



Top Ten Tips from the World of Book Blogging

By Laura Fabiani



iREAD BOOK TOURS

Top Ten Tips from the World of Book Blogging

The Research:

Tip #1: Target the right blogs

Tip #2: Get to know the blogger you are pitching

Pitching Your Book:

Tip #3: Include key hooking elements in your pitch

Tip #4: Display the right attitude because it matters

Tip #5: Keep track of your pitches

Working with Bloggers:

Tip #6: Pay it forward and share blog posts

Tip #7: Respect a book blogger's opinion

Being a Proactive Author:

Tip #8: Stand out as an author

Tip #9: Learn about virtual book tours

Tip #10: Self-publish the right way

The Research:

Tip#1: Target the right blogs

Finding the right blogs for your book can make the difference between getting your book discovered by your target audience or lost in a sea of other books.

“Will you please review my book?”

That is the question book bloggers get asked time and again by authors. Initially, when I first began my book blog in 2009, that question had me excited at the prospect of being offered a free book to read and review. Now, not so much.

Some of the books I get offered are not even the genres I like to read. So why am I being asked to review them? Simply because the author or publicist did not do his or her homework. You need to target the right book blogs for your book. I can't stress how important this is. Finding the right blogs for your book can make the difference between getting your book discovered by your target audience or lost in a sea of other books.

If you want to make good use of your marketing time, then take the extra few hours to do this. But how do you know which blogs to target? Let's say you wrote a sci-fi novel. The first thing you need to do is look for book bloggers who love to read this genre. A quick search on Google using “sci-fi book bloggers” will get you links to where you can find them. You can also search directories such as [The Book Blogger List](#).

Also, try researching sub-genres, rather than just the general ones. I once toured a book that was a Christian sci-fi and my research brought me to a website where I found a slew of book bloggers who specifically love reading Christian sci-fi.

What should you look for in a blog? Here is a quick checklist:

- Look at the date of the most recent post. Is it over two months since they last posted? Move on.
- Review policy. Read it. Period. It will tell you all you need to know about the blog, what genres the blogger(s) read or do not read, how to contact them, what book format they prefer, their lead time for reviews, and anything else they deem is worthy for you to note, such as sensitivities to certain content such as graphic violence, profanity and explicit sex scenes.
- If there is no review policy page, look for the About Me page. Spend some time getting to know the blogger. If you write Christian fiction, would you offer it to someone who says they are atheist?

- Ease of contact. If you have a hard time finding contact information it's likely that the blogger does not want to be solicited for reviews and prefers choosing her own books to read and review.
- Blogger name. Look for it and use it when contacting them. After all, you are going to ask this person to review your literary masterpiece. Shouldn't you address them by name?
- Reviews. Read a few of them and note the writing style. Are you okay with it? If you are expecting a 300-word review and only get a paragraph, you would have known this had you taken the time to read the reviews.
- Their reach. Look at their blog followers and social media followers. Are there comments on their blog posts? Note: Some newer blogs may not have any comments but they are open to reviewing and may write great reviews so you need to weigh what matters to you. Also, some are more active on social media than on their blogs so they will reach readers when sharing their review posts on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram.
- As you do your research, keep a spreadsheet of the blogs that you plan to pitch. Include the blog name, blogger name, contact email, and any specific instructions on how to pitch them. More on this in Tip #5.
- After you've pitched, you can add the date you sent out the pitch and any reply given.

This first part of your research can take days, but in the end it will be worth it, especially if you keep meticulous notes.

Tip #2: Get to know the blogger you are pitching

In book marketing, you are not just pitching your book, you are pitching yourself.

I can tell you that we book bloggers do have our pet peeves about how we are approached, and we openly talk about them on our blogs. How do you avoid getting ignored or having your email request deleted within seconds of being opened? The secret is in the introduction. Do NOT send out mass emails containing the intro “Hi there”, followed by a book description and an ebook attachment. That is spamming and will get an automatic deletion. And it won't do anything good for your reputation.

Instead, address the blogger by name or the pseudonym found on their blog or social media sites. Your first sentence should indicate that you know something about them, which is why you are contacting them in particular about a possible review of your book. That first sentence should make a book blogger feel like they have been personally selected by you to review your book. Because...that *is* what you did right?

