THE CREATIVE WRITER IN YOU

Yesterday

i found
my voice

Today

i'm here
to shout
about
it

WRITERS ON WRITING

"What the finger writes, the soul can read."
Alice Walker

"Writing really helps you heal yourself."
Alice Walker

"Everybody writes badly sometime."
Toni Morrison

"A poem should not mean / But be."
"Ars Poetica."
Archibald MacLeish

"Tomorrow may be hell, but today was a good writing day, and on the good writing days, nothing else matters."
Neil Gaiman

"The skill of writing is to create a context in which other people can think."
Edwin Schlossberg

"The cure for writer's cramp is writer's block."
Inigo De Leon

"You must keep sending work out; you must never let a manuscript do nothing but eat its head off in a drawer. You send that work out again and again, while you're working on another one. If you have talent, you will receive some measure of success—but only if you persist."
Isaac Asimov

"Inspiration is wonderful when it happens, but the writer must develop an approach for the rest of the time...The wait is simply too long."
Leonard Bernstein

"And lo, though I walk through the valley of the orches, I shall fear no evil, for I know that the author can't kill me off for at least another three pages; no matter how stupid or trite I become, or he ruining the book."
Chuck von Rosbach

"A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people."
Thomas Mann

"Being a real writer means being able to do the work on a bad day."
Norman Mailer

"I write the way women have babies. You don't know it's going to be like that. If you did, there's no way you would go through with it."
Toni Morrison

INSIDE FAMOUS WRITERS' STUDIOS

Tora Nume Hurston, novelist and folklorist, wrote Their Eyes Were Watching God in seven weeks while she was in Haiti in 1933.

Emily Dickinson, poet, wrote notes on envelopes and pieces of paper, which she kept in a drawer.

Walter表彰, mystery writer, writes in the nude.

John Grisham, legal thriller writer, received over one hundred rejections before his first novel became a bestseller.

Playwright August Wilson writes on the backs of napkins at restaurants.

One of Amy Tan's college professors told her she would never make it as a writer.

1983 Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison reads her manuscripts about thirty-six times.
POETRY VERSUS PROSE

Poetry and prose differ from each other generally in the way they appear on the printed page and in their style and form, with poetry generally being in rhymed or unrhymed verse/stanza form and prose in paragraph form. Prose appears as it is read - from left to right, horizontally, while poetry is read line by line, vertically and horizontally, usually unrhyming the rhythm and rhyme. Both poetry and prose may appear in the vernacular.

POETRY

I Dream a World
Langston Hughes

I dream a world where man
No other man will laugh,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blinds our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind.
Of such I dream, my world!

in Just-
c.e. cummings

in Just-
spiring when the world is mus-

luscious the little
lame balloonman
whistles far and wee

and eddiesebb come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's

spring

and

the goat-footed
halfmoonMan
whistles

far

and

woo

the queen
old balloonman whistles
far and wee

Housecleaning
Nikki Giovanni
From Selected Poems of Nikki Giovanni (1996)

i always liked house cleaning

even as a child

i dug straightening

the cabinets

putting new paper on

the shelves

washing the refrigerator

inside out

and unfortunately this habit has

carried over and i find

i must remove you

from my life

CREATIVE WRITING TIPS
Contributed by Chris Bai and Chris Yew
From the Late Dr. O'Brien's Creative Writing Lectures

Drop the semicolon and replace it with a period.
It's okay to contract.
Have a catchy title.
The first line or sentence should hook the reader.
It's okay to use bad grammar in the dialogue of your script in order to make a character's speech realistically represent him or her.
Use more meat, less fluff; that is, create balance in your writing: the meat is the details, concrete nouns, verbs, story, etc. The bread crumbs are clever phrases, exposition, etc. It takes the right amount of meat and bread crumbs to make a meatloaf. Overbalance either, and it becomes just meat or just loaf.
Be a good, informed, dedicated reader as a means of being a good writer.
Always, always, read what you want to write.
Find out what the current trends are, so your own writing style is not outdated or so you can challenge current conventions.

HOW TO WRITE GOOD POETRY
By Reginald Shepherd
Visiting Assistant Professor of Creative Writing, Department of English
University of West Florida

The first step to writing good poetry is reading poetry as much and as widely as you can, both older poetry and contemporary poetry. You can't expect others to want to read your poetry if you don't read poetry, and more is to be learned about writing poetry from other poems than from a thousand handbooks. Read poems, think about them, figure out how they work, and use what you have learned in your own poems.

The second step to writing good poetry is actually writing. As in any other endeavor, the best way to improve as a writer is to practice constantly. Write all the time; give yourself exercises and assignments. Write when you feel like writing and when you don't. Even if what you come up with isn't always wonderful, it can provide raw material for later use.

The third step to writing good poetry is revising. Half or more of writing is rewriting. Very little that one writes is going to come out perfectly, or even close to perfect, in the first draft. You have to be willing to rework and polish what you've written, sometimes to the point of giving up your initial idea if the poem has gone in a different direction than you had originally intended.

When writing poems, show; don't tell. Don't explain what you mean; find concrete objects and particular language that will embody and exact what you want to convey. Think of the poem as an experience that you want the reader to have: when we have an experience, we know what happened, even if we don't know what the experience "means." In life, our thoughts and feelings arise out of our experiences. So, too, in poems, statements and abstractions should be situated in concrete contexts and specific language.

Because poems tend to be short and highly condensed, every word in a poem counts. There's no room for wasted words. Don't use words that don't actively contribute to the effect of the poem; everything is there for a reason.

A heightened sense of how words and phrases sound, and of how sound makes sense, is something that distinguishes poetry from prose. Poetry should have its own rhythm, an audible shape that takes the reader from the beginning of the poem to the end. The music of language is crucial to all good poems.

If you take this advice to heart, you will be well on your way to writing good poems, and the experience that you gain will improve all your writing.
PROSE

This is not an important book. It is only the story of a strong woman, a tortured man and three sons who lived hemmed in by thin cotton and ragged history in northeastern Alabama, in a time when blacks and whites found reason to hate each other and a whole lot of people could not stand themselves.

