

FORERUNNER BUSINESS ARTS

The Online Presence Starter Kit

for First-Time Authors

The calm, plain-English guide to getting your book online —
website, email list, and readers — without the tech overwhelm.

by **James Graybeal** · jamesgraybeal.com

WELCOME

Let's make this simple

If you've got a book coming — or one already out — and the whole "website, email, social media" thing makes your stomach tighten, this is for you.

You don't need to become a tech person. You don't need seventeen tools. You need the right few things, done in the right order, so readers can find you and you can reach them again.

That's the whole point of this kit. In the next few pages I'll show you the three pieces of an author's online presence, what to do first, and the handful of mistakes that trip up almost every first-time author. By the end you'll have a one-page plan you can actually follow.

No jargon. No pressure. Just the clear next steps — in the order that actually works.

SECTION 1

The 3 pieces of an author's online presence

Everything you've heard about "being online" boils down to three jobs. That's it.

1. A home base — your website.

One place on the internet that you *own*, where a reader can learn who you are, see your book, and take a next step. Not a social profile you rent — a home you own.

2. A way to stay in touch — your email list.

Social platforms come and go, and they decide who sees your posts. An email list is a direct line to the people who care about your work — yours to keep, whatever happens to any app.

3. A way to be found — your outreach.

The gentle, ongoing work of getting in front of readers: search, a bit of social, conversations, and referrals. This is the part that grows over time.

Website, list, outreach. When people feel overwhelmed, it's usually because they're trying to do all three at once, badly. You don't have to.

SECTION 2

What to do first

The order that kills overwhelm.

Here's the order I give every author I work with. Do them in sequence. Don't skip ahead.

First — claim your home base.

Get a simple website live — even just a few pages. Done beats perfect. You can improve it forever, but you can't build on nothing.

Second — start your email list.

Set up a way for visitors to give you their email in exchange for something small and useful. Even if you only have five subscribers, start now. Lists grow from day one, not launch day.

Third — give people a reason to join.

A short freebie — a sample chapter, a reader's guide, a checklist. This is what turns a visitor into a subscriber.

Fourth, and ongoing — outreach.

Now — and only now — you start telling people. Search, social, conversations. Because now you have somewhere to send them and a way to keep them.

Most authors do this backward: they pour energy into social media with no website and no list, and the attention leaks away. Front to back, in order, and it holds.

SECTION 3

Your author website: what actually matters

You do not need a big website. You need a clear one. Here's the short checklist of what belongs on an author site — and nothing that doesn't.

The pages you actually need

- **Home** — who you are, what you write, and one clear next step.
- **Book** — your book (or books): cover, description, and where to buy.
- **About** — your story, kept human and warm. Readers buy from people.
- **Contact / Newsletter** — an easy way to reach you and to join your list.

On every page

- A single, obvious next step (usually: join the list, or buy the book).
- Your book cover visible up top — no scrolling to find it.
- Plain language. Write like you talk.

What you can skip (for now)

A blog you'll never update, a dozen menu items, fancy animations, a store full of merch.
Clarity sells books. Clutter buries them.

SECTION 4

Start your email list before you launch

If you take one thing from this kit, take this: **start the list before the book is out.**

Why it matters so much

- On launch day, an email list is the difference between shouting into the void and telling people who are already waiting.
- You own it. No algorithm decides who sees your message.
- It compounds. Every reader who joins today is one more person to tell about the next book, too.

The simplest possible setup

- Pick one email tool made for creators (there are a few good, friendly ones — I'm happy to point you to my picks).
- Create one signup form and put it on your website.
- Offer one small freebie so people have a reason to join.
- Write one welcome email that says hello and delivers the freebie.

That's a real email list. You can make it fancier later. Right now, *started* beats *perfect*.

SECTION 5

The 5 mistakes first-time authors make online

I see the same handful of stumbles again and again. None of them are your fault — nobody hands authors a map for this. Here's the map.

1. Building on rented land.

Putting everything on a social profile or a marketplace page you don't control. If they change the rules, you lose your audience overnight. Own your home base.

2. Waiting until launch to start the list.

By launch day it's too late to build the audience you needed at launch. Start now, even small.

3. Trying to be everywhere.

Five social platforms, all half-done, all draining you. Pick one you can sustain. One done well beats five done anxiously.

4. Hiding the next step.

A pretty site that doesn't tell the reader what to do. Every page should make one next step obvious: join, or buy.

5. Waiting to feel "ready."

Perfectionism dressed up as diligence. Readers don't need a flawless site. They need to find you. Ship the simple version and improve as you go.

SECTION 6

Your one-page launch plan

Fill this in. This is your whole online presence on a single page.

My home base

My website is / will be at:

.....

The one next step I want visitors to take:

.....

Three pages I'll start with:

.....

My email list

The email tool I'll use:

.....

My freebie (what I'll offer to get signups):

.....

My one welcome email will say:

.....

My outreach

The one place I'll show up consistently:

.....

Two people who could introduce me to readers:

.....

My next single action, this week:

.....

Date I'll have the simple version live:

SECTION 7

Where to go from here

You now know more about author online presence than most people who are "figuring it out" for months. You know the three pieces, the order, and the traps.

If you'd rather not build it alone, that's exactly what I do. I help first-time authors launch their whole online presence — website, email list, and outreach — without the tech overwhelm. You end up owning everything, and knowing how to run it.

Want a plan made just for you?

Book a free Game-Plan call and I'll map your specific next steps — whether we work together or not.

Book my free Game-Plan call →

contact@jamesgraybeal.com · jamesgraybeal.com

Your readers are out there.

Let's make it easy for them to find you. — James