All your pitches should be customized. Read the About Me page. It will give you insight on the blogger's life. Sometimes, you will find an interesting tidbit that you can use in your pitch. For example, if the blogger states he lives in Plymouth, Massachusetts and your book just happens to be set in that city, then this is something you can use in your pitch. Or if the blogger has a son who plays football and your book's protagonist is a football player, then you can use this to introduce your novel. This will tell the blogger that you took the time to read his/her blog, that you are interested in finding out about what he/she likes to do and read.

Also, it's not always evident at first glance if a blog is not owned by a North American blogger. Don't assume the blogger is from the US. Making a note of which country the blogger lives in will make a difference when you are pitching. You may decide to offer print copies only to local bloggers to save on shipping costs, but if you are unaware of the blogger's location and offer a print copy to a blogger who then happens to send you their mailing address in London, you will be stuck fulfilling your offer or risk looking foolish when you are unprepared to send your book overseas.

Personal interest will go a long way by telling the blogger what type of person you are. In book marketing, you are not just pitching your blog, you are pitching yourself.

Pitching Your Book:

Tip #3: Include key elements in your pitch that will hook your reader

After reading tons of pitches, most book bloggers can scan an email and tell within 3 seconds how interested they are in the pitch.

Book bloggers are super busy. They read a lot of books and have TBR (to-be-read) lists that are a mile long. Experienced book bloggers can get about a hundred pitches a week. What will make your pitch stand out from the rest? How can you compete with all the requests and bestseller review lists from the big publishing houses that make it into the same inbox as your pitch? After reading tons of pitches, most book bloggers can scan an email and tell within 3 seconds how interested they are in the pitch.

Here's a checklist of what a good pitch should include:

- A catchy subject line. Some book bloggers request that you include the words Book Review Request in the subject line. If this is the case, do so.
- Address the blogger by name. If you can't find it anywhere on the blog (you may need to check out their social media sites too) then at least use something specific to them, like their blog name. Do not use a generic greeting such as "Hey there!". Better to start with "Hi Blogger at Books Are my Passion" which will at least indicate this email is for them and not part of a mass email.
- As stated in Tip #2, you want to customize the pitch and indicate you've done some research and have read the blogger's blog. Therefore, use this in your intro. Something like, "I was thrilled to find you love to read diverse kidlit because my latest release is about a young Taiwanese girl who saves her village through a brave act...." will spark the blogger's interest because your intro is specific to them.
- Make it easy for a book blogger to consider your request. Your pitch should include all the details about your book so they do not need to go searching for it. In bullet points, you should include the book's full title, publisher, publication date, ISBN number, number of pages, Amazon page link, and the format offered for review. Some bloggers only read print or listen to audios, so this detail will be helpful. I've been frustrated too many times with the lack of information on the book being pitched. I just want to delete and move on.
- Include the book cover. Book covers sell! Need I say more?
- You can include the book description found on the back cover of your book, but I also suggest that after your intro, you include key elements that make your book stand out. This is especially true of non-fiction books. There are tons of books written on parenting,

for example. What makes yours different? Why would the blogger want to read this particular parenting book?

- Include one or two of your book's best blurbs or testimonials. Not too many. Make sure these blurbs are short and bring out the best elements of your book.
- Include any awards your book has won.
- Include your author bio. Make sure it's not too long. If you're pitching a non-fiction book, your bio should include any expertise you have that indicates your book's topic is written by someone who knows and understands the topic.
- Content rating. This is optional but it can definitely make a difference in getting a reader interested despite certain content that may offend. If your book contains profanity, graphic violence, explicit sex scenes and mature subjects (rape, suicide, sexual abuse, etc) then it would be in your best interest to mention it if you think a particular blogger would discontinue reading the book when they come across these subjects or scenes. A blogger may be sensitive to a certain subject and decide not to review your book because of this. This will save you the cost of a book and the shipping.

