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Gail Buckley & Greg Land



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**How To Write  
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***A Beginner's Guide To  
Freelance Writing From  
Your Home!***

# Table of Contents

OVERVIEW ..... 3

RESUME WRITING— FOR OTHERS! ..... 5

WORKING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES..... 8

THE “READER’S DIGEST” ANGLE ..... 13

KEEPING IT SHORT AND SIMPLE ..... 15

FROM FAMILY LIFE TO CHILDREN’S STORIES..... 20

SELF-PUBLISHING FOR PROFIT..... 23

LISTING OF BOOK PUBLISHERS ..... 28

## **OVERVIEW**

Have you ever heard the expression, "everyone has a book in them that's trying to get out?" What does this really mean? Not everyone writes books, do they?

No, not many attempt the long, difficult process of writing a book-length manuscript. But a growing number of individuals are being paid for their writing; and, they've never attempted to write a book!

Why? Think about it! When you're driving to work in the morning, listening to the radio, what do you hear? People talking, right? It may surprise you that very little of that talk is spontaneous. The radio people work from written material, which means... ? Yes, someone has to WRITE the information down to be read over the airwaves.

Here's another example. Your mother's birthday is coming up. What do you do? You buy a card. Did you ever wonder who wrote the cards you look through when you're searching for the right message? Well, it's not a big company where people sit around all day writing cards. The writers of greeting cards could live next door to you since most of the material is submitted on a freelance basis.

How about your mail? Do you have days when you receive an endless amount of junk mail? Letter after letter of come-ons trying to get you to respond; these are not always thrown out. Some people read them and do inquire about the product or service mentioned. More importantly, those letters and flyers are WRITTEN... by someone!

You're getting the idea. Writing is a common part of everyday business life. From the brochures telling you about savings accounts down at your local bank to the billboard you drive by every morning on the way to work to the bumper stickers you read on the back of the cars in front of you. All of this is written by somebody. Why couldn't it be you?

Writing is an essential part of everyday life. There are scores of opportunities waiting out there for anyone interested in making some money through the written word. It's not just Stephen King and Danielle Steele. Many of today's successful freelance writers are completely unknown

simply because their name doesn't appear on their work. Yet you see it every day from television commercials to newspaper advertising.

Don't have any experience? Nonsense! Everybody writes, from the notes you send with your holiday cards to lists you make before grocery shopping. You probably don't realize how much you write in a given week. In so doing, you are likely adjusting your writing depending on the subject or audience. When you send a note to school with your child, you're writing in a certain style that's likely different than a note you'd send to a relative.

This is exactly what writers do... they alter their writing content based on their subject or audience. So who says you can't write for a living?

There's no end to the kind of writing you can do. However, we do have a few suggestions for you to consider in getting started thinking about a career, part-time or full, in the writing field. As you review these pages, some idea may jump off the page as something you could do. Great! More importantly, don't think because you're never had a writing lesson that you can't do it. All it takes is practice, practice, practice and a determined desire to get it right. If you've got the drive, writing could well be your next career.

## ***RESUME WRITING— FOR OTHERS!***

Nearly everyone, at one time or another, has written a resume in preparation for a job search. So why not start there? How many times have you done your own resume? If you've written it at least once, think of all the other people who have sat down to attempt it.

What an endless list of possible clients! No matter how large or small the town in which you live, hundreds and even thousands of people are in need of resumes. People change jobs a lot today, through their own wishes or due to circumstances beyond their control (like a downsize, merger, buy-out or similar business adjustment). Besides, people don't often keep their resumes up to date.

So, we've established the need— resumes for people. Now, can you write them?

Why not? If you haven't done your own lately, do it now! Practice on yourself. There are a number of books you can check out at your local library or bookstore that offer help in formatting a "Modern" resume. There are employment resumes which list your experience by positions you've held. There are also functional resumes which list your qualifications by skill. Your employment history listed at the end is of lesser significance to the overall message you're trying to send, which is "hire me!"

The business world is increasingly competitive in the number of positions available, as modern technology has eliminated some positions while creating a need for others. The key today is specialization and a well-written resume can help you "stand out" in a potential employer's eyes.

