HOW TO CREATE YOUR FIRST SIMPLE GUIDE 

A Calm, Non-Techy Beginner's Guide To Creating Something Real

written by Terri's Earn-from-Home Journal

Introduction

If you're reading this guide while already feeling slightly overwhelmed by technology, online business jargon, or the terrifying phrase "build your digital product"...

Firstly, welcome 😃

Secondly, you are exactly whom I wrote this for.

Because, despite what social media might suggest, most of us do not begin this journey feeling confident, organised, or remotely tech-savvy.

Some of us begin with:

- Twenty open browser tabs
- a notebook full of half-understood ideas
- a cup of tea going cold beside us
- and a growing suspicion that everybody else somehow received an instruction manual we missed

That was certainly me. 😄

When I first started creating digital products, I assumed people doing this online must naturally know what they were doing.
I thought they probably:

- understood technology instantly
- had beautifully organised desks
- used words like "funnels" confidently
- and definitely didn't Google things like: "Why has my text box disappeared?"

Meanwhile, I was over here accidentally moving entire pages in Canva while questioning every decision I'd ever made.

But slowly — and I really do mean slowly — I realised something important:
You do not need to be an expert to create something helpful.

You do not need:

- fancy equipment
- expensive software
- a huge audience
- or complete confidence.

You just need:

- an idea
- a willingness to learn
- and enough determination to keep going when technology briefly tests your will to live 😆

That's what this guide is about.

Not perfection.
Not building some polished "internet empire."

Just creating your very first simple guide in a calm, realistic, non-overwhelming way.



Inside these pages, I'll walk you through:

- choosing an idea
- writing without overthinking
- using Canva simply
- formatting your guide
  and most importantly...
- learning when "good enough" is genuinely good enough.

Because honestly?
So many brilliant ideas never get finished because people convince themselves they need to know everything before they begin.

You don't.

You're allowed to learn as you go.

In fact, most of us are

So make yourself comfortable, ignore the pressure to be perfect, and let's create something real together.

One slightly confused but determined step at a time 🙂

Chapter 1
Stop Waiting To Feel "Ready"

I need to tell you something that would have saved me a huge amount of stress if I'd understood it sooner:

Almost nobody feels fully ready when they start creating something online.

Not the calm-looking people on Instagram.
Not the polished business owners.
Not the people confidently talking about "passive income" while holding enormous coffees in spotless kitchens.

Most of us start somewhere between "This could be a good idea... "and "I have absolutely no clue what I'm doing."
The problem is, we tend to believe confidence arrives first.

We think:

- THEN I'll start
- THEN I'll feel capable
- THEN I'll know enough.

But in reality?
Confidence usually turns up halfway through, slightly out of breath, after you've already survived several minor technology-related emotional breakdowns

That's how it happened for me anyway.

At the beginning, I massively overthought everything.

Not just the writing. Everything.

The title.
The fonts.
The colours.
The spacing.
Whether anybody would read it.
Whether I sounded silly.
Whether I was “qualified enough.”
Whether I should quietly abandon the whole idea and go and reorganise a kitchen cupboard instead

(Which, by the way, suddenly becomes VERY appealing the moment a Canva page refuses to behave.) 😆

I kept imagining there was some magical moment where everything would suddenly click into place and I’d transform into one of those highly organised online business people.

Spoiler alert: that moment never arrived.
Instead, what actually happened was much less glamorous.

I learned slowly.
I made mistakes.
I Googled things constantly.
I pressed the wrong buttons.
I accidentally moved entire sections of pages while trying to resize tiny boxes.

And somehow...
bit by bit... I still created something real.

That's the important part.

Not perfection.
Completion.

Because there is a huge difference between:

- endlessly planning something
  and
- actually finishing something.

Planning feels safe.
Finishing feels vulnerable.

The moment you create something real, your brain suddenly becomes dramatic:
"What if people hate it?"
"What if it's not good enough?"
"What if somebody notices I still don't fully understand Canva?" 😆

But honestly?
Most people are too busy worrying about their own stuff to analyse yours that deeply.

