

Right First Time: Making your Book Launch a Success

- * Planning the Launch
- * Choosing a Venue
- * When to Hold your Launch
- * Suggested Formats
- * Sample Speeches
- * Catering



By Lionel Hartley, PhD
Principal at L&R Hartley, Publishers

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Published by L&R Hartley, Publishers

P O Box 1471, Murwillumbah, NSW, Australia, 2484

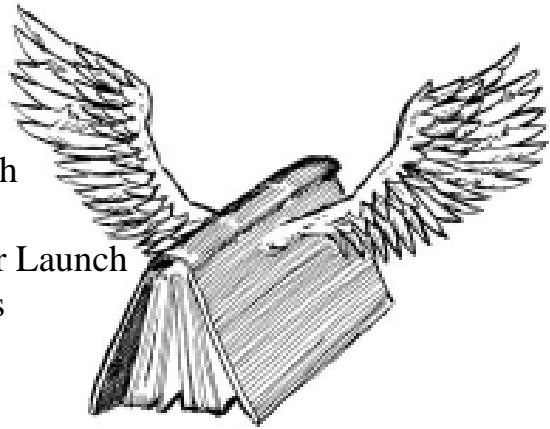
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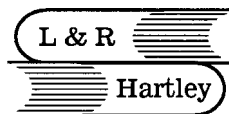
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Contents

Planning the Launch	7
Reasons	9
Goals & Objectives	10
Strategies	11
ToDo List.....	16 & 19
Choosing a Venue	21
When to hold it.....	25
Who to invite?	29
Sample Speeches	33
Catering	39

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Planning the Launch

How we can develop our own personal set of strategies to “get it right, first time”?

Firstly, before anything else, we ask ourselves, “What is the purpose of having a book launch?” We ask this because our answer can be used to plan an event that will fulfil those purposes.

So... ask yourself, “What is the purpose of having a book launch?”

If your answer is, “Any excuse for a booze-up”, then forget the book launch and just have a party.

Now I don't know what your personal reasons are or will be, however I will suggest some possible answers, so that you can see how to turn these into goals

that will eventually determine the success of your book launch. Your list may be quite different. Book launches are a very personal affair and although many publishers will try to dictate how they should happen, I believe that the most successful launches are those that have had the input and planning of the author.

To plan our launch we list our reasons, turn these reasons into personal goals and objectives, then turn the goals into strategies which can then become a to-do list (things I have to do). And finally, we do our to-do list.



Here is an example...

(The reasons used below are for discussion, and are not necessarily good or bad, right or wrong, better or worse, or the best or the worst of reasons. Any reason that promotes the rights of the author without impinging upon the rights of others is legitimate.)

Ask yourself, “What is the purpose of having a book launch?”

Suppose your **reasons** are:

1. To promote yourself as a writer
2. To promote your book with a view to making sales
3. To sell copies of your book
4. To make valuable social and/or business contacts (networking)

Now let's turn these *reasons* into **personal goals and objectives**:

1. I aim to promote myself as a writer
2. I aim to promote my book with a view to making sales
3. I aim to sell copies of my book
4. I aim to make valuable social and/or business contacts (networking)



Now we turn these *goals and objectives* into **strategies**:

1. I aim to promote myself as a writer
 1. By advertising my book launch (if the general public is invited)
 2. By inviting the Media (Newspaper (including local “freebies”), TV, Radio, etc.)
 3. By inviting a local personality to launch my book and to be photographed with him/her
 4. By reading an excerpt from my book
 5. By quoting what others have said about my writings
 6. If I am a poet, I could write a special poem for the occasion

2. I aim to promote my book with a view to making sales

1. By having actual copies of my book on display

2. By quoting what others have said about my book

3. By reading an excerpt from my book using an actual copy of the book and not reading from notes

4. By practising my reading skills beforehand so that my reading is easily understood

5. By selecting an excerpt that will make my listeners want to be readers

6. By presenting (in advance of the launch) a complementary copy to the guest who will be invited to launch my book so that his/her comments are reflective of having read the book.