Since many individuals are either unaware of a resume's importance or lack the confidence in their ability to write a competitive resume, a resume-writing service can address both needs. Proper advertising of the service can educate people as to the resume's importance, while advertising alone may well generate more calls than you can handle from people who know a good resume is crucial and want some "expert" help in constructing their "masterpiece".

Employers use resumes today to narrow down the list of people they want to bring in for an interview. Specialization has employers looking for particular talents, but often a memorable resume can help get an interview even if all of their "requirements" for the job aren't present.

You don't need much to get a resume service off the ground. First, you should study the various books on how to write a good resume. Practice a few formats and have samples ready for potential customers to review.

Second, you will need a computer with a word-processing program or even just a good memory typewriter. If you have a computer and can afford a laser printer, all the better. But remember, you're not in the printing business, you are simply creating the resume for your client.

Finally, this is an easy business to operate out of your home. If you have an area sufficient to put a computer or typewriter, you can start. Pick up a file cabinet, or the smaller, plastic file boxes to store client files. Your client's need for a resume probably won't end with one effort. Another job search is likely to occur down the road and the client will probably come back to you for an update, especially if they were successful getting a job the first time around. Keeping a client's past resume on file can assist you for further work later.

As you research your resume writing, make a list of verbs that are common for resume writing, such as:

administered	managed
analyzed	operated
completed	organized
coordinated	prepared
created	started
designed	supervised
developed	trained
evaluated	wrote

These lists will assist you in writing your resumes very quickly without constantly referring to a thesaurus. Time is of the essence to a freelance writer; there are shortcuts to producing quality work without spending hours and hours on a given piece.

You're ready to start. Now you must attract clients. Put together a business card and a flyer and start tacking them up on every community bulletin board in town. Send them to large company personnel departments who may refer employees who are being laid off. Advertise in the

classified of your local newspaper and in the smaller, often free, publications that are circulated around town like the "Pennysaver". Tell friends and family members and give them your card/flyer. They can spread the word among friends. Someone's bound to need help.

What should you charge? A simple one-page resume could be priced as low as \$25. The more complicated the resume, the more you charge. Much depends on the amount of work you have to do. Keep track of the time it takes you to complete a resume— the more work, the longer hours, the higher your price.

## **WORKING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES**

Now that you understand the idea of the versatility of freelance writing, let's turn our attention to organizations you will come in contact with through your resume services business.

As individuals come to you with resumes, make a list of all the local company names you write on the resumes. This is your next prospecting list.

Companies, particularly small ones, have a great need for writers. Think about it! Every day, a business is corresponding with a customer, a potential customer or a supplier. That correspondence often takes the written form.

Well-written correspondence can make the difference between getting a job, landing a customer, increased growth in the business or not. The importance of writing can never be overlooked. Yet the majority of people, even business people whose prosperity depends on customers, place little emphasis on good writing and spend very little time at it.

Your opportunities here are many. Businesses write letters, create brochures, advertise their services, send out direct mail to potential customers; in short, they WRITE!

You'll have to alter your Resume Services business card or, better yet, create a new business card to advertise your "all-purpose" writing services. Prepare samples of different types of writing you can do. Instead of throwing out that junk mail, save those letters and practice perfecting their idea to get a potential customer to respond to what's in the letter. Have a family member or a friend bring home samples of correspondence from their places of work. Read them and practice writing business letters. Go to the library and check the reference works on writing good letters. Read newspapers and magazines for sample advertising copy. Take a product you like and write an advertisement for it. Practice! Practice! Practice!

### **Correspondence**

Your best clients here are small businesses, sole proprietors or partnerships who may not have the time to spend on their correspondence. Contract with them to do their written work. You can

probably charge \$25-100 for a letter. Businesses may have form letters they use, and you can redesign them for the better. The quality of correspondence is often an indicator, to a client or a potential client, of the company's professionalism. You can help businesses increase their sales simply by improving their correspondence.

## **Brochures**

Most businesses try to sell their services through the use of a brochure. Brochure writing and design is not something that takes ages to perfect.

The most important consideration is identifying the purpose of the brochure. Is it to sell a client on the company itself, or a specific product or service? Once the subject is identified, then you can pinpoint the key features of the specific idea that should be emphasized.