And the people who genuinely need your help are not looking for perfection anyway.

They're looking for reassurance, simplicity, honesty and somebody who explains things like an actual human being.

That's why simple guides often work better than complicated ones.

People do not want:

🚫 Twenty pages of jargon
🚫 corporate language
🚫 overwhelming information overload.

They want: "Please just explain this calmly before I throw my laptop into a hedge." 😆

And that's exactly what you're capable of doing.

So if you're currently waiting to feel:

- more experienced
- more confident
- more knowledgeable
- more "official"

Let me gently say this: You probably already know enough to help somebody. You do not need to know everything before you begin.

You just need enough courage to create version one.

Because version one teaches you what version two needs.

And honestly?

That's how most of us are figuring this out:
one slightly confused step at a time 😄

Chapter 2
Choosing A Topic (Without Spiralling Into Existential Crisis)

One of the biggest myths about creating a digital guide is this idea that you need:

- specialist qualifications
- groundbreaking knowledge
- or a revolutionary business concept nobody has ever thought of before.

You really don't.

In fact, most helpful guides are built around very ordinary things. The kind of things people quietly Google at 11 pm while stressed, overwhelmed, tired, or trying to solve a small but annoying problem.

Things like:

- "How do I organise my week better?"
- "How do I start selling digital products?"
- "How do I use Canva without losing my sanity?"
- "How do I work from home when my house is chaos?"

Real-life problems.
That's what people connect with.
Not perfection.
Not an expert performance like a TED Talk.

Just useful help from somebody who understands the struggle.

When I first started thinking about creating guides, I assumed I had nothing valuable to offer.

Surely everybody already knew this stuff?

Surely nobody needed advice from a woman who regularly:

- lost important tabs in her browser
- accidentally resized entire Canva pages
- and occasionally had to leave the room before technology tested her patience beyond human limits 😄

But then I realised something important:
If you have learned something the hard way...you can usually help somebody who is still at the beginning of that journey.

That's what all guides are.

You do not need to be standing at the top of a mountain, dramatically shouting life lessons down to the world 😆

You just need to be a few steps ahead of somebody else.

That's enough.

In fact, sometimes beginners explain things BETTER than experts.
Why?
Because experts often forget what it feels like to be confused.

Meanwhile, beginners still remember:

- What felt overwhelming
- What made no sense
- What finally helped things click
- And which tutorials made them want to cry into a cup of tea 😆

That memory is valuable.
Very valuable.

So when choosing a topic, stop asking: “Am I qualified enough?”
Instead, ask: “What have I learned that might genuinely help somebody else?”

That answer is usually much closer than you think.
For example, your topic does not need to be dramatic or highly technical.

Some genuinely useful guide ideas could be:

- Organising your week while working from home
- beginner meal planning
- simple budgeting
- starting an allotment
- managing stress
- creating printable planners
- Basic Canva skills
- journaling prompts
- working around chronic illness or fatigue
- confidence building
- digital products for beginners.

You are allowed to use your own life experience.

Actually... that's often the BEST material.

Because people connect with honesty.
Not polished "internet expert" energy.

And here's another thing that helped me enormously:
Your first guide does not need to cover everything.

Please read that sentence again. 😆

One of the quickest ways to overwhelm yourself is to try to create:

🚫 The ultimate guide to absolutely everything known to mankind.

That's how you end up:

- emotionally exhausted
- surrounded by unfinished drafts
- questioning your life choices
- while your cat sits on your keyboard as if offering silent judgement 😄

Keep it simple.

Instead of:

➡️ "The Complete Guide To Building An Online Business"
try:
➡️ "How To Create Your First Simple Guide."

Specific is calmer.

Specific is easier.

Specific gets finished.

And finished matters more than perfect.

Also — and this is important — choose a topic you can actually tolerate thinking about for several days 😄

This sounds obvious, but excitement matters.

If the topic feels painfully dull by page three, your readers will sense it.

You do not need to force yourself into writing like a corporate robot. Your personality is part of what makes your guide feel human.

That's why stories, humour, honesty and small real-life moments matter so much.

