



Cara Finnegan • Book Coaching

What is a book coach, anyway?

A book coach is the writer's equivalent of a personal trainer, providing goal-setting, expert guidance, accountability, and support—all tailored to your individual needs. Think of me as a *facilitator*. You do the work, and I use my skills to help bring about the outcome you're looking for.

What I coach and don't coach

I coach fiction in several genres (recent client projects include historical fiction, upmarket fiction, contemporary women's fiction), as well as memoir and narrative nonfiction. I don't coach projects designed solely for a scholarly audience, self-help, business, or books for children or young adults.

Who I coach

I love working with writers who want to change lanes, who want to step into a different vision of themselves as writers. I specialize in coaching academics who want to write non-academic stories, folks who dream of writing that novel, memoir, or nonfiction for a general readership. If you don't have a background in academia, though, fear not! If the idea of changing lanes and stretching yourself into new ways of writing excites you, we may be a good fit.

About me

My coaching practice blends my Author Accelerator training in coaching fiction and memoir with my twenty-five years of experience writing and coaching award-winning, research-intensive nonfiction projects. A native of St. Paul, Minnesota, I currently live in Champaign, Illinois, where I work as a professor of communication. After more than two decades of coaching students and colleagues in academic contexts, I have found that book coaching perfectly merges my mentoring talents with my love of fiction and narrative nonfiction. Simply put: I love this work!

I also write fiction and have published three books of research-intensive narrative nonfiction. I recently finished a first draft of a mystery novel featuring an amateur sleuth and I am currently knee-deep in writing a family memoir that focuses on life in the 1930s Midwest.

When I'm not writing, coaching, or professoring, I love to run, read (of course), spend time in the woods, experiment with different kinds of photography, and hang out with my spouse and pets. I also have a strange obsession with stories about art crime – maybe I'll write one someday!



Packages and Pricing

Initial (non-scary, no obligation) Discovery call: FREE

- fill out a short Q&A form telling me what you're working on and what you'd like from a book coach, then we'll set up a time to talk
- one 30-min. phone/Zoom call to discuss your needs and see if we are a good fit

Story Insight package: starts at \$1000

This package is best for you if you have a draft of a full manuscript and want a clear-eyed evaluation. I'll offer you insight into what's working, what's not, and how best to revise.

With Story Insight, you'll get:

- review of your manuscript (\$1000 for up to 70K words; add .02/word after that)
- a 4-5 page summary letter outlining primary strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript and recommending concrete steps for revision
- one 45 min. call to discuss feedback and next steps
- does NOT include inline comments or copy edits on manuscript
- depending on your needs and my availability, you'll have the option to move into either the Story Vision package or Story Focus package

NEW! Story Insight Mini – submit 35-50 pages: \$250

This package is best for you if you have part of a draft and would like insight into how it's working so far. Often the main issues in a manuscript emerge in the earliest pages. Even if you have a full draft, this package may offer a more economical glimpse into what's working and what's not. Depending on your needs and my availability, you may wish to move from here into monthly coaching.

With Story Insight Mini, you'll submit your first 35-50 pages (double-spaced) and get:

- review of your pages
- a 2-3 page summary letter outlining primary strengths and weaknesses and recommending concrete steps for revision
- one 30 min. call to discuss feedback
- does NOT include inline comments or copy edits on manuscript

Story Vision package: \$1500 (or \$500/month paid over 3 months)

This package walks you through proven strategies for laying the foundation of your story, using a series of exercises that help you get to the heart of what you want your book to be. Whether you are a “pantser” (writing by the seat of your pants) or a “plotter,” you will leave this package with a valuable vision of what your story is, why it matters, and who your audience is. You’ll be able to hold a clear picture of the project in your mind and move forward into your story with confidence.

This package is best for you if...

(1) you have part of a draft, or maybe even a full draft, but you know you need to step back and get a better handle on the big picture before you can really move forward;

-or -

(2) you haven’t started writing yet, but know you need a clearer vision so that you don’t waste time drafting words that won’t move the story forward

With Story Vision, you’ll get:

- an initial 45-min. project planning call
- 6 deadlines (tackle up to two deadlines per month) where you complete intensive writing exercises designed to help you craft a vision for your story
- summary feedback from me with detailed comments at each deadline
- one 30-min coaching call per deadline to discuss feedback and plan next steps
- depending on your needs and my availability, you’ll have the option to move into the Story Focus package so that you can put your new vision for your story into practice

Story Focus package: \$1500 (500/month for minimum of 3 months)

This package is best for writers who have a plan in place and are ready to focus in a concentrated way on getting the story on the page. It offers ongoing coaching as you draft and revise, with extensive feedback at each step. It is ideal for writers who want accountability, support, and feedback on a regular basis.

With Story Focus, you’ll get:

- an initial 45-min. call to lay out a plan for your project and our work together
- 6 deadlines where you submit up to 20 pages of work per deadline on a regular, predetermined schedule (up to two deadlines per month)
- a summary letter with my feedback, plus inline comments on your pages, with each deadline
- one 45-min. coaching call paired with each deadline to discuss feedback and plan next steps
- package can be extended for additional packages of 3 months each

Things to keep in mind

- All packages include free email support as well as the option to purchase additional calls.
- I will use my training and talents to help you craft the best book that you can. I cannot guarantee that you will get an agent, get published, or make money. (And you should run the other way from anyone who claims they can guarantee these things!)
- My coaching practice requires writers to have a basic comfort level with sharing files on Dropbox, using the comment/track changes function in Microsoft Word, and meeting via Zoom. We will use these tools to exchange our work and communicate. If any of these tools are brand new to you, that's okay; I can point you to helpful tutorials.
- Right now book coaching is my side gig; I also have a full-time job. As a result, I only commit to working with the number of clients that I know I can serve well. If I commit to working with you, know that you are part of a select group of writers and will have my focused attention and commitment.