Keeping brochures simple is important. Writing everything there is to know about a company, product or service may seem great, but it is usually ineffective because it's too much for a casual reader to take in. Simplicity, on the other hand, can trigger a potential client's interest and have them seeking out the company to ascertain more about the product or service identified within the brochure. Once they call, the company has a better chance of transforming that curiosity into a new customer.

As you begin to do writing, you will work with other professionals in the field such as graphic artists. These are individuals whose artwork can help create a terrific brochure. But, for small businesses, it is often convenient to find the copywriter and graphic artist in one person. For that reason, the use of a computer has great potential rewards. There is a wide variety of "desk-top publishing" software that can be used for both writing and graphic design. There are specific programs that design a brochure.

Being able to offer the whole package will be a great advantage to your business. Brochure writing can bring you a nice paycheck per piece, as high as \$500-1000 for some elaborate pieces.

As a writer, your objective is to put the message within the brochure effectively. Remember—keep it simple. The easier to read and comprehend, the higher the response will be to the piece.

## **Advertising**

The art of advertising is only slightly different from the brochure. In a brochure, you have more time and space to put your message across. In advertising, only a few words are used.

Advertisements must stop the reader and thus need a "grabber" headline. You must always remember the purpose of the advertisement. It's not to SELL anyone, but to attract enough INTEREST to get the person to call for more information. Then the real selling can start!

There are words that are consistently effective in pulling in an audience and initiating a response. Here's a short-list:

amazing	profitable
easy	secret
free	simple
now	privileged
special offer	win
incredible	don't wait
make money	startling

Businesses need to attract clients. Advertising will do that if it's done well. This is where you come in. Read advertisements! Which ones do you respond best to? Try this: cut out a few of the advertisements you like best and show them to several friends. Record their level of interest and rank the results. You'll probably see a pattern where one or two of the advertisements emerge at the top of everyone's list. Study those to see why. Very likely, you'll see that the use of a few key words and the message they imply will prompt people to respond positively to those ads.

## **Direct Mail**

Many businesses do direct mail as a method of acquiring new customers. These works must be written well to achieve the type of response that will make the effort worthwhile, especially financially, since postage and printing costs make it an expensive method of advertising .

But it works! Well-written direct mail can bring in hundreds and thousands of new customers . Your writing efforts are not merely a cost in constructing a direct mail letter; in fact, you can help a company earn substantially more as a result of a successful direct mail campaign.

Effective direct mail creates an image in a client's mind. That vision is primarily one in which the person's life will be enhanced by the purchase of the product or service being advertised. This is your goal— to help the potential customer see how much better things will be because of what you are "advertising" in the letter.

### **Here are ways to make a direct mail letter effective.**

*1. The opening of the letter should be treated with the same reverence as a headline.* You have to grab the reader's attention quickly and make them want to keep on reading. It may be the outside of the direct mail envelope that starts the process. If it's good enough, the person tears open the envelope and begins reading. Then the headline/first paragraph of the letter must create the same effect— to keep the person reading.

*2. There must be reasons to keep reading, usually in the form of some benefits.* Because the person opened the envelope, there is a free offer. Then, when reading the first paragraph, more benefits jump out; the value of the service or product, perhaps. Put in a good “benefit” with each paragraph and keep the paragraphs short!

*3. Don't offer benefits that aren't believable.* Don't make promises you can't keep. The idea is not to make people skeptical, but to make them see the tangible benefits that you offer are valid. To this end, be specific. General terms usually provoke disbelief, while actual specifics are shown to have more honest-sounding appeal.

*4. Understand the product or service yourself.* Would you buy it? If so, why? If you understand why you'd buy it, you can set about convincing people using those same thoughts.

**5. Use third party affirmations, if available.** If it's only your copy, it won't leave as good an impression as the insertion of a few "outside" quotes from others, testifying to the effectiveness of the product or service.

**6. Simplicity sells! Short sentences.** Short paragraphs. Easy words. You're not out to win the Pulitzer Prize. You only want individuals to respond to your letter. They will if they understand the benefits of doing so. Keep it simple!

**7. Be explicit with your instructions.** The letter must not only detail the great benefits, but tell the person exactly what they must do to obtain them. Be specific and make it easy to respond — including a postage-paid card or a toll-free number are usually great methods.

**8. Freebies earn responses.** Giving something away usually helps the response dramatically.

**9. Convince the reader that the product or service being advertised is backed up by a strong company that guarantees the results and benefits detailed in the letter.** Readers must be convinced of the authenticity and the ability to back up the strong comments within the letter.