From the Prologue of
All Over But the Shoutin' 
A Memoir by Rick Bragg (1997)

He reproached his wife with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. If it was not a mother's place to look after children, whose on earth was it? He himself had his hands full with his brokerage business. He could not be in two places at once, making a living for his family on the street and staying at home to see that no harm befell them. He talked in a monotonous, insistent way.

From The Awakening
A Novel by Kate Chopin (1899)

WRITER CREDIBILITY

You undermine your own credibility when you submit a letter (such as the one below) or manuscript laced with errors.

I have redefined the word ‘Writing’ in my new book ‘Writing With Style’. And I wanted to enlist the help of the writing lab to help me to get the attention of websters dictionary to imprint the revised version into their publications worldwide. This is a time when creative writers have considerable influence and I think it would be wise to change a few needed things such as this.

Resend, please:
Jane Err

PLAYS

Plays are presented in dialogue format.

Mama (still quietly). Walter, what is the matter with you?
Walter. Matter with me? Ain’t nothing the matter with me!
Mama: Yes there is. Something eating you up like a crazy man. Something more than me not giving you this money. The past few years I been watching it happen to you. You get all nervous acting and kind of wild in the eyes – (Walter jumps up impatiently at her words) - I said sit there now. I’m talking to you!
Walter. Mama – I don’t need no nagging at me today.

From A Raisin in the Sun (1959)
A Play by Lorraine Hansberry

Writing requires devotion and a bit of arrogance.
–Suzi Cmescheta, p. 1003

Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.
–Audre Lorde

STANDARD EDITING SYMBOLS

Symbol | Explanation of Meaning | Example of Use
---|---|---
\* | Insert letters or words at point indicated | six elements
\+ | Delete: Eliminate words or punctuation indicated | temperature
\- | Close up, no space | mockup
\| | Delete and close up | nondestructible
\# | Restore elements deleted, or retain elements indicated. | The power was
\| | Insert space | U 2.0 Mo
\| | Transpose | Hike increase of power
\| | Make lower case | Sodium Reactor
\| | Make upper case (capitalize) | Janet Greyson
\| | Initial caps |เข้า CAPS
\| | Italicize (underscore in typewriter composition) | اند \*ital \*
\| | Move right to the position indicated | The final design——
\| | Move left to the position indicated | There has been a word
\| | Raise to the position indicated | theWord
\| | Lower to the position indicated | completed. Work has
\| | New paragraph | test look
\| | Insert period | One run has
to determine
\| | Move to point indicated | \* 35-inches pipes
\| | Write out or abbreviate | \* Heading[100%]0
\| | Center | 100% [X]
\| | Superscript |
THE PUBLISHING PROCESS: FROM WRITING TO PRINTING
By Tonja Guedagnoli
tagued@hotmail.com

What Did I Write?
- Novel
- Short Story
- Article
- Poem
- Screenplay
- Research Piece
- List
- Nonfiction
- Fiction
- Autobiography
- Biography
- Educational Document
- Religious Document
- Children's Story
- Novelt Book
- Textbook

Where Do I Find Publishers?
- Books
  - Literary Marketplace (LMP) - It's HUGE: go to the library!
- Bookstores
  - Look for books similar to yours. Who published them?
- Internet
  - Freensl, freelancemagazine.com
  - authorlink.com
  - everywriter.com
  - literarymarketplace.com
- Magazines
  - The Writer
  - Writer's Digest
  - Publisher's Weekly

Create a List of Publications for Your Manuscript
- Which publishers want to publish your genre?
- Do they accept unsolicited/unsolicited material?
- Make a list of addresses, phone numbers, web addresses, and contact names, if possible.
- Check websites for submission guidelines.
- Look at books the publishers have done to see if yours could fit into their line.
- Narrow down list by deleting those whose products are very different from yours.

Submission Guidelines
Guidelines vary but most publishers have similar requests:
- Use 1½ margins around 8 1/2" x 11" WHITE paper.
- Type and double space.
- Print on only ONE side of paper.
- Check what publishers will accept (i.e., full manuscript, one chapter, query letter only, sample with cover letter, etc.)
- On the left top side of first page, include your name, address, email, and phone number.
- On the right top side of first page, include word count.
- Include name, title, and page number on each page.
- Check binding requests (some publishers say staple; others say don't).
- Include SASE

Sample First Page
Ira Goodwin
P.O. Box 1234
Panama City, FL 32401
author@hotmail.com
(850) 555-5555

Word Count: 754

Sample Cover Letter
Dear Editor:

Have you ever heard animals talk to each other? Did you ever wonder what they are saying?
I am pleased to submit the enclosed manuscript, "Chitter Chatter" (150 words), for your review. It is a story about animals, and it invites the reader to understand what some animals may be chattering about.

Because your company indicates an interest in publishing animal stories for children, I have chosen to submit my manuscript to you. I am no stranger to the world of publishing. With a B.A. in English and an M.S. degree in education, I worked as an editor for an educational publishing company for four years. In that time, I received editorial credit in over 25 books. When my company relocated, I began working as a freelance editor and recently started writing children's stories.

Should you be interested in publishing "Chitter Chatter," I would be happy to work with your editorial staff on any revisions as required. Please contact me via phone at (850) 555-1234 or by email at tagued@hotmail.com if you'd like to discuss my story or my qualifications.

Sincerely,

Title of Your Story
by
Your Name

Sample Manuscript Page

Title of your manuscript
Last Name: Page #: 

Make sure the text of your manuscript is typed using a regular type and size font such as Times Roman or Courier (12 pt.).

Put your title, last name, and page number at the top of each page as shown above. Most companies prefer a manuscript that is entirely double spaced.

Getting My Manuscript Ready
DO:
- Change manuscript to fit submission guidelines.
- Prepare SASEs.
- Find out correct postage (esr. if mailing complete MS).
- Keep track of the who's, where's and who's.
- Send out your manuscript with no heart strings attached.

DON'T:
- Use loud colored paper/envelopes.
- Stress out if you don't have a contract name.
- Send to a company which doesn't publish your genre.
- Send to a company which doesn't accept unsolicited material.
- Include someone's illustrations.
- Include your resume.
- Say your family members or friends loved your story (in your cover letter).