7. By having posters of my book* on display

8. By distributing business cards* advertising my book promotion website

9. By displaying my books in an attractive manner, using a tablecloth to match the cover of my book - by including in the display a few “props”

relevant to the content of my book, bearing in mind that it is the books I want to sell and not the props. As I am setting up the display, I will remember that as the books sell, the display will change appearance.

10. By actually inviting/encouraging people to buy my book. I can tell them that I can provide a receipt so that they can claim back the cost as a tax deduction if they buy my book for (for example) research purposes.

11. By keeping the formalities short to allow plenty of ‘sales time’ before the partying.

12. By offering to personally sign copies of the book AFTER the party

3. I aim to sell copies of my book

1. By having a sales table manned by a volunteer (or two)

2. By providing a cash-tin, receipt

book and some change to use as a ‘float’

3. By having a generous quantity of my books to sell

4. By having an additional supply of order forms*

(See the *Book Launch Kit* for a supply of Order Forms)

5. By including an additional order form in each book

6. By offering a discount or gift (e.g. a signed bookmark*) to purchasers of books sold during the launch

4. I aim to make valuable social and/or business contacts (networking)

1. By choosing a ‘neutral’ location to hold the launch (see the section *Choosing a Venue*).

2. By hosting a safe party following the launch (see *Catering*, below)

3. By inviting local booksellers to the launch

4. By scheduling the launch outside bookstore trading hours to allow these local booksellers to attend

5. By inviting people who would be likely promote my book in their work or social spheres-of-influence

6. By strategically seating my guests to maximise table discussion and to keep the focus on my book. (Even if this means seating “best friends” at opposite ends of the table). (See the *Book Launch Kit* for a supply of Table Place-cards)

7. By publicly thanking the guests (including the Press) and the person launching the book

And Finally, we turn our *strategies* into a **To-do List** (Things I have to do):

1. Choosing a ‘neutral’ location to hold the launch, scheduling the launch at an appropriate time

2. Advertise my book launch (if the general public is invited)

3. Invite the Media (Newspaper (including local “freebies”), TV, Radio, etc.)

4. Invite a local personality to launch my book

5. Organise to be photographed with him/her

6. Order a generous quantity of copies of my book to display and sell

7. Select an excerpt that will make my listeners want to be readers

8. Practise my reading skills beforehand

9. Read an excerpt from my book using an actual copy of the book

10. Present (in advance) a

complementary copy to the guest invited to launch the book

11. Order posters of my book to put on display

12. Order business cards advertising my book promotion website

13. Display my books in an attractive manner, using a tablecloth and a few “props”

14. Invite/encourage people to buy my book.

15. Tell them that I can provide a receipt so that they can claim back the cost as a tax deduction if they buy my book for (for example) research purposes.

16. Offer to personally sign copies of the book AFTER the party

17. Have a sales table manned by a volunteer (or two)

18. Provide a cash-tin and some change to use as a ‘float’

19. Order additional supplies of

order forms

20. Place an order form in each book

21. Budget for a discount or gift (e.g. a signed bookmark)

22. Order bookmarks

23. Host a party following the launch

24. Invite local booksellers to the launch

25. Invite people who would be likely promote my book in their work or social spheres-of-influence

26. Plan a strategy for seating my guests to maximise table discussion and to keep the focus on my book.

27. Prepare Table Place-cards

28. Publicly thank the guests (including the Press) and the person launching the book

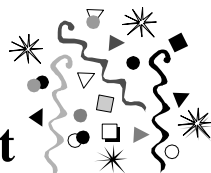
29. Privately thank the sales-table volunteers and other supporters

30. Go home as a wealthy and well-known author.

And finally, we **Do** our To-do List.



My 'To Do' List



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Choosing a Venue

Here are some possibilities:

1. Thematic choice:

Choose a location which reflects the content of the book - a café for a novel, a library for an anthology, a zoo, aquarium or bird sanctuary for a book about fauna, a garden setting for a book about flora, an opera-house for a music book, etc.