Letters can be two to four pages in length or even longer and you can probably charge \$50-100 per page to write the copy. This is a small investment for a business in exchange for the sales growth direct mail can achieve.

In summary, small local businesses are a great source of writing work for you in a variety of forms.

## ***THE “READER’S DIGEST” ANGLE***

Successful writers usually begin by writing about themselves or events which have happened to them. The familiarity about the material makes it easier to write and there is an air of authenticity about the writing for obvious reasons. It is these life experiences which even the beginning writer can fashion into small works that can be published.

Anyone who has children has plenty of humorous stories to relate. As television personality Art Linkletter used to point out, “Kids say the darndest things.” If you have a funny story like that, try writing it down. Or if a friend tells you a tale in a similar vein, record it and read it back to them. Practice writing these short pieces.

Short anecdotal-type writing must relate the story quickly. Short means short! Work at cutting out all the excessive words you can. Trim the piece to its “bare bones,” yet don’t lose the humor in it. It’s almost like writing good comedy bits for stand-up comedians. Their material is never overly long. Henny Youngman and Rodney Dangerfield talk in rapid-fire delivery, a joke to every sentence.

This is the kind of writing you would ideally do since there are plenty of paying outlets for these funny works. The best known is “Reader’s Digest”, which has an array of popular columns like “Life in these United States”, “Humor in Uniform” and “Campus Comedy”, among others. They pay \$400 for each anecdote of less than 300 words (1 page, double-spaced is about 250 words). That’s good pay, but you should realize that “Reader’s Digest” receives thousands of submissions each month. If your anecdote is one they think is publishable, it will probably go on a waiting list. But this is one outlet.

For other outlets, check the book, “Writer’s Market” for the current year. They list all the outlets for short, funny pieces. You might also try the magazine, “Writer’s Digest”, which has a list of specialty publishers each month. Contact the magazine to see which issue lists the short pieces such as these. Very often, they publish articles about how to get the short works published.

To help trigger thoughts about stories you can relate, try compiling a list of phrases which can help you recall a story or two that could be publishable. Showing the list to friends can also help them remember a story that you could use. Here are a few phrases to get you started:

repairs	skiing trip
job hunting	fishing trip
mail delivery	sports activities
holiday gifts	military service
car pooling	local tavern
doctor's appointment	grocery shopping
dentist's appointment	shopping (general)
fast food	in-laws
kitchen cooking	neighbors
substitute teaching	scouts (girl, boy, cub)

Short anecdotes can be the basis for a couple of paragraphs that fit into a "Reader's Digest", or the basis for a longer article that other magazines (usually family-oriented) may have some interest in. It is the easiest method for beginning writers to start acquiring good writing habits by actually writing over and over again. It's easy because the material is familiar. You're not laboring over research to achieve a proper article.

Keep in mind the supreme rule of successful writing: keep it simple! Simple sells, especially with short, humorous pieces like these.

## ***KEEPING IT SHORT AND SIMPLE***

As long as we're on the subject of simplicity, there are other types of writing that lend themselves to the short and simple principle. Items such as bumper stickers, radio spots and greeting cards are all outlets for simple, short phrases or paragraphs that can put a message across; preferably a humorous one, very quickly.

Did you see the movie "Forrest Gump"? In this film, the movie's hero answers a reporter's question with a bumper-sticker-like phrase. The reporter stopped short, as it dawned on him what a great phrase for a bumper sticker he had just heard. The next scene in the movie is a car traveling down a highway sporting the phrase on a bumper sticker.

That's how it happens. There are numerous bumper sticker opportunities. Businesses, associations, charities and other organization; use the bumper sticker to deliver a memorable phrase to the general public. What a simple, great, easy way to advertise!

If you are familiar with any local group, you may have an idea for a bumper sticker advertisement for them. Try playing with catch phrases in your head. If one occurs to you that you like, try it out on your family first and then your friends and coworkers-workers to see their reaction. If it's overwhelmingly positive, approach the organization with your idea. They'd pay for advertising, so why not for bumper sticker ideas?

