

# How to Dedicate a Book

Book dedications were begun as a way to give thanks to a patron, often in exchange for money to finance the book.<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jun/21/news.comment> Today, they are a way to express gratitude for inspiration and are...

Part 1 of 3:

## Choosing the Focus of Your Dedication



**Brainstorm names of potential people.** Make a list of people who you might dedicate a book to. These might include your spouse or partner, children, parents or friend. Who is most important to your project and your inspiration as a writer?

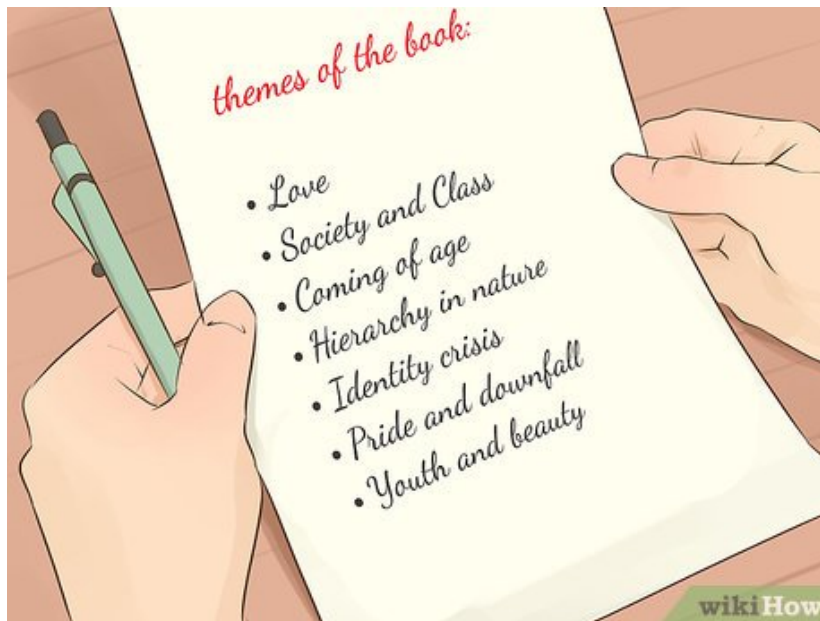
1. You might have a person in mind who is the very reason that you've written this book. Your book might be about that person or written in their memory. This person might be a natural choice for the dedication.
2. Consider if you actually know the person to whom you're dedicating the book. You can also brainstorm names of people that you don't know personally but whom you admire.

2.



**Make a list of people who are not appropriate for this dedication.** The book's subject matter, for example, might mean that a certain person is not an appropriate choice. For example, if you have a book with troubling or adult subject matter, you may not want to dedicate the book to a child.

3.



**Make a list of the book's themes.** If you don't have a specific person in mind to dedicate your book to, think about dedicating it to someone who tirelessly supports the themes in your book. This might help you figure out who might be the best person for your dedication.

4.



**Brainstorm reasons why you want to dedicate the book to someone.** You might dedicate a book to someone because they inspired you or because they encouraged you to become a writer. Think about how certain people contributed to your overall writing career. Think too about how they may have contributed to this particular project.<sup>[2]</sup>

5.



**Fulfill a promise or request.** You may have promised a spouse or friend that you'd dedicate your first book to them. You may want to fulfill this promise by dedicating your book to them. Similarly, someone may have asked that you dedicate the book to them.<sup>[3]</sup>

1. Don't feel too obligated to dedicate your book to someone who asked for the dedication. It is a deeply personal process to write a dedication, and if it doesn't feel right to choose that person, you can choose someone else. Be prepared, however, to explain to that person your reasons why they were not chosen.

6.



**Choose something that's not a person.** There is no rule that says you need to choose a person for your dedication. You might choose a pet, for example, or even an object that particularly inspired you as you worked on the book.