2. Personality choice:

Choose a location which reflects the personality of the writer such as a local bookshop, theatre, club, university, cinema, pub, church, private home, historic institution, or botanical garden.

3. Marketing choice:

Choose a location that will maximise the possibility of sales such as a University Bookshop, shopping mall, or

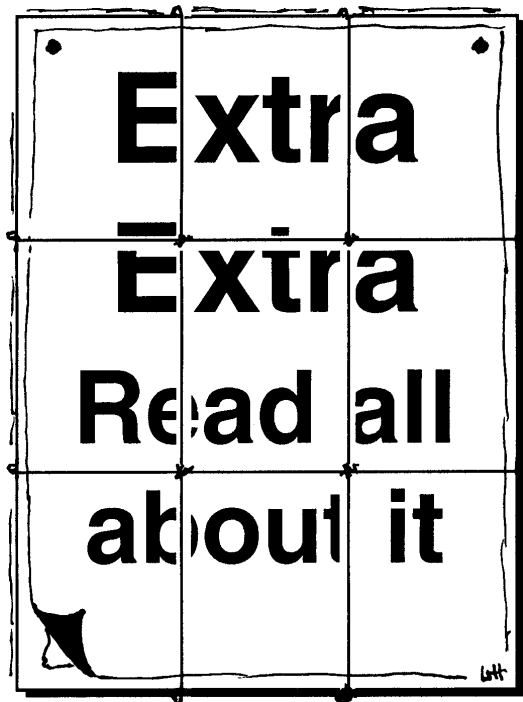
town square. You could have your book launch as a featured event during a trade show or county fair – go ahead, ask the organisers! Hire and set up a stall - before-hand to display the book and promote interest in the launch, and afterwards to sell copies of the book.

‘Neutral’ Locations

What do I mean by choosing a ‘neutral’ location for the launch?

A ‘neutral’ location allows the greatest variety of individuals to come together with the smallest amount of conflict. Let me give a couple of examples. If the book is a religious book and the launch is in a particular church, then it may be difficult getting people from other religious denominations (even the media) to attend. However if it is held in a community facility, then people of all faiths can meet, socialise, and buy your book. If the book is book about tennis

and you have the launch at your local tennis club, it may discourage members of other clubs from attending, whereas if it is held at a function room at a national tennis club this barrier is removed. Remember it is possible to have a local 'mini-launch' a week before your 'national launch' if you want to acknowledge input into your book by your local community.



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When to hold your book launch

1. Sometimes you can capitalise on a national event to boost the impetus of your launch. For example a book on quitting smoking could be launched on National No-Tobacco Day (held annually on 31 May). Tell the media that you are celebrating that event by the launch of your book. Local media like to have local events that appear to be part of a national strategy. There are lots of occasions to choose from: Local Library Day, Children's Book Week, National Cancer Awareness Week, Senior's Week, Australia Day (Australia), Waitangi Day (New Zealand), etc.

2. You could make use of an occasion when people are already gathered together for another reason. For example a combined churches rally, sports

carnival, camp-meeting, camp draft, or other event has a ready-made audience - the people are often eager for something different, something new.

3. In the example above (under Planning the Launch) I have used the example of scheduling the launch outside bookstore trading hours to allow local booksellers to attend. This is by no means a rule; rather it has been used as an example of *thinking about your timing to maximise attendance*. An early afternoon weekday launch will capture mothers while the children are at school. An evening launch will attract the social types. A Saturday night barbecue will suit certain sectors of the community and a Sunday Launch/lunch in the park will attract others. A business breakfast may be appropriate under certain circumstances. Plan the timing of your event to minimise your costs and

maximise your attendance.



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Who to invite?

Think about whom you would like to attend. Ask yourself, ‘Is it better to have 1000 people who will go home thinking ‘It was a great night out,’ or 50 people, most of whom will go home thinking ‘I just can’t wait to start reading the new book that I bought today.’



Ask yourself if you would like the media to attend. Don't fall into the trap of

thing of yourself as a small fish in a big pond. Every author who has ever been published was unknown before s/he was known, unread before s/he was read, unrecognised before s/he was recognised, unacknowledged before s/he was acknowledged, etc., etc.

