SPM COURSES

BOOK PROPOSAL

Use this template to craft your own book proposal, which you can send to publishers, or just use to guide you during the self-publishing process.

BOOK TITLE

Subtitle

by

Author Name

Submitted by:

[name, phone number, email address, social handles, and any other relevant contact info]

Table of Contents

Optionally, if your proposal is quite long, (let's say, more than a dozen pages) you can include a table of contents at the beginning of the proposal.

Overview

- **What's it for?** The high-level pitch for your book. What's your elevator speech?
- **Don't:** Focus too much on the content of the book or otherwise explaining what is in the book.
- **Do:** Describe your project in plain English. What story, place, people, idea, or theme does this project explore? Why does it matter? Why now? What do you hope viewers feel, understand, or question after experiencing the book?
- **Pro Tip:** Try writing the overview last, as it incorporates the most important aspects of your overall proposal.

About the Author

- **What's it for?** To demonstrate why YOU are the perfect person to create this book and your credentials/authority to write on the topic.
- **Don't:** Tell your life story. Focus on any credentials that make you the right person to make this body of work and turn it into a book.
- **Do:** Mention exhibitions, publications, awards, teaching, community-involvement, long-term commitment to the subject, and/or lived experiences that make you qualified to present the work.
- **Pro Tip:** Repeat after me: "It's not about *me*, it's about *the book*!"

Target Audience

- **What's it for?** This is your chance to think carefully about who will feel most drawn to your book and why. Publishers, collaborators, or even future marketing partners want to see that you understand who this work is for, and not in the broadest sense, but in a realistic, thoughtful way.
- **Don't:** Try to appeal to "everyone." While anyone could enjoy your work, the strongest proposals focus on the people most likely to connect with it, buy it, share it, or recommend it to others.
- **Do:** Start with your core audience. Ask yourself: Who already cares about this subject, style, place, or type of storytelling? Think about the photographers, communities, publications, influencers, organizations, festivals, or hobbies your audience already follows. What interests, values, or experiences make them likely to connect with your work?
- **Pro Tip:** For photographers working on personal or documentary projects, your audience may include other photographers, photo book collectors, local communities, travelers, historians, artists, educators, or people emotionally connected to the subject matter.

Comparable Titles

- **What's it for?** Publishers, collaborators, and even potential supporters often evaluate a project by asking: What kinds of readers would already be interested in this? Showing familiarity with other photo books demonstrates that you understand where your work fits within the broader photography landscape.
- **Don't:** Say your project has "no comparison" or only name huge, iconic books everyone already references. It's often more useful to show a thoughtful understanding of niche or contemporary work that shares meaningful similarities with your own.
- **Do:** List 5 to 10 of the most relevant titles here, with author, publisher, first published format (usually hardcover or paperback), page count, price and ISBN. Ask yourself: If someone enjoyed my book, what other books might sit beside it on their shelf?
- **Pro Tip:** You may want to begin this section with a short paragraph about trends, gaps, or observations in your area of photography. For example, are there many books on this subject already? Or is your work offering a fresh perspective?

Marketing and Promotion

- **What's it for?** This section helps explain how people will realistically discover your book. Whether you're pitching a publisher, preparing for self-publishing, or simply clarifying your plan, it's helpful to think through how you'll connect your work with the people most likely to care about it.
- **Don't:** Just list follower counts, websites, or social platforms without context. Numbers alone don't tell the story. What matters more is how you engage with people and how those channels help you share your work. For example:
    - Do you have an active Instagram audience?
    - A newsletter or email list?
    - Photography communities or local organizations you're involved with?
    - Workshops, speaking opportunities, festivals, exhibitions or teaching experience?
    - Relationships with podcasts, publications, blogs or influencers in your niche?
- **Do:** Instead of focusing on hypothetical future opportunities, concentrate on the audience, relationships, and platforms you already have, or can realistically access.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep in mind, the goal isn't to prove you're famous. It's to show that you've thought intentionally about how your book will find its audience. You can break this section into smaller categories. For example:
    - Website, newsletter, and social media
    - Exhibitions, festivals, workshops, and speaking
    - Photography organizations and communities
    - Media outreach, podcasts, or publications
    - Partnerships or collaborators

Book Specifications & Timeline

- **What's it for?** This section is where you outline the practical details of your project. The goal is simply to communicate what you envision and where the project currently stands.
- **Don't:** Get too tied up with unknowns, and don't be inflexible about design. There's no need to worry if everything isn't finalized yet, estimates are completely fine here.
- **Do:** Include details such as:
    - Estimated number of images
    - Approximate page count
    - Book size or format (hardcover, softcover, etc.)
    - Whether the book includes text, essays, captions, or interviews.
    - Current stage of the project (editing, sequencing, mockup, near completion, etc.)
    - Estimated timeline for completion
    - Any special considerations (permissions, archival materials, travel, printing needs, collaborators, essays/forewords, etc.)

•**Pro Tip:** Remember, this section is simply to answer the question, "*What will this book physically look like, and how close are you to finishing it?*"

Sample Spreads & Book Mockups

- **What's it for?** Use the final pages of your proposal to include sample spreads or a rough book mockup if you already have them. This will help communicate the visual direction, pacing, and sequencing of this project. Publishers are aware that these layouts are exploratory and may continue to evolve as the project develops. You may also attach these separately when you sending out your proposal.