A Cover Letter
- Write a one-page letter using business letter format.
- Grab interest in the first paragraph.
- Give the title, word count, and brief synopsis in the second paragraph.
- Tell about your qualifications/previous publishing credits in second paragraph.
- Give contact information in the third paragraph.
GETTING STARTED
By Diane Gaines Jackson
Author and Retired English Professor, Pensacola Junior College

Become a friend of the post office, copy shop, and office supply store. You'll be spending a lot of time at these places.

Save everything on disk and keep a hard copy.

Keep a supply of large envelopes.

Do these statements sound familiar to you? If so, you have probably already begun the creative writing and publishing process.

If this is your first time getting started, then you should get a copy of Writer's Market for a beginning or seasoned writer. It is a large book that provides information on writing, samples letters, a list of agents, a list of publishers, etc.

Once you get started and now have a manuscript, determine what the publishing company's guidelines for submission are.

Flirt your manuscript, or get a professional to edit it for you. Regardless of the latter, be sure to check on the legitimacy of agencies and publishers who claim to have expertise in editing. Write a query letter which lists your potential agent and publisher will accept.

Follow the publisher's guidelines to the letter. If you don't, your manuscript will likely be rejected.

Send the query letter along with your manuscript (according to the publisher's guidelines) and a SASE - a self-addressed, stamped envelope - to the publisher.

Meet publishing houses do not tell you about how to package your manuscript. But they prefer that you not fold, staple, or staple it. For very large manuscripts, you can use a rubber band. If the publisher accepts electronic copies, then follow the specifications for electronic submissions.

The principal keys to getting started are doing the necessary research, submitting, specified paperwork in the required format, and using common sense.

Finally, don't expect that this publishing venture is going to make you rich. In fact, the process can prove to be rather costly because of the numerous expenses incurred from generating and sending manuscripts.

Meet Sally Q., Successful Writer by Shannon Lord

Sally Q., a writer and teacher, can all learn from Sally. This is how Sally became a writer.

- Sally made up her mind that she would never know if she could do what she loved unless she took a chance. She took a job writing as a lawyer.
- Sally took writing classes. She learned how to structure a story, different point of view, writing to different magazines and periodicals. She also learned grammar and punctuation.
- Sally became a student at the latest Writer's Market and read it from cover to cover.
- Sally did research and found several small publishers that were interested in her work and she submitted her work to them.
- Sally submitted the manuscripts of her publications by following the writer's guidelines on the publications' Web sites or in the publications themselves.
- Sally sent query letters to these editors along with some samples of her writing.
- Sally told the editors. She sent a message for them, letting them know that she had sent an email and that if they did not receive it, could they let her know so she could send it again? If they had not received it, she had to keep from repeating the same mistake.
- Sally wanted to hear back from the editors. Meanwhile, she entered contests from other small publications she found in Writer's Market.
- Sally sent a cover letter from a local editor, a 500-word short story about a festival in her area. The editor offered to pay a $100 fee. Knowing that everyone has to start somewhere, Sally accepted.
- Sally sent out more queries to editors of local magazines and newspapers, this time attaching a pot of her print story, "
- Sally received more money from other editors she had already received.
- Sally began submitting queries to bigger publishing companies, who would now look at her work because she had been published previously.
- Sally now works regularly as a freelance editor.
- Sally has decided to get an agent and go after the big-time popular national magazines for book publishing houses. Or, she may apply to work at homes for a newspaper.
- Sally is happy.

(Article continued on p. 2)
THE CREATIVE WRITER'S DICTIONARY
GLOSSARY OF CREATIVE WRITING AND PUBLISHING TERMS

Some paraphrased definitions taken from American Heritage Dictionary.
Quoted definitions from A Handbook to Literature, Ninth Edition, by William Harmon
Compiled by Mamie Webb Hixon and D.P. Watkins III

academic writing - writing aimed toward a knowledgeable readership, typically in a scholastic arena

anthology - a book that consists of essays, stories, or poems by different authors

agent - a person who aids the writer with legal aspects of the profession and helps to find a publisher for the writer's manuscript

authorial license - the writer's right to create regardless of realism or accuracy; liberties with the normal rules of fact, style, or grammar taken by a writer in order to achieve a particular effect (See poetic license)

autobiography - a book about someone's life authored by that person

bar code - information (a sequence of numbers and vertical lines identifying a publication and often its price) that is depicted visually and deciphered by machines; required by most bookstores of books to be sold

biography - a book about someone's life

blank verse - unrhymed poetry that has a regular rhythm and line length

business writing - writing which may be composed for either internal or external usage, typically in a business arena

canon - "...the accepted list of books by any author, such as Shakespeare... More recently, the idea of a general literary canon has received attention from a critical viewpoint, and the process of canon-formation has been interpreted as the work of one person of society to make its own labor central and to reduce the work of others to marginal or trivial status outside the canon" (A Handbook to Literature 77)

capbook - presently refers to low-budget, hardcover collections of writings (poems, ballads, or stories), many times created by individuals expressly for their work

classic - "a piece of literature that by common consent has achieved a recognized superior status in literary history; also an author of similar standing" (A Handbook to Literature 96)

coleaphon - insignia of a publisher which may appear at the front or back of a book (or at the end of a shorter work - like a short story - within a larger work), also sometimes refers to more in-depth publication information

copy editor - one who is responsible for ensuring that a text conforms to publication needs and is free of errors

copyright - the legal right of authors or publishers to control the use and reproduction of their original works; writers and publishers use this symbol to indicate that the material is copyrighted

creative nonfiction - nonfiction writing which may follow the conventions of fiction writing in order to spark reader interest

creative writing - the writing of fiction, poetry, or drama; writing composed of content chosen for its contribution to a greater effect; each element in creative writing is present because it serves a purpose in the work

dialogue - the speech between and among the characters of a literary work

director - the person who may be involved in a variety of tasks related to book publishing, for example recruiting authors and compiling anthologies

drama - prose work of varying lengths which discusses a topic

discipline - writing comprised of imagined elements - people and events; narrative writing drawn from imagination rather than from history or fact, and is most frequently associated with novels and short stories