If your budget precludes the invitation of a certain group of people because of a concern about catering then consider some of the ‘budget’ options under Catering, below.

Ask yourself, ‘Do I invite everybody through public advertising, or will I be selective and fully cater for a few people?’

Suggested formats

Priority – launch book first - party afterwards

Here are some suggested formats:

1. Launch >>> book sales >>> food and drinks >>> book signing
2. Refreshments >>> excerpt/poetry reading >>> launch >>> book sales and signing
3. Book sales >>> launch >>> signing >>> drinks with crackers and dip
4. Concert/entertainment >>> launch >>> book sales >>> food and drinks >>> book signing
5. Etc.

The Launch itself can be divide up into components and you can choose the order for each segment: welcome, speeches, excerpt reading, launch speech, comments from readers, and acknowledgements (the ‘thank-you’s’).



Sample Speeches

“It gives me great pleasure to officially launch the publisher’s first edition of [*author’s name*]’s [*name of publication*]. [... *describe book or author ...*]. I now declare this book officially launched.”

“I am honoured to be asked to participate in this book launch celebration, because I know that [*author’s name*]’s [*name of publication*] is a book that you will want to read.

[... *summarise book content or author ...*]. I now pronounce the official launching of [*author’s name*]’s [*name of publication*].”

“Thank you for inviting me to take part in the celebration of the launch of [*author’s name*]’s [*name of publication*]. When I read [*his or her*] book I was

particularly moved by [*outline some thing which inspired you.*] As I hold this book in my hand, I publicly declare it officially launched!”



“What an absolute delight it is to launch [*author’s name*]’s [*name of publication*].

I have known [*author's name*] for [*duration*] and am thrilled to see [*his or her*] labour in print. [*Share an anecdote about the author or the book*]. Eric Rolls, at a book launch, once said that one launches a boat, not a book. Rather, one opens a book. So it is with much pleasure, that I stand before you and declare [*author's name*]'s [*name of publication*] officially open.”

“... I am not going to say that this book is so gripping that you cannot put it down. On the contrary, it is so loaded with spices that you need to put it down at the end of each chapter. Pardon the gastronomic metaphor, but please digest it in small doses.

I am honoured to declare that [*name of book*], is now launched and firing, not with *falafel* but with *falafali* (chilli peppers)!” (Joseph Wakim OAM, an actual quote from the Launch Speech of *Bin Laden in the Suburbs*, 2004)

“A book launch is not a platform for review or an excuse to con you into buying a book. It is a celebration. A celebration, most often, of years of hard work and study. And so, although it is hoped that you will leave here today with a copy of the book in your hands, we are really here to celebrate the past achievements of the author, the present joy in seeing this book realised and the future pleasure you will receive as you read it [as I have done]. [*Share something from the book*]. And so, without further ado, I now announce the launching of [*author’s name*]’s [*name of publication*].”

“ I must say, at the outset, that when [the author] phoned me with the proposition that I might launch his book, I felt some reservations. It was only when [*s/he*] added that “you don’t have to agree with it to launch it” that my reservations

receded just enough to make it seem like a good idea at the time. As it turned out, his advice was both insightful and helpful. ... I wish [*him or her*] well and hope that the publication of [*his or her*] book will trigger the kind of debate that will lead to more long-term enlightenment than short-term heat. I have great pleasure in declaring [*author's name*]'s [*name of publication*] launched.” (John W Zillman AO FTSE, Statement made in launching William Kininmonth's book *Climate Change: A Natural Hazard*, 2004)

“I am indeed honoured to be able to speak at the launch of the book entitled: [*Name of publication*] It is customary when launching a book to wish the writer success the book deserves and I certainly do that. But I think that it deserves not merely a large number of sales but also that it should bring immense pleasure to

the reader. This is not only what I hope the book will achieve, but [having read it], that is what I believe will happen. I congratulate [*author's name*] and have the pleasure now of heralding the launch of [*author's name*]'s [*name of publication*].