Nobody remembers:
🚫 "Step 4.2 of the optimisation process."

They remember:
➡️ "This woman accidentally deleted half a page and had to go outside for emotional recovery." 😄

That's relatable. That's memorable. That's real.

And real is far more powerful than perfect.

Chapter 3
Writing Without Overthinking (And Why Messy Drafts Are Completely Normal)

One of the fastest ways to stop yourself from creating anything is by believing your first draft has to sound impressive.

Or polished.

Or deeply intellectual.

Or like one of those business books written by someone who apparently wakes up at 4 am to meditate beside a mountain while drinking mushroom coffee 😄

Realistically?

Most first drafts are a bit of a mess.

And that is completely normal.

In fact, if your first draft feels awkward, clunky, slightly chaotic, or full of sentences you immediately dislike...

Congratulations
You are officially writing. 😀

Writing is not usually magical inspiration floating gracefully onto the page.

You start a sentence... then immediately question:

- the wording
- the grammar
- the structure
- whether you sound silly
- whether somebody on the internet might judge you 😆

Meanwhile, the poor unfinished guide sits there patiently, wondering if it will ever become a real document.

This is why I think conversational writing is so important.
Especially for beginner guides.

People do not want to feel like they're reading:

- a legal contract
- a corporate handbook
- or an instruction manual written by somebody emotionally disconnected from reality 😆

They want to feel understood.

That's why I always recommend imagining you are helping ONE real person. Not "the entire internet." Just one person. Maybe somebody:

- overwhelmed
- tired
- confused
- lacking confidence
- staring nervously at Canva while wondering where all the buttons have gone 😆

Write to THAT person.

Suddenly, your tone softens naturally.

You stop performing.

You stop trying to sound “professional.”

And ironically?
That usually makes your writing far more engaging.

Because warmth connects better than perfection.

Honestly, some of the most comforting things online are written by people who simply sound human.

Not polished robots pretending they’ve mastered life.
Which brings me to something important...

A Quick Word About AI (Yes, The Bots 😆)

We probably need to talk about AI now because, let’s be honest, half the internet currently is 😂

Used well, AI tools can genuinely help people:

- organise ideas
- overcome blank-page panic
- structure guides
- simplify information
- brainstorm titles
- and build confidence when starting out.

I use AI support myself.

In fact, there were many moments early on where I genuinely typed things like:

- “HELP BUTTON WHERE???”
- “Why has my text moved?”
- “Please explain this like I am confused and mildly sleep deprived.” 😂

And thankfully, unlike some humans, AI does not sigh heavily or make you feel silly for asking.

But - and this is important - there is a BIG difference between:
🚫 copying and pasting everything blindly
and:
☑️ using AI as support while still keeping your own voice.

Because readers can feel the difference.

We’ve all seen writing online that technically says all the “right” things... but somehow feels strangely empty.

Like a motivational robot swallowed a business textbook 😂

That usually happens when personality disappears.

Your stories matter.
Your humour matters.
Your real-life moments matter.

The little details:

- the messy kitchen
- the technology meltdowns
- the interruptions
- The cat walking across the keyboard
- the moments where life happens in the middle of your plans.

THAT is what makes people connect with your writing.

AI can help shape words.

But it cannot replace:

- lived experience
- personality
- warmth
- resilience
- or your unique way of seeing the world.

That part is yours.

And honestly?
That's the bit people remember most.

So please don't wait for your writing to become perfect before allowing yourself to continue.

Messy drafts are not failure.
Messy drafts are evidence that something is finally being created.
And that matters far more than getting every sentence perfect the first time 

Chapter 4
Canva Without The Meltdown 😄

I would like to begin this chapter by reassuring you of something very important:

You do NOT need to become a graphic designer overnight to create a lovely digital guide 😄

Honestly, before I started using Canva properly, I assumed everybody else magically understood:

- layouts
- spacing
- resizing
- fonts
- image placement
- and all the mysterious little symbols hiding in the side panels.

Meanwhile, I was sitting there quietly typing:
"WHY HAS MY PAGE GONE BLACK???" into Google 😄
The good news?