free verse - verse without a fixed metrical pattern, usually having unrhymed lines of varying length

galleys - a first test copy of a publication on which corrections are marked; a proof done before type has been split into individual pages

genre - a specific type of art with its unique traits based on form, style, or subject matter; for instance, poetry and fiction are genres; and mysteries, legal thrillers, and science fiction are genres of fiction

haiku - three-lined, unrhymed poem composed of 5, 7, and 5 syllables

historical narrative - a written account of history organized chronologically

ISBN number - the ten-digit International Standard Book Number (usually found on the back cover of a book) which identifies books on the commercial market; must be acquired at the time of publication

journalistic writing - writing focused on the unique concerns of journalistic work such as who, why, where, and how

ms, MS, or manuscript - an author's text for a book or other piece of written work as it is submitted for publication

market - to offer something - your publication - for sale, or sell something, especially by using advertising and other techniques to attract buyers

memoir - a type of biography which typically focuses solely on specific episodes from a person's life

mystery - a novel that makes great use of suspense, especially about an unsolved crime

narrative - a literary work whose aim is to tell a story

Nobel Prize for Literature - "The highest honor in the literary world. The Swedish chemist and engineer Alfred Bernhard Nobel (1833-1896) willed the income from practically his entire estate for the establishment of annual prizes in literature and other fields. The Nobel Prize for Literature rewards a recipient's total career. Many great writers have received it, and many just as great have not. The 2002 prize was reported to carry an award of about $1.1 million" (A Handbook to Literature 330)

nonfiction - writing composed of facts instead of imaginative elements

novel - lengthy fictional prose work of fiction
**perfect binding** - a binding created by trimming pages at the bound edge and giving them a cover as opposed to stitching them uncut; binding used in softback and handbook books

**play** - A literary composition of any length, ordinarily written to be performed by actors who impersonate the characters, speak the dialogue, and enact the appropriate actions. A play usually but not always assumes that an audience will be on a stage before an audience" (A Handbook to Literature 390).

**playwright** - somebody who writes plays

**plot** - the sequence of events in a novel or play

**poet laureate** - established in the seventeenth century in England (John Dryden was the first officially appointed one) and in the United States in 1986, an appointee serving for a renewable one-year term; this title is assigned to a poet regarded for his or her poetic distinction. Up to 1998, the Poets Laureate of the United States had been Robert Penn Warren, Richard Wilbur, Howard Nemerov, Mark Strand, Joseph Bruchac, and Yusef Komunyakaa (A Handbook to Literature 390).

**poetic license** - a poet’s freedom to break conventions and defy rules in order to achieve an artistic effect: “the privilege, sometimes claimed by poets, of departing from normal order, diction, rhyme, or pronunciation [or even spelling]” (A Handbook to Literature 390).

**poetry** - writing which uses specific words for their rhythmic, aesthetic, and artistic qualities, may involve meter and rhyme but is often unrhymed

**popular literature** - writing in one of the commercially viable modes, especially prose fiction. “This literature is valued on a strictly quantitative basis: number of copies sold. It is both creature and carrier of popular taste, and it may be a more reliable index of what the majority of people really have on their minds” (Handbook to Literature 394).

**print run** - term referring to the printing of multiple copies of a book during one publishing cycle

**proofreader** - one who peruses a text in order to find and eliminate errors

**prose** - writing which is associated with the ordinary manuscript (a series of paragraphs) and is not limited by meter, rhyme, or rhythmic requirements; in its broadest sense, “this term is applied to all forms of written or spoken expression not having a regular rhythmic pattern” (A Handbook to Literature 406).

**prospectus** - usually a document detailing the principal characteristics of a publication and presented to a publisher for consideration

**publisher** - company or person who publishes a printed work

**Pulitzer Prize for Literature** - “Annual prize for literature, awarded annually since 1917 by the School of Journalism and the Board of Trustees of Columbia University. The prizes are supported by a bequest from Joseph Pulitzer. An Advisory Board selects works published in the United States during the preceding year and recommends recipients to the Board of Trustees, who make the awards... Six awards are given for books: novel, play, American history, biography or autobiography, verse, and general nonfiction. Pulitzer Prize recipients have included Willa Cather, Pearl Buck, Margaret Mitchell, John Steinbeck, Robert Penn Warren, Ernest Hemingway, Harper Lee, Soulil Bowell, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, John Updike, and Philip Roth for fiction; Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, Archibald MacLeish, Carl Shapira, Dwelldon Drooks, Wallace Stevens, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Rita Dove, Yusef Komunyakaa, and Mark Strand for poetry; and Eugene O'Neill, Robert Sherwood, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, August Wilson, Neil Simon, Horton Foote, and Susan-Lori Parks for drama” (A Handbook to Literature 410-411. 013-020).

**query letter** - a letter in which the prospective author inquires as to whether or not an editor will be interested in examining or publishing a manuscript

**reviewer** - the person who reviews manuscripts and sometimes creates written reviews

**royalty** - money paid to the creator of a work of art for the use of his/her art

**SASE** - self-addressed, stamped envelope

**sci-fi** - a form of fiction, usually set in the future, that deals with scientific and technological developments and contact with other worlds

**short story** - a work of prose fiction that is shorter than a novel

**sonnet** - a poem of 14 lines which conforms to various metrical and poetic conventions

**synopsis** - a condensed version of a text, usually a summary of the plot of a novel

**verbalia** - the everyday language of people as opposed to official or formal language

**vignette** - a short, descriptive piece of literary writing

**writer’s block** - an inability on the part of a writer to start a new piece of writing or continue an existing one

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**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is academic dishonesty—willfully copying someone else’s work without acknowledging the source(s) or pretending that the work of a "ghost writer" is your own. Plagiarism, especially copying born of intent to deceive, is a very serious offense; and publishing companies have stringent policies for handling offenders.

Do not submit for publication something written by another person, or a portion of a written work that has been copied from a book, newspaper, magazine, or journal, or a work downloaded from a paper mailing website.