Catering

If your budget frustrates your plans for a book launch due to concerns about catering then consider a venue such as a café and provide pre-launch refreshments only.

Or perhaps a community hall with a couple of bowls of ‘punch’ and a few cheese platters.

Your local library can supply you with books of party ideas, themes, catering suggestions, non-alcoholic wine recipes, finger-food recipes etc.

Right at the beginning of this book I suggested that if your book launch is an “excuse for a booze-up”, then forget the book launch and just have the party.

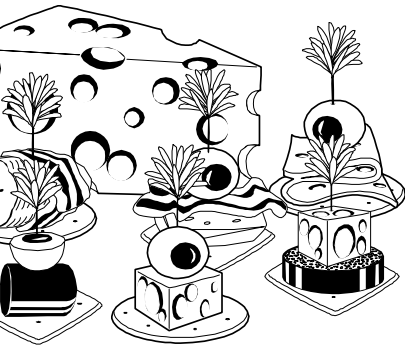
But what if you are having alcohol at the party after the book launch? Here are a few pointers to help people to remember your book launch for the right reasons:

Have plenty of non-alcoholic drinks available. Don't encourage or force guests to drink alcohol. If you *must* have alcohol, provide plenty of food so guests won't drink on an empty stomach. Remember to designate before you celebrate – arrange a designated driver for those who are drinking alcohol.

Never serve alcohol to people under 21.

If preparing an alcoholic punch, use a non-carbonated base such as fruit juice because alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream faster when it has a carbonated base. Activities and entertainment can be scheduled to keep the focus on celebrating the book launch and not drinking. Singing along with

musical accompaniment, party games and board games for all ages are socially acceptable and fun!



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A rectangular poster template with a thin black border and two small circles in the top corners. At the top center is a small illustration of a person in a boat. Below it is the title "Book Launch" in a large, serif font. A rounded rectangular box contains the following text: "Broken Windows and Shattered Lives" followed by "Lue Throwabrick" on the next line. Below that is "n in the University Club" and "range Room" on the next line. Then "aker: Dr Setin Stone" and "nts afterwards at the" and "Canteen" on the next line. Below the box is "All welcome" and a small URL "goc2ies.com/tegrab lich".