Here's what NOT to include in your pitch:

- Do not include an attachment of your book in ebook format. You are making a request, and the blogger has not yet replied. Don't assume including the ebook will make the blogger want to read it.
- Do not boast. While it's okay to let others speak of your achievements, such as including blurbs and awards won, it's not becoming to toot your own horn. Statements such as, "My book is the best on the market when it comes to business start-ups" or "I know you'll love my book!" will get you nowhere. You will come across as unprofessional and a newbie. Book bloggers are savvy readers and well-read.
- Do not request to read the review before the blogger posts it. If you are offering a book blogger your book to review, it's understood that you are asking for their opinion. You are not entitled to change it or then ask them not to post it.

Tip #4: Display the right attitude because it matters

Be kind and unassuming in your request. You want to recognize that it's the blogger's choice to accept or decline the offer.

If you read hundreds of emails a week, you become adept at getting a feel for the genuine friendliness or lack thereof in an email message. Therefore, as an author, your attitude matters before you send your pitch, as you write it and afterwards when you continue in your correspondence with the blogger, if you get a reply.

If you don't like switching hats from a writer to a marketer as you embark on getting publicity for your book to maximize your sales, then I suggest you pay someone to do it for you. Why? Because your attitude will translate from your mind to your email and right across to the blogger. When you approach book bloggers you have to remember that they are your potential readers. You are bypassing the middleman and getting right to the consumers. Treat your consumers with respect. Book bloggers are avid readers who love to support authors and do so voluntarily. Be grateful and see them as people from all nationalities and stations in life.

When pitching, you want to appear friendly but not overly friendly, as in being too casual, i.e. don't write as if you're texting. As an author, you are a professional, but at the same time you are a unique individual. So again, do not write a generic piece, but instead mildly infuse your pitch with your own personality. If you like humor and it is appropriate to your book's topic, then use it and make sure it's in good taste.

Be kind and unassuming in your request. Of course, you want them to read your book and that's why you're pitching them in the first place, but you want to recognize that it's the *blogger's choice* to accept or decline the offer. So there are certain words you can use to convey that the blogger is in control. This is powerful.

Here are some phrases that work. I have italicized the key phrases that show the blogger you respect their time, decision, and personal interest.

If you are interested in reading my book, I would happily send you a complimentary copy. If you decide to review it, please share your post link so that I can in return share your review.

I would love to send you a review copy in any format you prefer (mobi, ePub or PDF).

Thank you for taking the time to consider my offer. I look forward to hearing from you.

If my book is of interest to you and is a good fit for your blog, I would be more than happy to send you a review copy.

Your pitch is the first impression the blogger will get of you. Make it a good one.

Tip #5: Keep track of your pitches

Don't assume you will remember all the bloggers to whom you sent a request.

You may be organized and keep well-labeled folders in your email inbox, but keeping track of all the blogs you researched and plan to pitch requires more than that. Sending the same pitch twice or even three times to the same blogger can be embarrassing and will not be in your favor. The best way to keep track of the bloggers you pitch is through a spreadsheet. I mentioned this in the Research section of this document. You can use any application that you find easy to use, (or will learn to use) such as Excel or Google Spreadsheets.

Here is the information you should include in the spreadsheet:

- Name of blog
- Name of blogger(s)
- Contact email
- Useful tidbit of info you can use in your pitch
- Any genres or content they do not read, such as graphic violence
- Social media sites they use
- Their reach (number of followers throughout all their sites)
- Country blogger lives in
- Date you sent the pitch
- Date blogger replied
- If the blogger accepted or refused the offer and why

Some blogs have several bloggers on board reviewing books of different genres, so make sure you note which blogger you queried. The information you include in this spreadsheet will be useful to you weeks after you sent the pitch. It will come in handy when you will use these reviews to promote your book online. If a blogger hasn't replied, it may be because:

1. They are too busy
2. They are not interested
3. Your email ended up in their spam folder
4. The pitch was sent at a particularly busy time of year, such as Thanksgiving or Christmas
5. The blogger is on vacation and missed the email
6. The blogger is sick and missed the email

Some bloggers do state in their review policies that they are not accepting review requests at this time. This may have changed soon after you did your research. Respect that and do not query again. Or they may state that they get many requests and if they do not reply, you can try again.

Because of these reasons, you may want to try pitching again. However, adjust your intro accordingly. You should state that you sent a previous email, but you fear it may have been

missed because “it was a busy time of year”, for example. If you do pitch a second time, note it on your spreadsheet.