Some slogans are just funny and don't necessarily apply to any type of advertising. Try these phrases out on some people and see if they like it. Again, if the response is heavy on the positive side, you may have an idea you can sell yourself. Bumper stickers aren't that expensive to print and if you sell 50 or so, you'll likely make back your investment and start to make a profit.

Be sure it is a marketable slogan, though. A beach theme would do well in a community by the sea. A slogan about the forest would play well in the northwest. The heartland may buy bumper sticker themes about farms. Pet themes have universal appeal.

Use your imagination! Be creative! That's what this type of writing is all about! The whole trick to it is to think of the phrase, not write a lengthy piece. If you've written advertising or read our

suggestions for good copywriting earlier in this text, remember the key to successful advertising was the headline. A bumper sticker is nothing more than a good, snappy headline.

Successful bumper stickers can lead you to using a great slogan on coffee mugs, hats, T-shirts, banners and similar low-cost, easy to sell material. They make great handouts for business sales meetings and contests. A little creativity can go a long way.

In addition to bumper stickers, there are similar chances to write short, catchy phrases, sentences and short anecdotes for the radio.

You're probably familiar with your local radio stations. You've heard many of the disc jockeys, usually the morning drive-time ones, do their usually zany bits to attract a listening audience. Since ratings drive the advertising which makes the station profitable, the better the disc jockey's material, the greater the potential for higher ratings.

These disc jockeys quite often think of their own material, but are also willing to look at bits written for them. More importantly, the radio stations are often willing to buy comedic pieces for their radio personalities.

The best approach is to familiarize yourself with a radio disc jockey's particular style and work with it to create your comedy. There may be certain themes or issues a particular disc jockey likes to relate and you can build your material on that. Don't take the disc jockey out of his or her regular character, simply blend your material in with what they normally use.

You may be able to create a character for the disc jockey to play off of during comedic exchanges between music plays. There was a radio personality who had an alter ego, complete with a different voice, called "Mr. Friendly". Mr. Friendly was anything but, and the radio disc jockey would tape this character's sentences and phrases ahead of time and play them in response to questions or comments he personally made during his show. The results sounded like an actual conversation exchange and were often hilarious as a result. This is the type of creation that could earn you a sizable amount of money if it works well with the radio disc jockey.

So, the next time you're listening to the radio, think about the type of things you'd say if you were on the radio and then blend it in with the disc jockey's style. You may be surprised at the reception you'd receive if you wrote a few pieces for them to use on the radio.

Disc jockeys are always on the lookout for good material to use on their shows. It's similar to all the great comedians you've seen who have writers supply them with their lines. These individuals are best at delivering the lines, but very often someone else has written the material for them. Why not you?

Another short writing option for you is the greeting card market. Did you know that nearly 50% of the first class mail market consists of greeting cards? Cards are not limited to birthdays and holidays any more. You name the event, there is a card for the occasion.

Three companies dominate the card market today, according to "Writer's Market". These companies are Hallmark, American Greetings and Gibson Greetings. They are your primary markets, although you may well find it easier to break in to one of the smaller card companies listed in publications like "Writer's Market" and magazines like "The Writer" and "Writer's Digest" which are available at the newsstand or your local library.

Women are the traditional card buyers by an overwhelming number. Visit a few card racks yourself to see the different styles under the various company names. This way you can find which style you feel most comfortable in pursuing and can direct your output at the proper distributor.

Card companies are always on the lookout for promising new material. Again, these are short pieces which require quick, snappy thoughts that tell the message clearly and rapidly. It's the same style as headline, bumper sticker and anecdotal type writing; and, if you're doing those successfully, greeting cards may be a good choice for you.

Each editor of a card company may prefer to see your submissions in a particular type of format. Once you've identified the companies you believe you can write for, send in a request for their writing and submission guidelines along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for their convenience. In so doing, you'll save yourself the trouble of submitting material outside of their usual format, which they'll discard.

Some like individual card ideas submitted separately while other prefer a list of ideas at one time. Typical categories of cards are:

1. ***Humorous***, either by written word or visual gag. These are exceedingly popular and ones that are difficult to write and therefore in demand constantly.
2. ***Traditional***, which is usually the sentimental type of verse constructed message. These are generally the longest pieces of writing, often poetic type verses.
3. ***Contemporary***, which is also humorous, dominated mostly by one-liners about modern society while also conveying the specific message - birthday, anniversary, holiday, etc.
4. ***Personal***, which most often is a blank card inside for the buyers to write their own message. The focus of your work is to come up with an appropriate picture or phrase (or both) on the front of the card.