Book Launch

Broken Windows and Shattered
Lives
Lue Throwabrick

n in the University Club
range Room

aker: Dr Setin Stone
nts afterwards at the
Canteen

All welcome

goc2ies.com/tegrab lich

L & R
Hartley

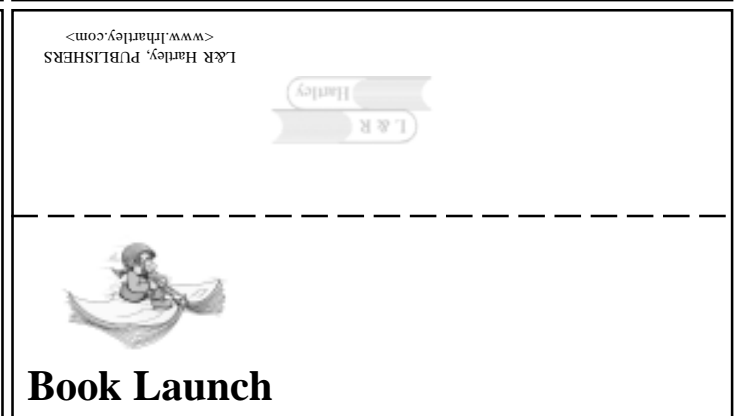
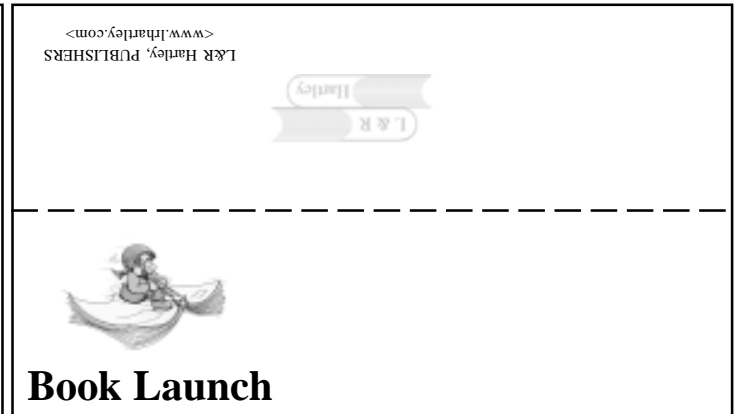
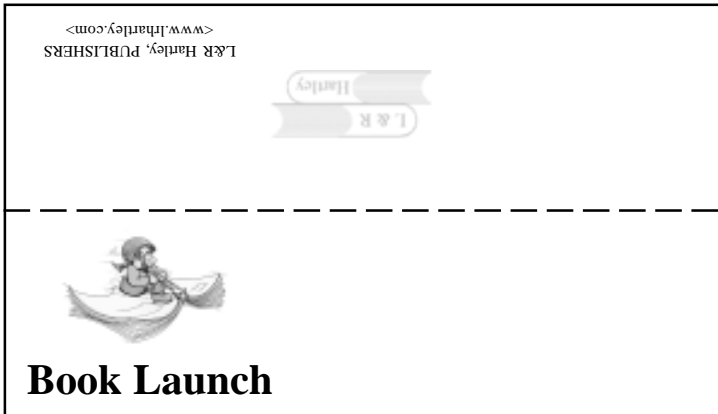
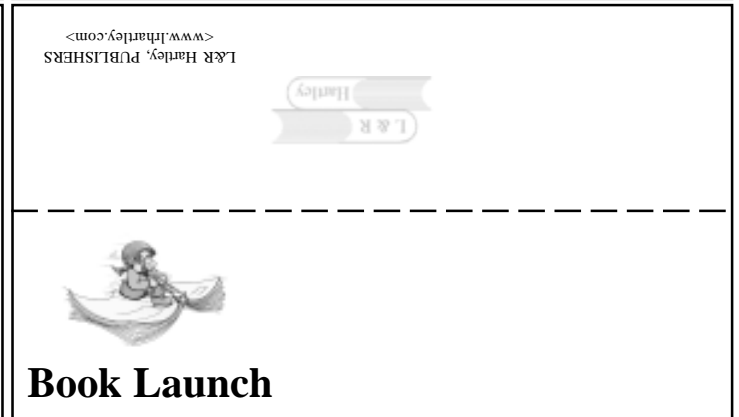
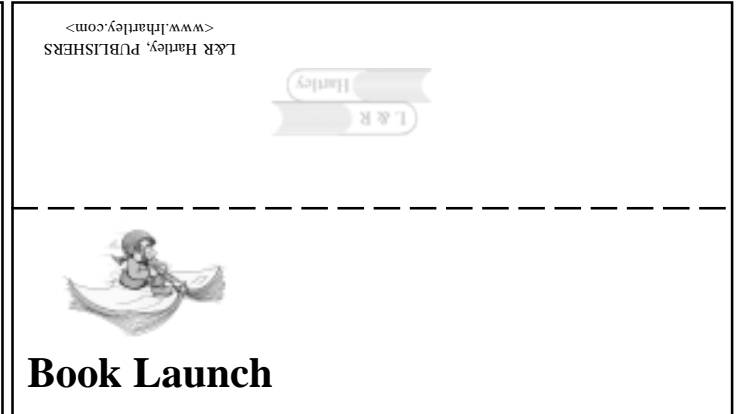
Nametag and Table Placecards



Cut out *Table Placecards* along solid line and fold backwards along dotted line.