Working with Bloggers:

Tip #6: Pay it forward and share blog posts

Maintaining a book blog is time consuming.

Book bloggers don't get paid for writing reviews. Reading books and then writing a review and posting it is time consuming. Maintaining a book blog is time consuming. There is book blogger burnout. Since I started book blogging in 2009, I have seen book blogs come and go, even those that were highly popular.

What can you do to thank a blogger who has posted a review of your book and even shared it on other sites and social media? There are several things:

1. Write a brief thank you note in the comment section of the review post.
2. Send an email thanking the reviewer and, whenever you can, let the blogger know what in particular you liked about his/her review.
3. Post a blurb of the review on your website, linking back to the blog
4. Share the review post on your social media sites
5. Follow the blogger on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.

Some authors will send a thank you note or card when they ship their hard copies to the bloggers, however if you are only offering ebook copies, thanking them online is fine. Imagine what those handwritten cards will mean to the reader when you've attained bestseller status?

Tip #7: Respect a book blogger's opinion

Consumers have the right to their opinion of your product.

You finally start getting reviews online from the bloggers you've pitched and some are less than stellar. Even the most seasoned authors will tell you this hurts. How do you handle it? Should you reply to a statement about your book you feel is untrue?

Let me begin by saying that once you write a book and publish it for everyone to read, you have now entered the business world. You have created a product (the book) and you are asking people to buy it. Therefore, the consumers have the right to their opinion of your product. When you are asking a book blogger to review your book, in essence you are asking them to give you their opinion on your product.

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to learn to accept that different people will have different opinions about your book. If a blogger writes a negative review, do NOT reply to that review. In the past, I have seen authors' reputations destroyed because they attacked their readers. One author had to delete her website because of the backlash she got for attacking what was viewed by readers as an honest review.

Book bloggers are a tight community who support one another. They will openly talk about their experiences working with aggressive and stalker authors. Some bloggers have been asked by authors to change the review or to take it down. Or they have sent nasty letters to the book blogger if they did not like the review. This is not often the case, but it has happened. For these reasons, some book bloggers will not review indie books. Goodreads and Amazon have updated their terms and conditions because some cases have gotten ugly.

If you want to have a career as an author, be careful what you say online. Once you say something, it can't be taken back. Do not feel the need to defend yourself, even if you feel what the blogger said is incorrect. You can do two things with a review. Take the constructive criticism and become a better writer or stand by what you write and let others' opinions be just that, *their* opinion.

Do you see bestselling authors posting replies to their negative reviews on Amazon? No, they're busy writing their next book. Get together with your buddy authors and snicker at some of the ludicrous things some reviewers have said, if you must, and get it out of your system. Then move on and keep writing.

Because of false reviews that some unethical authors resort to, Amazon has cracked down on what reviews get posted. If your Amazon page is filled with just 5-star reviews, it will look suspicious. It has been our experience that negative reviews can also boost sales by allowing book buyers to see honest reviews about your book and thus trusting they are not trumped up. Controversy causes a buzz.

Being a Proactive Author:

Tip #8: Stand out as an author

Fans love to be recognized and are loyal.

There is much advice on the Internet about how to promote your book. With so many authors vying for media attention, how can you stand out? Most importantly, how can you stand out without annoying your audience or pushing your book to the point where it becomes unprofessional?

Gone are the days when an author communicates with his audience only through his publicist. When an author takes the time to appreciate his readers, he creates fans. Fans love to be recognized and are loyal. If you want to build a fanbase, then you have to be an approachable author.

I experienced this at BookExpo two years ago when I waited in line with a ticket I obtained earlier that morning to see Adriana Trigiani. She has one of the largest fanbases I know. Trigiani is an Italian American best-selling author of sixteen books, television writer, film director, and entrepreneur based in Greenwich Village, New York City.

After waiting for half an hour, I looked to see Adriana Trigiani herself coming towards the very long line. She greeted and shook hands with *every* single person in that line, sometimes quickly stopping to get photographed. Then she joined her publicist at the table to sign the latest release she was giving away to everyone in that same line. I still remember the look on some of the fans' faces who were startled when they realized that their favorite author had approached *them* to say hi and shake hands! Do you think Trigiani's act of personally greeting her fans made them like her more? You bet. What's more, Trigiani replies to the emails she gets from her fans.