Here are various reasons that cards are sent, to help channel your thoughts toward particular ideas that are easy for you to express:

### **Holidays**

New Year's Day

Father's Day

Valentine's Day

4th of July

St. Patrick's Day

Halloween

Passover

Thanksgiving

Easter

Hanukkah

Mother's Day

Christmas

### **Special Occasions**

Birthday

Anniversary

Belated Birthday

Graduation

Get Well

First Communion

New Baby

Confirmation

Congratulations

Bar Mitzvah

New Job

Engagement

Vacation/Trip

Retirement

Sympathy

Thank You

**General**

Friendship

Good-Bye

Missing You

Haven't Heard From You

Thinking of You

Sorry I Haven't Written

Don't forget that many of these categories have sub-categories with variations like "mother", "father", "niece", "nephew", "son-in-law", and so forth. Cards can also be from "the two of us", "your brother" and other people. There are even cards for single parents.

There are different types of card styles, too, like "pop-ups", children's cards and bawdy humor for adults only. Don't limit yourself. Experiment with all types of writing styles and themes. You'll eventually establish a comfort level and a knack for a particular category.

Bumper stickers, radio comedy bits and greeting cards. Think short and you may well be on your way to a successful freelance writing career.

## ***FROM FAMILY LIFE TO CHILDREN'S STORIES***

Earlier in this text, we suggested that your conversations with your children or younger relatives might make good short anecdotal tales for submission to outlets such as “Reader’s Digest”. There are many more children’s magazines which provide possibilities for this type of writing.

Children’s stories are not only the humorous recollection, but can be both fictional and non-fictional articles that may be easy to write because they are, again, from your PERSONAL EXPERIENCE! If you are a teacher, you probably have an endless source of material to put down on paper.

You can write about children or you can write to children for them to read. It all depends on your subject matter and your angle. If, for example, you’ve come up with a good method of getting your child to clean his or her room, this might make a good short article for a magazine like “Growing Parent” or “Christian Parenting Today”.

You may have a story about your child’s first date, which you can turn into an article about teens and dating that kids themselves might like to read in a magazine like “Seventeen” or “Teen”. Parents, too, might enjoy it, so you can try submitting it to both types of publications.

If you’re writing towards a teen audience, you’ll have to keep the story on a written level that your young readers can comprehend. There are easy ways to do this, by using no more than three syllable words and writing in short, sharp sentences and brief paragraphs. Simply reviewing spelling books for various age levels will help you develop a vocabulary list that will be useful when directing your piece at a specific audience/age-group level.

Writing for children should be done in a style that empathizes with them, as if it were written by someone their age. Don’t write like a parent! If you’re trying to get a message across, do it in a way another child might tell it.

Parent magazines are quite different and here you can write for an adult audience, although the simple, spare style will always work for you (and, quite often, the editor) as it is easy to read. Assume, as you would with children, that the parent needs even the most basic explanation. A common mistake writers make is to assume that a reader understands a particular subject on

some level already. Don't make this mistake! Explain yourself and assume the reader knows nothing. You're usually teaching when you write and repetition helpfully reinforces the subject matter or the specific key points you wish to illustrate. Assuming the reader is not conversant with the subject is your best bet.

Here are some possible magazines for submissions.

**PARENTAL: Aimed at the parents**

American Baby Magazine

475 Park Avenue South

New York, NY 10016

Christian Parenting Today

P.O. Box 3850

Sisters, OR 97759

Expecting

Gruner & Jahr USA Pub.

685 3rd Avenue

New York, NY 10017

Growing Parent

Dunn & Hargitt, Inc.

P.O. Box 1100

Lafayette, IN 47902

Home Education Magazine

P.O. Box 1083

Tonasket, WA 98855

Parenting Magazine

301 Howard Avenue, 17th Floor

San Francisco, CA 94105

Parents Care

P.O. Box 1563

Lancaster, CA 93539

Parents Magazine

685 3rd Avenue

New York, NY 10017

Today's Family

27 Empire Drive

St. Paul, MN 55103

Twins

P.O. Box 12045

Overland Park, KS 66212

## **CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES**

Businesship

Business Kids Suite 1080 E.