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**Copyright Law**

*Copyright law restricts the reproduction, public display, and distribution of original works of creative expression, such as books, music, and art.*

*Copying or distributing the material, whole or in part, may be considered an infringement of copyright. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 makes it an offense to reproduce, copy, or modify a copyrighted work without the owner’s permission.*

*Be sure to properly reference all materials that you use in your work. Using the proper references will help to prevent any legal issues.*

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GETTING PUBLISHED
(Continued from page 5)
By Shannon Lord
Editor, Ballinger Publishing Company

*Sally did not hand out the editor. She did not go to his or her office and demand to see him or her or call the editor daily. These days, most editors prefer a query letter sent via email with samples attached.

**Query letter. This can be the body of the email. Keep it short! After 3 paragraphs, editors put it aside. Be friendly and concise. Tell what you want to write and why you should be the one to write it. Give context information. If you do not have a certain topic you are selling to the editor, simply let the editor know that you are a local freelance and are available for assignments. Letting the editor know your areas of interest or expertise also helps. For instance, if you were a business minor, the editor would think of you first when assigning business-related stories.

*Samples: Always attach samples! If you’ve had works printed, send those. If not, it is acceptable to send short pieces, two at the most, that have not been printed. The editor just wants to see if your writing is solid. Attach samples as .rtf files.

**pdf: When your stories are printed, request a .pdf from the publisher. If this is not possible, scan the hard copy into your computer and make a .pdf (using Adobe Acrobat). That way, editors can read your story in its layout.

Fiction writers, including short story writers, poets and novelists, journalists who wish to write for newspapers, and other non-fiction writers, those that prefer magazine writing for instance, can all use these basic principles to begin or further their career.

BREAKING ALL THE RULES!
An Illicit Guide to Getting Published (for Beginning Writers)
By Regina Sakalarios-Rogers
Adjunct Professor of Creative Writing, University of West Florida

Any good writer’s resource or guide to publishing will give you the polite rules to getting published, those that editors of magazines and journals want you to follow. Read these rules so that you recognize which can and should be broken. The current publishing market is so competitive that adhering strictly to these polite rules can three beginning writers right out of the race. There are three of these polite rules that you can generally break in safety.

One of the polite rules is to always read the magazine or journal to which you want to submit your best (and only your best) creative work. Instead, here’s what you do read the publishing guidelines carefully from the publication’s website, from the back of a Writer’s Market, or a Writer’s Digest or Poets and Writers or The Writer’s Chronicle or one of the multitude of publications for writers that are out there. The best place for beginning writers to get published is on the Internet. There is a webcine conflation on the Internet, and many print publishers have awakins as well. If you are hesitant to break the road before you submit a road, then the web is the best way to go.

The next polite rule you can break is the no simultaneous submissions request. Do it anyway. How are they going to know? The simultaneous submission is the beginning writer’s best weapon. You have a story, you love the story, it is the best thing you have ever written, so naturally you want to give that story the best possible chance for publication. Send it to as many publications you can reasonably keep track of, the worst thing you can do is simultaneously submit the same work to the same publication. They’ll never know, unless of course you are lucky enough to have written the world’s greatest story and all ten of the publications you have submitted to want your work. In that case, rejoice! You are in demand.

The final polite rule you can safely break is the cover letter rule. Unless a publication’s guidelines specifically request a cover letter, then you do not have to write one. They do not have some mystical power to sway the editor to love your work; only your work can do that. This cover letter rule is just that writer’s reluctance to promote. It indices professionalism, but professionalism doesn’t make up for substandard or unexciting or sloppy writing, so spend the time you want to spend on polite cover letters on your writing instead.

The breakable rules are out of the way now, so here is a point-by-point guide to follow for giving your work the best possible chance at getting past an editor and into publication:

1. Do your research. Find the most suitable publication for your work. Look at the calls for submissions in the back of writer’s magazines or in the Writer’s Market or online.

2. Read the guidelines carefully. Don’t submit work that a publication’s editor specifically states he or she will not read.

3. Send out as many copies of your work to as many places as possible. Don’t limit your chances by sending one poem to one publication, send it to as many as you can.

4. Keep track of your submissions. Devise a system of keeping track of where you have submitted your work. This way you know where it is and how long it has been out. If a story is turned down by one publication, send it to another until you get it published.

5. Don’t leave your work in limbo. Just because you have sent your poem out doesn’t mean you can’t keep working on it. Very few editors have the time to comment on how to improve a work they have turned down. Don’t wait on this kind of feedback.


7. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). No SASE, no way for the editor to contact you.

8. Read.

9. Write, Write, Write. Write something every day.

10. Do not get discouraged. Be confident.

Now you are ready to creatively market your work — go break some rules!

AGENTS
By Diane Gaines Jackson
Author and Retired English Professor, Pensacola Junior College

Your agent is the person who will do your submissions for you. Searching for an agent is a job within itself, but if you find a good agent, the hours spent will be well worth your time. Start with the same source you used for locating names of publishers: Writer’s Market Plus. With poetry, you can submit straight to the publisher, but with novels, it is best to get an agent because most publishers won’t accept unagented materials.

Your agent is not the same person as your editor, though your agent will likely give you editorial suggestions. You should edit your manuscript (or get it edited) before you send it to an agent.

Your agent is not necessarily someone you’ll meet face to face, but a person with whom you’ll be in constant contact; therefore, he or she should be someone with whom you can communicate comfortably.

Your agent will receive a percentage of your earnings when she or he is successful in getting your book published. Remember, your agent works FOR YOU.
SELF-PUBLISHING: WRITE FROM YOUR HEART, EDIT FROM YOUR HEAD
By Melodye Neal, Author of Vanilla Syrup, the Flavors of Life
A Book of Poems

As a self-published author, I am often approached by people who tell me that they have always wanted to write a book. My initial response is to begin inquiring about where they are in the process of making their publishing dreams a reality. More often than not, I will get the response: "Well, I have pages and pages of manuscript."

Also, I have discovered poets who have notebooks filled with poems. In reality, they have written a book.

What the person really wants to know is "How do I publish my work?" The following steps will get you from the notebook to the book signing.