A word of caution, be careful about the degree of closeness with your fanbase. You may have a few fans who have become good friends and this is okay, but the author who begins to complain online about the mundane tasks of writing and the publishing process will eventually alienate his readers. True fans have respect for the creative process and the literary works of their favorite authors. When an author whines and begins acting like a high school kid who uses social media to vent, belittle or resent the process, the reader will lose respect for the author as a professional artist.

A newsletter is a great way to keep in touch with your fans *only* if you include worthwhile content and do not always push your books on your readers. Stephanie Dray, author of *America's First Daughter* has a noteworthy newsletter. I highly recommend that you check it out. Remember, book bloggers have many favorite authors. Their inbox is already very crowded and inundated

with requests. So if they choose to sign up to receive an author's newsletter, it must be worth their time. If they do sign up to receive your news, offer them something in return the first time they sign up and each time they open one thereafter, like a free novella you wrote, a giveaway, a gift card, a discount to an item related to your book, etc. Make your newsletter fun and interesting. Did you read a good book? Mention it or write a short review to share with your readers. Are you doing research for your next book and came across a fascinating bit of information? Share it. Your newsletters should give something to your readers, always.

Tip #9: Learn about virtual book tours

A book tour company understands and knows how to implement all the work involved in organizing a virtual book tour.

When I tell people I'm a virtual book tour coordinator, I usually get a blank look, followed by a slight frown as they try to figure out exactly what it is that I do. A few years back, authors may have had the same reaction, but not today. If you're an author, you know how important online publicity is. Getting your book noticed on the World Wide Web through virtual book tours will get you exposure faster than if your local bookstore stocks your book.

Why is that? Because tour companies target book bloggers from all over the country who read and review your genre. They know how to get your book in the hands of avid readers who spend hours (and I mean hours!) telling others on their blogs what they're reading and why.

In the last six years virtual book tour companies have been gaining popularity in offering what is now considered one of the best promotional tools for authors. Here are 5 reasons traditional and small press publishers, along with self-published authors are choosing professional tour companies to promote their books:

1. Experience

A book tour company understands and knows how to implement all the work involved in organizing a virtual book tour. And yes, it's a lot of work! Just one tour involves developing and planning a customized tour schedule; pitching your book to the right blogs; creating and using promotional tour materials; guest posts, interviews, giveaways, social media marketing; and finally, customer service. All this within several weeks to two months.

2. Access

A book tour company has access to hundreds of bloggers whose blogs they have perused and carefully chosen to be a part of their host team. These tour hosts are experienced bloggers who understand virtual book tours and will go out of their way to help authors promote their books. They crosspost their reviews on Amazon and Goodreads and link up on their social media sites. Many are bloggers who will only work with authors through tour companies.

3. Knowledge

The owners of tour companies are usually savvy book bloggers who have been reviewing books for quite some time and have developed a good relationship with other bloggers, publishers, publicists and authors. They've taken part in book tours and know all the ins and outs of book blogging. They are influential in their field and passionate about book marketing.

4. Problem-solving

When something goes wrong--and inevitably something always goes wrong--book tour companies have experience dealing with and quickly solving any issues related to book tours. Actually, this experience allows them to foresee what could go wrong and therefore take preventative measures to ensure a smooth progression.

5. Service

You get what you pay for. If you want a well-organized book tour with a coordinator who guides and works with you every step of the way from beginning to end, maximizing your tours with reviews, book spotlights, guest posts, interviews and giveaways, you need to book your tour with a good virtual tour company. Their service to you is to ensure your book gets lots of exposure and buzz around the blogosphere.

So virtual book tours is the way to go if you want book bloggers talking about your book. But there are so many tour companies out there. How do you know which is the right one for you?

How to Choose the Right Tour Company for Your Book

The explosion of book blogs on the Web has led to the formation of virtual book tour companies, a business that was non-existent a dozen years ago. When publishers got on the bandwagon by getting their titles on tour with these companies, the reputation of book bloggers transformed from the simple diary of a book lover to a book marketing platform for authors and publishers.

