The creation of a preface can be easily overlooked among the many tasks related to completing a manuscript, yet it is one of the most effective tools authors and publishers have to convey the excitement and purpose of a new book or a revised edition.

Experience tells us that a strong preface can help win adoptions and widen the market for a book. The preface is an excellent way for you to communicate directly with the sales representatives who will be promoting your book on campus. Typically a sales representative will read the preface prior to any sales calls to gain insights into a book’s winning features and unique approach. The preface also speaks directly to a professor considering your book for adoption. Essentially, the preface is an excellent marketing tool that is easily accessible throughout the history of the edition. Therefore, it is our goal to ensure that your preface will be the best representative of your book as possible.

An appropriate preface will vary depending on the type of book you are writing; obviously, an introductory level text with a wide range of supplements will have a preface that looks quite different from a graduate level theory book. Nonetheless, there will be a few common elements that should always appear:

SEVEN STEPS TO A BETTER PREFACE

1) **A clear statement of your mission or purpose in writing the text.**
   Why did you write this book? Why is there a need for it? Why should anyone read your book? This may seem an obvious place to start, but authors often overlook a strong mission statement, having been so closely involved with the project. In the mission statement, you should include your purpose for writing the text, and perhaps problems you faced in teaching the course, the lack of adequate texts for a particular course, or possibly trends and recent developments in the discipline that drove you to write this book. The mission statement should be specific and powerful to compel instructors to adopt your book, students to read it, and professionals to use it. Sales representatives often say that the appeal of a book is in the “story” of the book—that powerful reason that drove you to write your book. And it is especially important that the mission statement in a revision be revised to keep abreast of changes and to keep the purpose for writing the text fresh.

2) **A description of the specific market (courses) for your book.**
   Departments and courses should appear by name and level first, followed by alternative markets, if your book was written for such markets. Indicating the market is important both to sales representatives, so they can sample your book appropriately, and to potential adopters and readers, so they identify if your book adequately meets their needs.
3) **The major features of the book and the benefits of these features.**
   In describing the features, make certain that each feature is clearly and simply described, along with its benefits. For example, if your book emphasizes international examples and data, you should discuss why this approach benefits the reader. Even if your book is an upper-level book, there are still unique characteristics that readers need to know about. Is your research, the methodology, or the theory unique? Does it fill a gap in the literature? Does it have policy implications? Let your reader know why your book is special.

4) **A discussion of special pedagogical aids and high-interest features.**
   This may be an easy task if your book is filled with special pedagogical features (boxes, technology integration, critical thinking questions); if so, remember to include the benefits of your features so readers can understand how and why they will be of aid. Briefly describe the feature and its intended benefits. For a revision is important to highlight new pedagogical aids and to provide more generous descriptions and examples.

5) **Changes to a revised edition.**
   If you are preparing a preface for a revision, be certain to include the changes to this edition. A heading such as “New to this Edition” can call attention to this important section. If the revision has been a modest one, you may be able to summarize the changes in paragraph form. If the revision is more extensive, or if you are writing for a large introductory market and your text covers many diverse topics, it is a good idea to list the changes by chapter. In outlining the changes, present them in a positive tone even if the deleted material was not successful in the previous edition.

6) **Ancillaries and the technology accompanying the text** (if applicable).
   Describe these in as much detail as possible, separating instructor supplements from those for the student.

7) **Acknowledgments.**
   A good preface always ends with acknowledgments and the content is largely your choice. The list of reviewers is the one required item; the editorial assistant will supply this list.

Individual texts may require additional items which should be discussed with your editor but these seven elements are essential to all prefaces. The preface should be completed for submission with the rest of the manuscript by the time the book is put into production.

It is important that the preface follow as closely as possible these basic elements so the sales and marketing efforts have the benefit of consistency among the many books Sage will publish in a given year; we appreciate your aid in helping us achieve this goal.

Thank you for your careful attention to the preface, as it is one of the most important steps you can take to ensure the success of your textbook!

Below we have included a Preface checklist that may aid you in the creation of your preface.
The preface is your personal advertisement for your text. It is an important item because the preface is frequently the first printed page reviewed by the prospective adopter. We believe the preface should anticipate certain questions and follow certain assumptions. The checklist below will give you an idea of what your examiners may expect, although not every preface will fit the mold exactly—prefaces for revisions, for example, will contain references to differences from the previous edition.

- Does your preface name the course for which your text is written?
- Is the preface written to include all interested readers, that is, the instructor and student?
- Have you identified the student audience for whom the book is written?
- Have you defined clearly the distinguishing features of your presentation: organization, theoretical base, emphasis, special coverage, and methodology?
- Have you mentioned pedagogical aids: end-of chapter questions, chapter outlines or overviews, summaries, suggested readings?
- Have you achieved a relatively familiar tone?
- Have you acknowledged assistance where acknowledgment is due: If you include a list of advisory reviewers be sure your editor has obtained permission to mention them.
- Have you kept the preface short and to the point?
- Have you avoided referencing competing books by name?
- Have you avoided sweeping generalizations that encourage disagreement in particular?
- Does your preface give readers a reason for examining the text in depth?
- Have you kept as much as possible to the active voice in your prose?
- Have you concentrated on the positive points of your text?
- If your book is a new edition, have you included a section that addresses what is new in this edition?
- If the preface refers to an instructor’s manual or other supplement, does it do so in a way that does not exclude the student reader?