1. Writing Skills: In order for you to write a book, sometimes "Less can mean more." The less writing talent you have, the better writing you do. Little or no writing experience can easily result in your writing an outstanding book. If you rely too heavily on professional skills, you are going to waste too much time correcting errors instead of actually writing. My first advice to anyone who wants to write a book is simply: "Write, Write, Write. It is important at this stage, but to worry about spelling, punctuation, or format—where one paragraph ends or begins. This technique will free you from trying to achieve perfection, and you will find that you already have what it takes to write... honestly."

Ok, say it with me: "I write from my heart and edit from my head."

2. Time: Let's pretend. As busy professionals, we don't have many spare moments; time is at a premium. You've probably been told that it takes years to write a good book. This statement is not necessarily true. Zora Neale Hurston wrote Their Eyes Were Watching God in seven weeks. Condition yourself to work at Level Seven on a daily basis. The formula is simple: A Level One is sitting on the sofa daydreaming about transforming your manuscript in the drawer into a bestseller. A level Ten is being too overwhelmed to get anything accomplished. A Level Seven is getting at least one thing done every day toward completing your book. Set a goal to write the dedication page one day, number the pages, or edit a chapter. How useful is this technique? My company is Level Seven Publishing.

3. Editing: This step will take the greatest amount of time. This is the point where you need to get assistance. There are several layers to editing the book. The first steps are as easy as pressing the spell check or grammar check button. Next, have a colleague or friends read your manuscript for understanding and clarity. As a writer, you may think that the message you are trying to convey is clear, but a reader may need more clarification. Finally, be prepared to hire a professional to complete the final stage of the editing process. An editor working from a publishing company can charge up to $300.00 per page, so this stage is a good time to do some networking.

4. Layout and Design: This is not the stage to express creativity. You want to produce a product that will be marketable. Visit a local library or bookstore, or browse through your personal collection for books of a similar genre or with a similar subject matter. Pay close attention to the layout as well as crown design. What kind of font is used? Is the book illustrated? Does it have an introduction, dedication page, or a preface?

5. Printing: Selecting a printing company will be determined by your needs. Some writers want to maintain a hands-on approach. Therefore, they might seek out a local printing company. If price is a factor, chances are you will have to select the service of a larger company in another area. Get recommendations from other self-published authors in your area.

6. Patience: You must have patience, patience, patience. The more I live and publish, the more I realize that it is time for something to happen... It Does.

5. Marketing: How to market your book is another article.

"Write when you write, revise when you revise. Never mash the two.

--Author Unknown

"And, I believe, was a woman."

--Virginia Woolf

MARKETING YOUR OWN BOOK
By Memie Webb Hixon
Writing Lab Director and Author

Popular fiction writer Terry McMullen became a "novel" sensation in 1987 with the publication of her first book, Mama.

Unlike many prolific writers of our time who allow their agents and publishers to get the word out about their works, Terry, according to media sources, marketed her own books by writing letters to bookstores and black organizations and universities asking them to promote her book. "This unique marketing approach proved highly successful, McMullen received several offers for book readings, and six weeks after Mama was published, it went into its third printing" (http://www.bleeckerstreetmkt.com/biography/biography.asp?bookindex=168&category=artMakers). Terry McMullen had something marketable—"it didn't make Bleecker's Catalog and probably wouldn't become a classic, but it had mass appeal and became a bestseller. Your book may not make the New York Times bestseller list or Bleecker's Catalog, but assuming that your book meets acceptable criteria and is well written, carefully edited, and reputable published, you can make your book marketable. Furthermore, you can market your book yourself, for you are your best salesperson and customer.

Particularly if you self-publish or if you use a vanity press, you'll want to know how to sell your product.

First, you must have a good product to market. Your hardback, Oderen books. As an author, if you have written a book that the content of that book should reflect the fact that you have read several other books— from popular fiction to classics to textbooks. Your books should be professionally typeset, formatted, and printed, not a homemade, unbound, stapled or stapled set of fifty pages or more that you are selling a book. Professional printers and publishers provide this service in the form of hardback and softback (paperback) covers and perfect binding. Keep the "Oprah Factor" in mind—what if you want to send your book to Oprah's Book Club staff for consideration? Just look at the presentation and visual quality of not only Oprah's but also books that line the shelves of locally or nation books and franchised booksellers such as Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, and Borders.

• Make contact with your local bookstores about their store's policy for selling books by local authors; then complete the necessary paperwork to start this process, which usually requires you to have a barcode as well as an ISBN number for your book. Provide the bookstore with an examination copy of your book. I strongly recommend that you initiate the request in person, usually through the store's Events Coordinator, who typically might set up a book signing for you.

• Request a book signing, particularly at neighborhood bookstores, where you’re likely to get the support of your own community, even if your book never receives national recognition.

• Be willing to provide individuals, organizations, and institutions with complimentary examination copies of your publication with a view toward someone in one of these groups advertising your book by word of mouth.

• Contact your local media, including print and broadcast media, about publicizing the release of your new publication. Give them an examination copy too. Along with an examination copy (free, of course), you may want to give the television station or radio station a copy of your media profile, which typically includes your resume focusing on your writing and publications, samples of your writing, and copies of articles previously released about you (articles about your writing or publications).

• Your book may not qualify as a PSA—public service announcement—so be prepared to incur expenses associated with advertising.

• Seek endorsements or praise statements from professionals who have read your book and find merit in it. If these statements are not printed in the book or on its back cover, then include them in an insert (a letter or flyer) accompanying each book.
HEAVEN IS A WRITING RETREAT
(If You Are a Writer)
By Rosalind Fisher
Instructor, Department of Sociology, and Writer

I have had the opportunity to attend writing residencies in four different states. A writing residency is a gift for a writer who receives one. It is the gift of time and space to create. Each of the residencies I attended provided wonderful accommodations, wonderful meals, privacy, and camaraderie with other writers and in some cases, artists as well.

My favorite residency was at Hedgebrook, which is a retreat for women writers only. It was my favorite because I am a tree lover. Hedgebrook is located on Whidbey Island in Washington State, on a working farm, among some of America’s most beautiful trees.