So how do authors get their books on these savvy book blogs? It's not as easy as it used to be as more and more book bloggers get inundated (and I do not use that word lightly) with book review requests. To bypass having your pitch ignored or even deleted, you can buy the services of a virtual book tour company who has access to these experienced bloggers . Which one is the right tour company for your book? Here are some pointers to steer you in the right direction:

What type of services are offered?

Tour companies today offer a variety of services, at a variety of prices, from virtual book tour packages to social media marketing assistance. A virtual book tour package usually consists of a certain number of scheduled tour stops on blogs that will feature a review of your book, a spotlight of your book, a guest post from you, an author interview or a combination of these.

Choose a package that offers the maximum exposure for the best price you can afford. Check their current tours and see if most of the stops are reviews. This is what you want to look for. Make sure that the tour coordinator will work one-on-one with you and be available to promptly guide you through the process and answer all your questions.

What types of books are featured?

Scroll through the books currently on tour. Are they quality books? Are they of the same genre as your book? Some tour companies specialize in book tours for a specific genre, such as YA or paranormal. Other companies service all genres. A lot of book bloggers no longer review self-published books, therefore if the company accepts self-published titles, they have access to bloggers who read and promote them.

What kind of experience does the company have?

Even if the tour company is fairly new, they should have at least three years experience working with book bloggers. This is key because book bloggers are the ones who will be hosting you and your book on their blogs. Read the About Us page.

Who are their tour hosts?

A good tour company should have a list of all the tour hosts (book bloggers) who they work with. You can scroll through this list and check out some of these blogs. Are they well-established blogs? You can also scroll through the tour schedule of their most current tours and check out the blogs participating. Beware of companies who use blogs by the same owner to fill up a tour schedule. If you want maximum exposure you need book blogs from all over North America and even international.

Does the company have a policy?

Every tour company should have a policy and you should read it carefully. Before paying for any services, you should know exactly what is expected of you as an author and you should be clear on what their procedure is, especially should problems occur. Also look for a FAQ page and take the time to read it.

Still unsure about using the services of a virtual book tour company? You can always direct any specific questions you have by contacting me at ireadbooktours@gmail.com. I would be more than happy to assist you.

Tip #10: Self-publish the right way

With so much choice today and so many ways to publish a book well, there is no excuse for publishing a less-than-stellar book

Thanks to indie authors who have forged the way by self-publishing their book the right way, authors today have the choice of bypassing the gatekeepers of traditional publishers and taking control of getting their stories published.

Most book bloggers can tell a self-published book from a traditionally published book if not published well. To avoid having your pitch rejected, make sure you offer a good product. What does that mean in terms of books.

1. Write a good story. The more unique your story is within its genre or sub-genre the better.
2. Get your manuscript professionally edited. Your book should be edited by a developmental editor first who will check the plot, characterization and pacing. Then get it edited by a copy editor who will look at sentence structure, grammar and punctuation. Finally, get a proofreader to make sure nothing is missed and you are ready to offer a polished product.
3. Hire a book cover designer with experience, preferably one who specializes in the genre your book is written.
4. Whatever self-publishing platform you use, make sure the formatting is well done and up to industry standards. For example, there should not be a double space between paragraphs, nor should the font be too small, fancy or hard to read.
5. Make your book available in all three of the most popular ebook formats: PDF, mobi and ePub.

Producing a good product takes an investment on your part, but it will make all the difference. Book bloggers have become picky about what books they will choose to read. The choice book bloggers face today is endless. With so many ways to publish a book well, there is no excuse for publishing a book that is poorly edited and badly packaged.

About Laura Fabiani

Laura Fabiani is an author, book reviewer, entrepreneur and blogger since 2009. She owns [iRead Book Tours](#) and [Italy Book Tours](#), PR companies that offer professional virtual book tours and author services. She has a degree in Special Care Counseling and has worked as a psychiatric child counselor and a special education technician at various institutions. Laura has helped develop and implement adapted programs for seniors with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

She is an advocate for children's literature, undiscovered indie gems and creative marketing platforms. She blogs about books and author events at [Library of Clean Reads](#).