1. For example, Robin Hobb, in her book 'Ship of Magic,' dedicated the book like this: 'To caffeine and sugar, my companions through many a long night of writing.'<sup>[4]</sup>

Part 2 of 3:

## Wording your Dedication

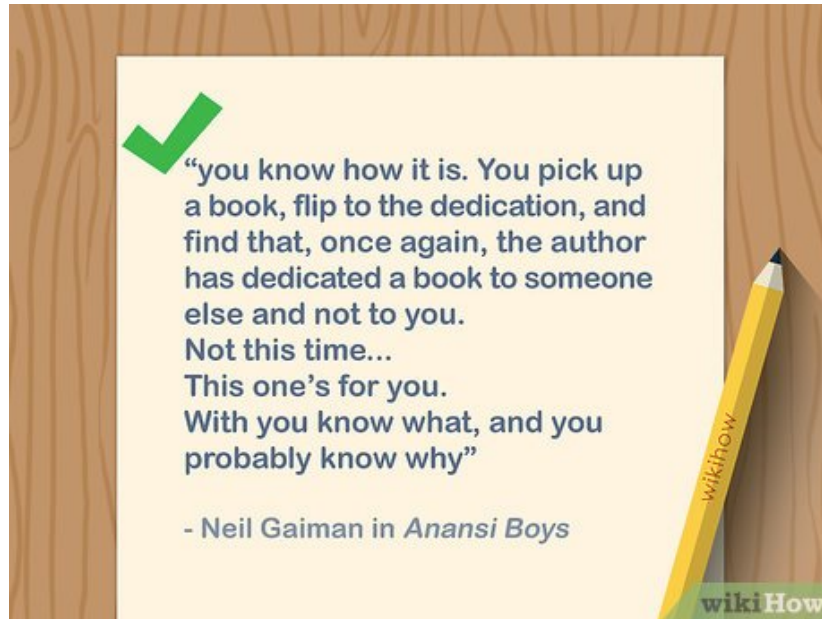
1.



**Start off the dedication simply.** Many dedications use the words 'To,' 'For,' or 'In Loving Memory of.'<sup>[5]</sup> Some of the most heartfelt dedications are the simplest ones, using only a few words.

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald dedicated several of his books like this: 'Once Again to Zelda.'<sup>[6]</sup>
2. King C. Gillette dedicated his book, *The People's Corporation*, like this: "For mankind."<sup>[7]</sup>

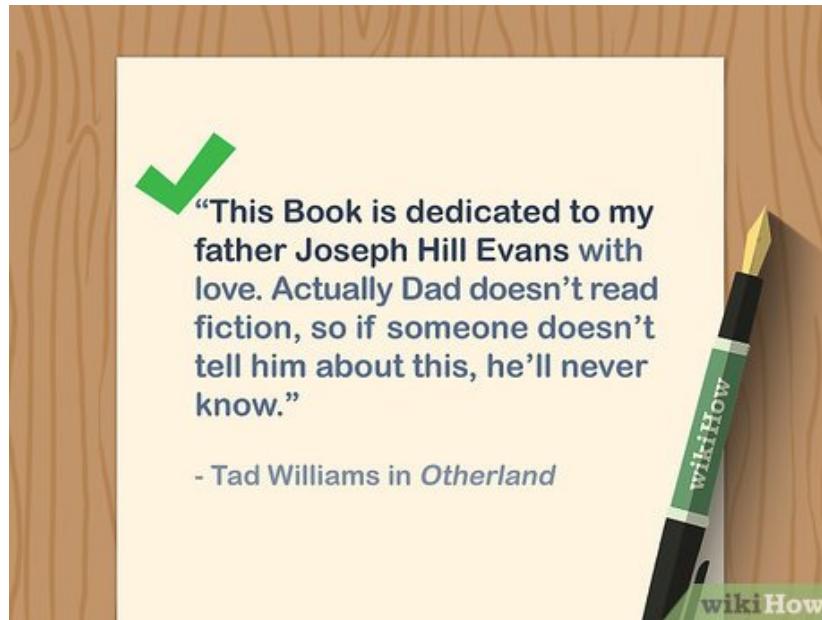
2.



**Reflect your personality in your dedication.** If you are a very formal person, a light-hearted and humorous dedication might seem out of character. Similarly, if you are casual, your dedication might not be overly formal. Think about how to reflect your personality and character in your dedication.<sup>[8]</sup>

1. In the dedication to his book *Anansi Boys*, Neil Gaiman takes a humorous approach by dedicating the book to an unnamed "you": "You know how it is. You pick up a book, flip to the dedication, and find that, once again, the author has dedicated a book to someone else and not to you. Not this time. Because we haven't yet met/have only a glancing acquaintance/are just crazy about each other/haven't seen each other in much too long/are in some way related/will never meet, but will, I trust, despite that, always think fondly of each other! This one's for you. With you know what, and you probably know why."