1300 I Street

Washington, DC 20005

Exploring Magazine

Boy Scouts of America

P.O. Box 152079

Irving, TX 75015

Guide

55 W. Oak Ridge Drive

Hagerstown, MD 21740

The New Era

50 E. North Temple

Salt Lake City, UT 84150

Keynoter

Key Club International

3636 Woodview Trace

Indianapolis, IN 46268

Magazine for Christian Youth

United Meth. Publ. House

201 8th Avenue S., Box 801

Nashville, TN 37202

Seventeen

850 3rd Avenue

New York, NY 10022

Teen Magazine

8490 Sunset Boulevard

Hollywood, CA 90069

Transcend

4 Daniels Farm Road

Suite 134

Trumbull, CT 06611

Youth Update

St. Anthony Mess. Press

1615 Republic Street

Cincinnati, OH 45210

## ***SELF-PUBLISHING FOR PROFIT***

Now that you've mastered the shorter forms of writing, perhaps you're ready to write a book-length work of fiction or non-fiction. If you've developed strong writing skills over the course of your writing for profit career, you will likely be able to master the discipline necessary to write a longer work.

The problems are more likely to lie with getting the book published. It is often easier to write a book today than to see it finally get published. Writers often see multiple numbers of rejections when submitting to book publishers. Some persist and do well like Richard Bach who survived more than fifteen rejections before getting "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" published. Many others simply give up.

There are other options, however. Getting a book published by a large New York firm is probably the least likely way to break into book publishing. Many of these houses are owned by large corporations today whose interest lies primarily with publishing blockbusters, books that can sell 50-100,000 copies in hard cover. Since few books by established authors do this, the beginner's chance in this market has virtually disappeared.

In addition, you need an agent in order to approach a large publisher like Random House or Doubleday. If you try to submit directly, your manuscript will likely lay unread. Some may even give you the courtesy of mailing it back. Still others will send you a postcard essentially saying, "Thanks, but no thanks".

The editorial director of the popular magazine, "Publisher's Weekly", believes that self-publishing is the best alternative for new writers to get a book out there for others to see. If an author is convinced of the quality of his or her book, and is receiving dozens of rejection letters, this editor suggests publishing the book yourself. Comparatively simple equipment, he says, can be used to turn out a reasonable facsimile of a finished book.

This establishes a writer as serious about one's work and can lead to publishers looking at the author's future manuscripts more closely. It always looks good to say you've been published, even if it is self-published.

Some self-publishing books have gone on to bigger and better things. “Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations,” a standard reference work now was, originally self-published by the author, as was the writer’s bible, “The Elements of Style”. They sold well; publishers noticed them and bought the rights to publish them in greater quantity.

If you decide to go ahead with self-publishing your book, you will have to be prepared to make an investment. It isn’t cheap to publish, but you can save on costs by doing as much work ahead of the printer as possible.

First, desk-top publishing software can often let you type set your own book yourself. Or, if not, you should try and type your book on a computer and furnish a typesetter with a disk. It will make it much easier, quicker and less expensive for the typesetter to actually lay the book out in its eventual published format.

Next, work with a graphic artist to design the cover. A photograph of you as author will likely suffice for the back cover copy.

Print your book in soft cover. It’s cheaper to print and thus you can keep your book priced lower for resale. This could improve the volume of your actual sales. The most popular book size is 5 x 8 inches. Depending on typeset size, there are usually 350-400 words per page. It is easy to fit this book on your shelf, in a briefcase, or in an overnight bag for airplane reading, thus making it a good size to market. Many original soft cover paperbacks are in this standard size.

Have the book perfect-bound on 60 pound offset paper. The text printing should be black. The cover should be in 2 colors while the cover stock should be 10 point coated, one side only.

Look for a printer who can print a book. Only a few of them can! Get at least three or four price quotes. The unit cost of each book will vary depending on the volume of copies you print. 5,000 books, for example, will have a much smaller per book cost than will printing of the 500 books. The reason is due to the high cost of setting the machine to print. Once the press is running, you simply pay for the paper and materials.

Don’t have 5,000 books printed, however, simply to save on your unit cost. If you don’t anticipate selling that many books, don’t order that many. Judge how many you think you can

sell and then have that number printed. You can always do a second printing cheaper than the first, since the set-up charges will not repeat unless you make changes to the book.

