message, ask yourself:

Does this sound like me?
Your messaging should reflect your natural tone and style, just like your writing

Is it consistent with my book's themes?
The emotions and ideas in your stories should come through in how you present yourself.

Would my ideal reader connect with this?
Think about what they need and how they will relate to your words.

Does it encourage curiosity?
Leave space for the reader to wonder, engage, and want to know more.

Is it clear and simple?
Make sure your message is easy to understand and delivers its point effectively.

If you didn't tick all five boxes, don't worry. Messaging takes practice, and sometimes it just needs a little refining. Maybe your tone of voice needs adjusting, your message could be more concise, or you need to tap into what truly excites your audience. Keep experimenting and revisiting your core ideas—every draft brings you closer to a message that connects.

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Stop, keep, start

After completing this session, what are the key things you should change immediately, what's working well, and what needs to start happening?

Remember to complete the quiz and feedback form using the links provided. Your input is valuable for improving your experience, reviewing your progress against the original learning objectives, and enhancing the course overall.

Session 2 Quiz; test what you've learned
Session 2 Feedback; provide input to improve the session

I will **stop** doing

I will **keep** doing

I will **start** doing

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Notes, ideas, sketches, doodles

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