You only need a handful of simple skills to create something calm, professional and readable.

You do not need:

- fancy animations
- complicated graphics
- ten different fonts
- a design degree
- or a nervous breakdown because your text box disappeared

You just need to keep things:

- simple
- clean
- readable
- and comfortable to look at.

That's it.
And honestly?
Simple usually looks MORE professional anyway.

Start With ONE Template

Use the search bar, e.g. eBook template. One of the biggest mistakes beginners make is endlessly scrolling through the 17 million templates looking for "the perfect one."

Three hours later:

- Your tea is cold
- Your brain hurts
- And you somehow still haven't started 😄

Pick one calm, simple template.
That's enough.
Then:

- remove anything too flashy
- delete unnecessary graphics
- simplify colours
- and slowly make it feel like YOU.

Your guide does not need to look like a luxury magazine advertisement.

In fact, overly busy designs can make reading exhausting. Clean and calming wins every time.



Tiny Canva Survival Tip

To delete an image or element, right-click it once and look for the little bin icon above.
(Yes, discovering this felt like unlocking a secret level of adulthood 😄)

Spend Time On Your First Page

This is probably one of the BEST Canva lessons I learned.
Get your FIRST page looking right before worrying about the rest.

Seriously 😃
Because once you have:

- the font
- spacing
- colours
- layout
- and overall feel

...you can simply duplicate pages instead of rebuilding everything from scratch every single time.

That saves:

- time
- stress
- and approximately 73 emotional breakdowns

Think of your first page as your “master page.”
Once it feels good, duplicate it and keep moving.

Tiny Canva Survival Tip

To duplicate a page, look for the little duplicate icon directly above your page.
This button will become your new best friend 😄

Keep Fonts Simple

Please do not feel pressured to use complicated fonts that look like they belong on a royal wedding invitation 😃

Simple fonts are easier to read and instantly make your guide feel calmer.

Some lovely beginner-friendly Canva fonts are:

- Canva Sans
- Montserrat
- Poppins

And honestly?
That is MORE than enough.

You do not need:

- seventeen fonts
- glitter writing
- swirly text nobody can actually read 😄

Consistency makes things look professional.

Readers should feel relaxed while reading your guide — not like they're decoding ancient treasure maps.

White Space Is Your Friend

One thing I learned quite quickly was this:

If a page feels cramped... people stop enjoying reading it.
You want:

- breathing room
- shorter paragraphs
- spacing between sections
- and pages that feel visually calm.

At one point, I realised my line spacing was so tight that everything looked slightly squashed together 😄

Thankfully, Canva DOES allow you to adjust this.

 Tiny Canva Survival Tip

To adjust spacing:
Top toolbar (Advanced settings now, look at us) 😄 → Spacing → Line Height. As you move the cursor, you will see your text change magically! 😃

Even tiny spacing changes can make your guide instantly easier to read.

Don't overdecorate

This is where many of us get carried away.
At first, you think: "Maybe it needs another graphic..."

Then suddenly:

- There are leaves everywhere
- motivational quotes floating around
- stars in the corners
- And somehow, the page now resembles a stationery shop explosion 😄

Simple is powerful. You do not need to fill every empty space. White space is not “missing.”
It is breathing room.

If your reader can focus easily, your guide is working.

Canva Panic Is Completely Normal

At some point, Canva WILL do something confusing 😄

You will probably experience at least one of the following:

- disappearing text
- accidentally resizing everything
- moving elements by mistake
- text boxes refusing to cooperate
- mysterious blue outlines appearing
- or moments where you whisper: “WHY HAS EVERYTHING SHIFTED???”

Please know this is completely normal.
Every single person learning Canva goes through this stage.
The difference is that experienced users simply panic more quietly 😃

Most problems can be fixed with:

- Undo button
- resizing slowly
- Or stepping away for five minutes before technology tests your patience too much.

Use Canva's Helpful Guides

Canva actually tries to help more than we realise.
Those little purple guidelines that appear while moving things?
They are there to help centre your content.