Each resident of Hedgebrook is assigned to her own cottage with a loft bedroom, a small combination living room-kitchen area, and a writing area. Each afternoon, lunch is delivered to each resident’s cottage in a basket. Based on a list of preferences she has provided the staff, dinner is a communal affair in the big red farm house where all the writers gather and share whatever they wish to share about their work and life. There is always good conversation and good food.

Gloria Steinem has long been one of my heroes, so, as you can imagine, I almost faint when I realized that my third week residency would overlap one week of Gloria Steinem’s stay and two weeks of Hattie Gossett’s residency. Each of these women has been a voice against sexism and racism in America.

It was my pleasure to spend evenings talking with and listening to them and their work.

The grounds at Hedgebrook are so beautiful, private, and safe until, in order to get up early and write all day until my heart was content. I felt like a goddess of words. While I was at Hedgebrook, where my talent and creativity were appreciated and validated.

You can have a similar experience to bring out the creative writer in you. Here are some places you might want to apply to. Each of these retreats accepts both emerging and experienced writers after a competitive screening process.

The Millay Colony of the Arts (The deadline for residency in 2005 will be Oct. 1, 2005)
P.O. Box 3
Austerlitz, NY 12017

Writer’s Colony at Dairy Hollow
501 Spring Street
Eureka Springs, AR 72632
479-753-4444
email: director@dairyhollow.org

Hedgebrook (The application deadline for residency in 2005 is Oct. 1, 2005)
Writers in Residence Program
219/ Millman Road
Lunigley, WA 98260

The Anderson Center at Tower View
Application of Residencies
P.O. Box 456
Red Wing, MN 55068
651-388-2003
Email: info@andersoncenter.com Website: www.andersoncenter.org

If you are a writer who would like to experience the feeling of being a god or goddess of words in a kingdom built just for you, the application process usually involves completing a form, paying a small fee, attaching samples of your work, and soliciting a couple of well-chosen reference letters. So apply - nothing beats a failure but a try, and the rewards are heavenly.

I am a writer perhaps because I am not a talker.
—Donaldwyn Brooks
A FEW "QUICK" TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME WRITERS OF SHORT FICTION
By Doug Munu
Creative Writing Major, Writing Lab Assistant, UWF

I was once a first-time writer attending UWF, and the following tips were at one time or another presented to me in writing workshops by peers and professors, explicitly or otherwise:

- Emulation. If you've ever looked through a shelf of books on writing, it might occur to you that they appear more like anthologies than textbooks. The reason for this is that there is a consensus in the writing community that good writing is often developed through emulation. That is, a good writer's strength is often evident in a foundation of what he/she read.

Consider your own bookshelf before you start writing. Whose writing do you really appreciate? What have you read that is in the same style or genre as the writing you wish to write? These are helpful starting points for any first-time writer.

- Avoid Broad Strokes. Some ideas don't fit seamlessly into every medium. When the adaptation of Tolkien's The Return of the King arrived in movie theaters, the result was right around three hours, and elements of the book were still excised from the film. Now imagine transposing the novel into a short story of 5 to 7 pages. You'd end up with a synopsis rather than a short story.

The presentation of short fiction is simply not the same as that of a novel or any other kind of writing. You should consider what ideas are adaptable to the scope of your forthcoming effort, and one of these considerations is, of course, length. Short fiction of five pages is probably not the best place to write about the interplanetary hero John Neilus; if his adventures consist of traveling from Mercury to Neptune and include an epic, socially disastrous encounter with the inhabitants of Saturn and their beautiful princesses.

If you look at an anthology of contemporary short fiction, you might notice that a majority of the stories seem to begin in what seems like the middle of the story. Constructing the background of characters and describing the scene for the reader don't have to be seen as prerequisites for the story to begin; these writer's tasks can be accomplished as the story progresses. Short fiction is almost like walking against a clock.

- Revision. Revision is a necessary step after you finish with any writing. It is not only important to clean up grammatical mistakes and identify problems with clarity, but it is also important to revise the content of your writing. Ask yourself those deep questions about your writing: Does Angelica's hesitation further my theme of cultural paralysis? But ask yourself the superficial ones, too: How many arms are too many on a sawed-dwelling monster?

- Those in writing workshops - enjoy yourself. This seems like a silly consideration for those already writing for their own enjoyment, but it may be an obstacle for those in a writing workshop class. Although you may be writing an assignment for a class in a workshop, writing should be just as much an enjoyable experience as it is a sometimes stressful and self-destructive one. Even with a specific assignment, the creative aspect of creative writing should allow you to steer that assignment to something absolutely enjoyable and interesting for you. Although in a writing workshop your audience is required to read what you write, I don't think that writing for your own enjoyment negates consideration of that audience. When you are reading, the enjoyment of a piece of writing that reflects that writer's passion for exceeds that of a place going through the motions until the writer hit that minimum page count.

EXPLORING CREATIVE NONFICTION
By Meghan Burroughs
Writing Lab Assistant, Creative Writing Major, and an Editor of Troubadour

Many college students, particularly English majors, think that they write nothing but term papers criticizing and analyzing works that may seem unimportant to them. If they are creative writing majors, they may like to write poetry or fiction, but we mustn't forget a genre that many writers seem to enjoy exploring within their own writing: creative nonfiction, a technique that offers fact with a poetic twist. This isn't a research paper in which you deliver straight facts of information that you would find in a book in the library; this genre is digging deeply within yourself to produce something beautifully written.

But what is "creative nonfiction"? Bill Roorbach, author of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction: The Art of Truth, says that most people believe it has no definition, but let it be "the widest sort of umbrella, with room underneath it for nonfiction writing across a spectrum of written work that has in common humanity, and just one thing more: all creative nonfiction, like all literature, aspires to art." Don't try to identify it: just hunt for the creativity that lies within facts.

Much of the nonfiction genre is designated to finding the writer's perspective. A popular type of creative nonfiction is a memoir, a technique which captures something particular in the writer's life that holds some important meaning that he or she wishes to allow an audience to explore. As a creative nonfiction writer, don't be scared to write about yourself. Why was your relationship with your pet rock in grade school so important? Why is it that you had a particular movie, a certain place, a sound? You may feel apprehensive about tackling subjects like those, but don't. You will find that you will have a creative piece that allows your readers to join you inside your mind and its history. Write creative nonfiction to have your readers share a moment of your memoir.