What price do you set for the book? Much depends on the market and your own costs in printing the book. Go down to your local bookstore and see what the range of prices are on books of your size and style (soft cover). If the average price is \$12.95, this will tell you what a competitive charge would be. Now, contrast that with the unit cost of your book which is the total printing, typesetting and graphic arts charges for your books divided by the number of copies. If your unit cost is, say, \$3.50 per book, you'd like to ideally charge about three or four times the cost on the open market, which would be around \$10.50 to \$14.00, for which the \$12.95 average price fits quite nicely.

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First up is the Copyrights Office. You should write to:

Register of Copyrights  
Copyrights Office  
Library of Congress  
Washington, DC 20599

Ask for the copyright registration forms and the booklet entitled "Copyright Basics". This will give you explicit instructions on copyrighting your material. Copyright protection now lasts for your lifetime plus fifty years.

While we're on the subject of copyrighting, you can also obtain a Library of Congress catalog card and number for your book. Libraries around the country often use this number to identify books and order them.

You can obtain information about this process by writing to:

The Registrar, CIP Division

Library of Congress  
Washington, DC 20540

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As a self-publisher, you will be assigned a number prefix which is part of the ISBN. Thereafter, for future publications, you will assign your own ISBN based on the pre-assigned codes you'll receive.

To get more information about this, write to:

ISBN Agency  
R.R. Bowker & Company  
205 E. 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10017

Ask specifically for the "ISBN System User's Manual" and the "ISBN Log Book" when contacting the ISBN Agency.

All of this work, including copyrighting, ISBNs and Library of Congress cataloging is crucial in establishing your book as a professional entry. You have a far better chance of having your work noticed if it is officially filed. Just because it's a self-published work doesn't mean it isn't a good book and worthy of attention. This work enhances your image and your potential as a serious writer.

Publishing yourself can be a rewarding experience and can launch a whole new career for you. If you like to write, book publishing can be a worthy goal.

## ***LISTING OF BOOK PUBLISHERS***

Here is a partial listing of book publishers to whom you could submit a manuscript or a book proposal. These are not the major publishers, who will only work through an agent. These are firms to which you can submit a book manuscript directly. For a larger listing, consult with the publications, "Writer's Market 1995" or "The Literary Marketplace", both of which are usually available at your local library.

Almar Press

4105 Marietta Drive

Vestal, NY 13850

The Benjamin Company, Inc.

21 Dupont Avenue

White Plains, NY 10605

Camino Books, Inc.

P.O. Box 59026

Philadelphia, PA 19102

Down East Books

P.O. Box 679

Camden, ME 04843

East Coast Publishing

P.O. Box 2829

Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

Donald I Fine, Inc.

19 W. 21st Street

New York, NY 10010

Gardner Press, Inc.

19 Union Square West

New York, NY 10003

Hancock House Publishers

1431 Harrison Avenue

Blaine, WA 98230

Imagine, Inc.

P.O. Box 9674

Pittsburgh, PA 15226

Intervarsity Press

P.O. Box 1400

Downers Grove, IL 10011

Kodansha International  
114 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10011

Madison Books  
4720 Boston Way  
Lanham, MD 20706

Paladin Press  
P.O. Box 1307  
Boulder, CO 80306

Perspectives Press  
P.O. Box 90318  
Indianapolis, IN 46290

Rutledge Hill Press  
513 3rd Avenue South  
Nashville, TN 37210

Sasquatch Books  
1931 2nd Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101

Ten Speed Press  
P.O. Box 7123  
Berkeley, CA 94707

Liberty Hall Press  
11 W. 19th Street, 3rd Floor  
New York, NY 10011

New Rivers Press  
420 N. 5th Street, Suite 910  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Pelican Publishing Company  
P.O. Box 189  
Gretna, LA 70053

Rainbow Books  
P.O. Box 430  
Highland City, FL 33846

St. Martin's Press  
175 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10010

Signature Books  
350 S. 400 East #G-4  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Walker and Company  
720 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10019

Remember to always request manuscript submission guidelines first. Send a request letter accompanied by a large mailing envelope, self-addressed and with at least three first class postage stamps on it.

Good luck!

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