 **Tiny Canva Survival Tip**

Drag elements slowly across the page until purple guidelines appear.
That's Canva gently saying:

"There. That's centred. Please stop moving it now." 😄

Margins can help too.

 **Tiny Canva Survival Tip**

To show margins:
File → Settings → Show Margins.

Very helpful if you accidentally place text dangerously close to the edge of the page

Done Is Better Than Perfect

This may be the most important lesson in the entire chapter😄

At some point, you have to stop endlessly tweaking tiny details and let your guide actually EXIST, because perfectionism can quietly trap people for weeks.

You'll find yourself:

- changing fonts repeatedly
- resizing things by one millimetre
- adjusting colours seventeen times
- and questioning decisions nobody else would ever notice

Meanwhile, your unfinished guide remains trapped inside Canva purgatory.
Please remember, your readers are looking for:

- help
- clarity
- encouragement
- useful information.

They are NOT sitting there examining whether your heading moved two pixels to the left
Your guide does not need to be perfect to be valuable. It simply needs to be:

- readable
- and genuinely created with care.

And honestly?
That already makes it more than good enough 💛

Chapter 5
The Only Canva Bits You Actually Need To Know

At some point while learning Canva, I became convinced there were approximately 47 million buttons.

Some looked useful.
Some looked mysterious.
Some I clicked accidentally and then immediately wished I hadn't

The good news?

You do NOT need to understand every Canva feature before creating your first guide.

In fact, I still regularly discover buttons and think:
"Well, that's new."

The secret is knowing which tools you'll actually use most often.
Let's keep this simple.

Step 1: Choose The Right Template

One of the first things Canva asks you to do is choose a template.

This can feel slightly overwhelming because there are approximately enough templates to keep you scrolling until retirement 😄

For simple guides and ebooks, I would suggest looking at:


Ebook Templates
Document Templates
Workbook Templates
Guide Templates

Don't worry about finding "the perfect one."
Choose something clean and calm.
You can always change colours, fonts and images later.
Think of templates as a starting point, not a set of rules.

Step 2: Get To Know The Left-Hand Menu

If Canva were a house, the left-hand menu would be where all the useful tools live.

The sections you'll probably use most are: **Text**
This is where you'll create:

- Headings
- Paragraphs
- Subheadings
- Titles

You'll use this section constantly.

Tiny Canva Survival Tip
Need a text box? Click Text, then select Add A Text Box.
Congratulations.
You are now officially writing 😄

Elements

This section contains:

- Shapes
- Icons
- Arrows
- Lines
- Decorative graphics

Try searching simple terms like:

- arrow
- leaf
- notebook
- star
- tick

The search bar is your friend.

📷 Uploads

This is where your own images live.

Useful for:

- photographs
- screenshots
- logos
- personal graphics

Simply drag and drop files into Canva.

Even I managed to learn this one 😄

Apps
This section contains lots of additional tools, including one of my favourites: Emojis.
Because apparently I am physically incapable of creating anything without adding at least one smiley face 😄

Step 3: Learn These Five Essential Skills

If you learn these five things, you can create surprisingly professional-looking guides.

1. Add Text You'll use this constantly.
2. Resize Text Click the text box and adjust the size from the top toolbar.
3. Move Things Around Click. Hold. Drag. Simple. Well... most of the time 😄
Sometimes you'll try to move something and discover Canva refuses to cooperate. Before assuming technology has developed a personal grudge against you, check whether your item is hidden underneath another element.
Canva works in layers, a bit like stacking pieces of paper on top of each other.
If something is underneath another layer, you may need to select the correct (top) item first before moving it. And remember:
The problem is usually not you.
It's probably hiding behind a decorative leaf!!

4. Delete Things Select the item. Click the bin icon. Gone. Like my patience when technology decides to misbehave 😄

5. Duplicate Pages

This is one of Canva's greatest gifts.
Create one page you like.
Duplicate it.
Repeat.
Much easier than starting from scratch every time.