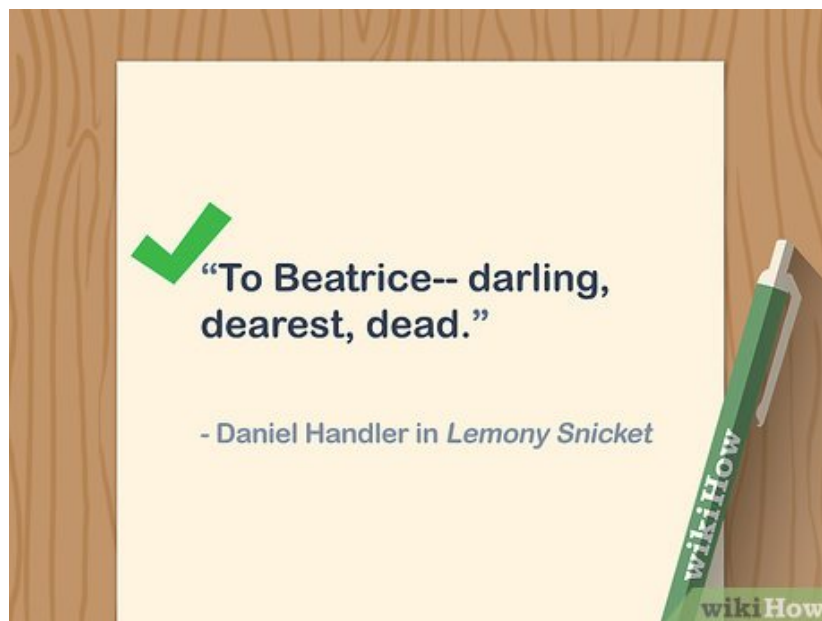
3.



**Reflect your relationship with the person you're dedicating the book to.** You might write a very personal dedication, or you might even use an inside joke.<sup>[9]</sup>

1. Carl Sagan dedicated his book *Cosmos* to his wife: 'In the vastness of space and immensity of time, it is my joy to spend a planet and an epoch with Annie.'
2. Tad Williams dedicated his *Otherland* book series to his father in a funny and endearing way: 'This Book is dedicated to my father Joseph Hill Evans with love. Actually Dad doesn't read fiction, so if someone doesn't tell him about this, he'll never know.'<sup>[10]</sup>

4.



**Reinforce your book's central message or theme.** Some books have a very clear theme and it is a natural fit to use the dedication as a place to thank someone for their contribution to that theme.

1. For example, Vaughn Davis Bornet dedicated his book, *Welfare in America*, to someone who worked to improve people's welfare: 'He devoted his life to the administration of government and voluntary agencies formed to help the starving and homeless.'<sup>[11]</sup>

2. For a children's book about a rat, Beatrix Potter wrote a dedication to her pet rat: 'In remembrance of 'SAMMY,' the intelligent pink-eyed representative of a persecuted (but irrepressible) race. An affectionate little friend, and most accomplished thief!'<sup>[12]</sup>
3. The dedication to the first *Lemony Snicket* book was simply: "To Beatrice-- darling, dearest, dead." The dedication for each subsequent book continued the joke about Beatrice's deceased-ness. This dedication helps set the tone (darkly humorous and ironic) for the whole book.<sup>[13]</sup>

5.



**Use a quotation or poem.** There might be a quotation or short poem that you love, or that you think is particularly inspiring. You can dedicate your book to someone and use the quote or poem to say what you want to say. Or, you might just use the quote or poem and skip the person's name altogether.

1. Quotations can come from someone well-known, or it could be a quote from someone you know.

6.



**Browse dedications from your favorite authors.** Search online for book dedications and see how others have honored people in their lives with a sincere or humorous dedication.

## Finalizing Your Dedication



**Double-check spelling and grammar.** Have a few other people read your dedication. Make sure your meaning is clear and that things are spelled correctly. Have your editor read through it.



**Finalize your formatting.** Most dedications are centered on the page. Some, however, might work better to be aligned to the left.

1. For some types of dedications, you might preserve the original formatting. For example, if you are including a poem as your dedication, you should use the original formatting of the poem, rather than making up your own.

3.



**Tell the person you're dedicating your book to.** Let this person know that your book will be dedicated to them. You don't necessarily need to give them a chance to decline the dedication. But giving them a heads-up might be a courteous thing to do. Fans might respond to the dedication – hopefully in a positive way – and it would be helpful if the person knows about the dedication.

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