Nametag (Fits standard plastic holder)





Book Launch

Order Form

_____ 20_____

Please supply:

_____ copies of _____

at \$ _____ each

I enclose \$ _____ as full payment

(which includes \$ _____ postage and handling)

Please mail to

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Code _____

Thank you for your order



Book Launch Book Order

RECEIPT

_____ 20_____

Received the sum of _____

(\$ _____) being full payment for _____ books

(Signed)



Book Launch

Cordially invites

*To celebrate with us as my new book is
launched by*

On _____ Commencing at _____

Book launch to be held at

R. S. V. P. by _____

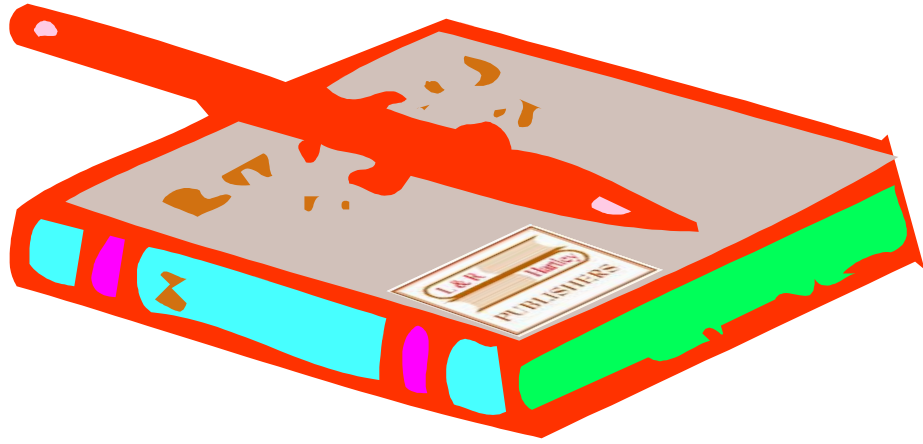
To _____

Here 'tis...



Book Launch Today

Book-signing



Meet the author



T-Shirt Advertising



T-Shirt Iron-on Transfers – Instruction Sheet

Keep these instructions for future reference.

1. Prepare the image stencil
 - a) Trim around your image with scissors to remove the areas that have no printing.
 - b) Make sure that you leave rounded edges to help avoid corner-lift after washing.
2. Prepare the surface
 - a) Heat iron (empty water) to maximum cotton setting.
 - b) Fabric should be 100% cotton; iron first to ensure flatness.
 - c) Let fabric cool before ironing transfer image.
 - d) Lay fabric on a hard, smooth surface. An ironing board is too soft. A table covered with a pillowcase is a good idea.
 - e) Place transfer paper with the printed side of design facing downwards in desired position on fabric.
3. Iron image:
 - a) Timing is important: Iron for 20 seconds – count! No image should be ironed for more than 30 seconds.
 - b) First apply hot, dry iron at light pressure to fix image in position.
 - c) Then iron at firm pressure in a straight, non-stop motion top to bottom or side to side.
 - d) Pay attention to the edges and make sure that you cover the entire transfer.
4. Peel and wear:
 - a) Allow fabric to cool completely, then in a smooth and even motion, peel away backing paper. If the master image lifts, re-position the backing sheet and iron over for a few more seconds, then remove backing paper.
 - b) Do not let the iron touch the image!
 - c) If your design looks a little shiny, place a piece of baking paper over it and iron it for a few seconds with a dry iron.
5. Washing and ironing:
 - a) Leave 24 hours before washing.
 - b) Wash separately, inside-out in cold water. If design bleeds a little, this can be removed with a second wash.
 - c) The T-shirts can be ironed successfully after washing. Turn the garment inside-out and avoid direct contact of the image with the iron.
 - d) The image will withstand many washes, and should be long lasting, but the image quality may degrade a little during the first few washes.
 - e) **DO NOT DRY IN A TUMBLE DRYER AFTER WASHING**
 - f) Do not dry-clean.
6. Disclaimer:
 - a) Adult supervision is recommended for children. Use in a well ventilated area.
 - b) This product has been manufactured with quality materials and processes.
 - c) Meticulous following of these instructions will ensure that you get the best value for your purchase.
 - d) Although we source and use only the best materials, because the final outcome depends largely upon the user, L&R Hartley cannot warranty stencils once they have been ironed or otherwise affixed to a garment.