Other creative pieces within this genre include writing about your culture. How exactly did the re-election of Bush affect you? Where would you be without that cell phone? Try choosing some off-the-wall topic to explore, and make it as fun as you want.

"In writing your essays, you should look at the assigned readings as tool boxes through which you can rummage for techniques: architectonics, rhythms, syntactical patterns, metaphors, images, etc. that you can use in your own essays. You don't have to like all the readings, you do have to take them seriously, think about them, and try to learn from them," says Reginald Shepherd, Assistant Professor of English at UWF. Look at the creative assignments offered to you and explore. Find your voice that would perhaps allow others to join you in your thoughts.

Creative Nonfiction Assignments, as Compiled by Reginald Shepherd

1. Try writing a piece about yourself. This piece is not supposed to be a biography, in which you relay all aspects of your life; rather, it is supposed to focus on a particular time, event, or idea that you think holds a deep meaning. Be poetically when writing your memoir; include descriptions and dialogue between characters.

2. Focus on a particular person that you love. What is its appeal - its sights, smells, textures, or sounds? This place possibly could be a store, under a tree, even a dream.

3. Try writing an essay about nature. Examine the puddles that form around your driveway when it rains. What is it about those puddles that makes you ponder deeper meanings in life? That makes you question the way nature is? Have fun with this one. Nature is everywhere, and it is waiting to be explored creatively.

4. Another idea is to do a cultural analysis: Shepherd says that this piece "takes a cultural phenomenon and investigates it, interrogates it, explores it." What effect has reality television had on the future of all television, for example?

5. Focus on current events. This literary journalism piece will be a personal reaction to current events. Take the cold, hard facts and make them part of your biography; how do you feel exactly about the War in Iraq? How has it affected you?

These are just ideas to help you get started in writing creative nonfiction. Use them to your advantage, and we guarantee you will find your creative voice in all of your writing.
THE FINE LINE BETWEEN FICTION AND CREATIVE NONFICTION: HOW CLOSE IS TOO CLOSE?

By Christine Lewis
Editor of Troubadour, Writing Lab Assistant, Creative Writing Major

The fun in writing creative nonfiction doesn't stem from creating a whole new story as if it does in the fiction genre, but rather it comes from making a real situation or experience interesting and entertaining to someone who wasn't there to share the experience. One of the most difficult challenges of writing creative nonfiction is determining exactly how far to take the story and what alterations need to be made in order to grab the reader's attention. Take caution though when altering a story for entertainment because, at some point, the story shifts from the creative nonfiction genre into fiction. Depending on the nature of the real situation, you may desire to make more or fewer changes to what really happened. The point of the change is usually to adjust the writing in conveying a particular theme, feeling, or sentiment; however, the change is also usually subtle such as a person's exact words. If an event occurred several years ago, an audience generally won't expect you to remember word-for-word each character actually said, but there are some key points that you can control without altering a story to the point of fictionalizing the event.

• The Personality of the Narrator - The narrator of the story has most of the control over the mood of the situation. If the narrator is similar to someone who thinks the event was humorous, then the sentiment will be reflected in the context of the story through what the narrator thinks about the situation.

• Point of View - To add spice to a real event, you can try to tell the story of what really happened through another person's eyes. For example, if a writer has an embarrassing situation occur with an air conditioning repairman, rather than write the story in the writer's first-person, the writer can write the story from the perspective of the repairman. The repairman may think differently and react differently than the writer does, and so the repairman's actions may seem a more appropriate fit for the story.

• Knowledgeability of the Characters and Scenery - Remember that you are the one who knows what the characters are really like. Just because you know your friend's idiosyncrasies, doesn't mean that everyone else does too. As with fiction writing, creative nonfiction requires great character description and setting. The description, or lack thereof, of a character can make or break a story, so try to make your characters as real as possible, but try to bring out their intriguing qualities.

Remember, there is reason why you feel compelled to tell a particular story. Hang on to that feeling, and the desire to express yourself will help you greatly in developing your story, so everyone will want to read it.

A CREATIVE NONFICTION EXCERPT FROM "Air Conditioning Exposed!"

By Christina Lewis

"At this point in the story, an air conditioning repairman accidentally walks in on the narrator as she is lounging-appropriately attire, after which he gapes and abruptly leaves the room with the door open.

"Just as Olie had promised, a few days later his father (the leader of the company) came out to inspect our closet. It was about ten in the morning, and I hadn't been out of bed for too long, so I was still in my pajamas. Being the socially conscious girl that I try to be, I decided that greeting the air conditioning man in my pajamas was slightly unladylike, and I went into my room to change while my friend Mary Lou greeted him. In the midst of my dressing for clothes, I could hear Mary Lou and Mr. Lundford (the AC guy) in the hallway inspecting the closet and measuring. While I struggled and failed miserably to find something semi-ladylike to wear, the door to my bedroom opened, and in walked Mr. Lundford. I had NOTHING! Surprisingly, I didn't shriek or scream; my first inclination was to grab something to cover myself with and run down the hall, an act which I have more self-control than I ever knew I had. I grabbed my robe and sat down on my bed. Poor Mr. Lundford didn't have time in the insulation department. He streaked directly over my face, and left the room - the door still open.

I sat for a few moments and analyzed the situation: 1) I had no clothes on. 2) A complete stranger had walked in on me when I had no clothes on. 3) Why didn't I scream when a complete stranger walked in on me with no clothes on? 4) I composed myself, dressed, collected my dignity, and walked out into the living room where only Mr. Lundford and I knew the events that had just taken place. I wondered to myself whether or not I should say something to him, but what would I say? "Don't worry Mr. Lundford, this kind of thing happens all the time?" "You okay Mr. Lundford, shouldn't you be embarrassed?" No idea what to say, so I did what any good communicator and scholar of words would do: I didn't say a damn thing. I avoided the subject just as I would the black plague. Mr. Lundford and I didn't make any eye contact or pass a single word to each other. He measured one foot after the incident and then left."