

"I wrote a book!"

"You should get it published!"

@doctorbeewrites

"I'm trying!"
aka

How Traditional
Publishing Works

1	 <div>Create a "query package"</div> <div><i>This typically includes a cover letter (called a query letter), a synopsis, and the first few pages of the book.</i></div>	2	 <div>Send queries to literary agents</div> <div><i>Agents get thousands of submissions a year. Only a tiny fraction will be selected. Many authors query for years.</i></div>	3	 <div>Interested agents ask to read a partial or full manuscript</div> <div><i>Agents request the manuscript for less than 5% of the queries they receive.</i></div>
4	 <div>An agent makes an offer if they think they could get a publisher to buy the book</div> <div><i>Only a fraction of full manuscripts read will result in an offer.</i></div>	5	 <div>Other agents can counter-offer when they hear the news</div> <div><i>Not all authors get multiple offers. Some agents also wait to offer until they hear someone else is interested.</i></div>	6	 <div>An author signs a deal to have the agent find an editor willing to publish</div> <div><i>Good agents have training on how to negotiate deals on behalf of authors and they have industry "insider" connections. Agents are paid on commission from a publisher deal.</i></div>
7	 <div>Agents can work with their new client to polish up the book</div> <div><i>Many agents are "editorial," meaning they help edit at this stage, but some agents prefer only to take on polished work.</i></div>	8	 <div>Agent sends the manuscript out "on submission" to editors at publishing houses</div> <div><i>About 80% of books in the U.S. come 5 parent publishing companies (the "Big 5"), and those editors ONLY accept submissions from agents, not directly from authors.</i></div>	9	 <div>One or more editors offer a deal to publish the book & the agent negotiates terms</div> <div><i>Stats on this are hard to get. There are multiple points in this stage where a book can fail to proceed. An estimated 60% of authors will not have their first book sell.</i></div>
10	 <div>The author revises their book with editor feedback & guidance</div> <div><i>Books go through several types of editing, and often multiple rounds of each kind</i></div>	11	 <div>The publisher handles cover design, interior book layout, marketing, and distribution</div> <div><i>Authors sometimes have input on some of these decisions, but generally, the publisher gets final say.</i></div>	12	 <div>The book is published!</div> <div><i>This is typically a year or more after the publishing deal is first signed.</i></div>

This entire process can take years. At every single step in the process, the chances of succeeding are very slim. The process requires dedication and a considerable amount of luck. Books published this way typically reach the most readers and give the author the highest level of support in the end stages, but it can be the most challenging route for many.