Step 4: Free Is Fine 😄
I want to save you from making a mistake many beginners make.
Please don't convince yourself that you need Canva Pro before you can create something worthwhile.
You don't. The free version is incredibly powerful.
Could Canva Pro be useful later?
Possibly.
But when you're starting, the free version is more than enough. Create first.
Upgrade later if you genuinely need to.
Not the other way around.

Step 5: Let Canva Help You

Canva quietly provides lots of helpful visual guides.
Those purple lines that appear when moving things?
They're trying to help.
Honestly.

Tiny Canva Survival Tip

When moving elements around a page, slow down slightly.
Purple guidelines will appear to show when things are centred.

You can also turn on margins,
File → Settings → Show Margins
A small feature that makes a surprisingly big difference. Canva will display a red warning if your text/images are outside of the margin.

Step 6: Save Everything

Thankfully, Canva saves automatically.
However... Technology occasionally enjoys keeping us humble 😄

I recommend:

- downloading regular PDF copies (right-hand corner hit Share - download -select PDF standard from the dropdown list) - then download.
- keeping backup versions
- Creating folders on your computer

Nothing feels worse than losing work you've spent hours creating.

Trust me.
Future You will be grateful.

Tiny Canva Survival Tip

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Step 7: Keep Your First Project Small

Please do not decide that your first guide needs to be 150 pages long.
That way madness lies 😄

Instead:
Create:

- a checklist
- a mini guide
- a short workbook
- a simple PDF

The goal isn't to create a masterpiece.
The goal is to finish something.

Because every finished project teaches you far more than a hundred unfinished ones.

And before you know it, you'll look back and realise you've learned far more than you ever thought possible.



🌿 Final Thoughts
The Guide I Wish I'd Had When I Started 😄

If you've made it this far, I hope one thing has become clear:
Creating your first guide doesn't require you to be an expert.
You don't need a marketing degree.
You don't need to be a designer.
You don't need expensive software.
And you certainly don't need to have everything figured out before you begin. Because the truth is, most of us are learning as we go.

I certainly was.

When I first started exploring the world of online business and digital products, I assumed everyone else knew what they were doing.
They seemed confident, organised, and professional.
Meanwhile, I was sitting at my laptop, wondering where half the buttons were and whether I'd accidentally broken something again
What I've discovered since then is that confidence doesn't usually arrive first.
It arrives later. After you've:

- tried something new
- made mistakes
- fixed mistakes
- learned a few lessons
- and realised you're far more capable than you thought.

That's how confidence grows.

Not through perfection.
Through practice.

If there's one thing I'd like you to take away from this guide, it's this - Start before you feel ready. Because if you wait until you know everything, you'll never begin.
Your first guide won't be perfect. Mine weren't.
Your second guide will probably be better.
Your third guide will be better still.

That's not failure. That's learning.
Every guide you create teaches you something new. Every project builds confidence.
Every finished piece of work proves that you can do more than you thought possible.

And sometimes that's the biggest lesson of all.
A year ago, I couldn't have imagined creating multiple ebooks, guides, newsletters, websites and funnels.

Now I look back and realise those skills weren't learned in one dramatic moment.
I was learning one click, one mistake and one small victory at a time, usually with the help of Google. Occasionally, with the help of YouTube. And quite often asking AI bots questions that probably sounded slightly panicked 😄

So wherever you are right now...

Whether you've already started your guide or you're still nervously staring at a blank page... I hope you'll give yourself permission to begin.

Keep it simple.
Keep it helpful.
Keep it human.

And remember: Done really is better than perfect.

Your ideas are worth sharing.
Your experiences have value.
And somebody out there may be waiting for exactly the thing you have to offer.

So take that first step.
Then the next one.
And before you know it, you'll be looking back at your own journey, wondering how you learned so much.
Possibly while discovering a feature everyone else apparently knew existed years ago 😄

Good luck.

You've got this.



Thank you for reading!

Contact me if you have any question.

email ; terri@timetogrowathome.co.uk

Next Steps & Resources

If you are interested in taking a free quiz to find a WFH income that suits you, and receiving free weekly newsletters:

https://www.timetogrowathome.co.uk/free-quiz

Or have a look at my website:

https://www.timetogrowathome.co.uk/

