

Writing Books

1. Advantages of Magazines Over Books
2. Disadvantages of Magazines Over Books
3. Advantage of Books Over Magazines
4. Disadvantage of Books Over Magazines

Before You Write That Book:

1. Do you feel strongly about your book? (Will the enthusiasm sustain you a long time?)
2. Is it book sized?
3. Have you estimated your audience?
4. Is it timely?
5. Is it a “Me-too” book?

Good writers labor so readers won't have to.

1. How do I know what to write?
2. Have I tried the acid test for ideas?
3. Why do I want to write?
4. What are my credentials for writing?

Tips to Get Started

1. Learn the mechanics.
2. Write (almost) every day.
3. Study the markets.
4. Mean business.
5. Be persistent.
6. Assess your strengths.
7. Be a reader.
8. Survey the field.
9. Remind yourself: No matter how talented I am, writing is a craft to learn.
10. Get training.
11. Write, rewrite, and rewrite and then rewrite again.
12. Don't demand perfection; but don't be too easily pleased.
13. Be willing to stop.
14. Remind yourself: When I write, I put myself and my values on paper in some form.

Common Mistakes Writers Make

1. They postpone writing their book.
2. They write chapter one and other chapters before investigating the market and marketing.
3. They think they must be an expert, or do immense research.
4. They don't understand the process and purpose of writing more than one draft.

Query Letters

1. Definition: Query is short for inquiry, and it's a brief letter to an editor that describes an article/book you propose to write, and you ask if the editor's interested in seeing it.
2. Purpose of the query letter:
3. Benefits of the query letter:

Looking Professional

Do everything you can to prejudice editors in your favor.

1. Neatness counts: Make the manuscript look professional.
2. Use the right format.
3. Watch the little things that mark an amateur. ***Think of the editor: Write what will be the most normal for editors to see.***
4. Proofread your material carefully.

Being Professional

1. Support other writers.
2. Keep learning.
3. Accept your writing as the best you can do now. Don't think of your words as unchangeable. Think of the manuscript as a *product*.
4. Stand up for yourself if you need to.
5. Think of yourself as a professional. This is also a business and you have a product/commodity to sell. Do it with integrity and honor.

Manuscript Preparation

Prejudice editors in your favor by making your manuscript look professional.

1. On all manuscripts, double-space and leave a one-inch margin on all sides of the page. (This is automatic on most computers.)
2. Don't insert extra lines between paragraphs.
3. Don't justify your right margins.
4. Use a header on every page. Your last name, slant or colon, brief form of title, and then your page number at the far right.
5. Indent half an inch. Use 12-point fonts. Many prefer serif such as Georgia; others prefer non-serif such as Arial. Do not use italics, or difficult-to-read fonts.
6. You do not need to put the copyright sign on your material.

"A common misconception is that you must register a work with the U.S. Copyright Office for it to be protected by copyright...copyright exists automatically from the moment a work is fixed in a tangible method of expression. Therefore, registration...is not necessary."
(*The Copyright Permission and Libel Handbook* by Lloyd J. Jassin and Steven C. Schechter, New York: Wiley: 1998, p12.)

7. On the cover sheet, put your title and by-line half-way down the page. Follow that with genre and word count, such as: a Historical Novel of 80,000 words; Nonfiction, 60,000 words.
8. If you are using a pseudonym, your by-line reads: "by Sidney Sams writing as Harry Harris." Or simply "By Harry Harris" and give your true name below.
9. In the lower left of the cover page type your name, address, phone number, fax, and e-mail address. If you have an agent, instead of your own information, list the agent's name, address, and phone/e-mail.
10. On the first page, center your chapter number and title (if you use one) one-third of the way down the page. Double-space twice, paragraph-indent and begin typing your chapter. (Do not begin renumbering the pages with each chapter.)

How you submit your work shows how professional you are.

ALWAYS:

1. Today, we send most of our manuscripts as attachments. If you do you're yours through the mail, use white, good quality paper (photocopy paper will do).
2. Type or print out on only one side of the page.
3. Double space (**Do not** create an extra space between paragraphs—you can, however, leave an extra space between scene changes).
4. Start each new chapter on a new page.
5. Number your pages consecutively; *don't* start again with each chapter.
6. Use a good printer—avoid dot matrix.

NEVER:

1. Use fancy fonts or type faces. Times New Roman will do.
2. Overwrap your manuscript—you can use a padded envelope or a cardboard manuscript box (no bows or perfume).
3. Use staples on any submissions. Paper clips are acceptable.
4. Phone or e-mail to learn if your manuscript has arrived.

A Good Nonfiction Book Proposal

(There is no one way to write a book proposal.)

1. Title page: Create an image.
2. Concept and Overview: Write power paragraphs. Don't be modest or conserve energy.
3. Author information.
4. What is the competition?
5. Marketing: Who will buy this book?
6. Author Promotion.
7. What about endorsements?
8. Chapter outline or synopsis.
9. Sample chapters

Fiction and Nonfiction Proposals

1. Fiction and nonfiction work in different ways. Publishers generally want all of a novel, especially if you've never published fiction before.
2. Fiction (unlike nonfiction) usually means total up-front speculations by the writer. You'll invest thousands of hours writing before you have any sense of having a sale.

A word about Concept

I like to insert a brief one- or two-sentence synopsis to help editors know if it's something they want. Call it a precis statement or summary.

Concept (nonfiction)

Sometimes we pray and wait for God to answer, but nothing happens. No matter what we do, we encounter silence or what Murphey calls God's Hidden Face.

Concept (fiction)

In this police-procedural, Mel Doyle tracks down a murderer who kills Presbyterian ministers and then carves a cross in their forehead. In solving the crimes, he faces his own need for spiritual help and turns to Jesus Christ.

To get your ideas across use small words, big ideas, and short sentences.
-- John Henry Patterson

Tips for You to Edit Yourself

1. Whenever possible, show readers.
2. Use action verbs.
3. Avoid passive verb on a page. Forms of “to be” are not the same as passive voice. (Avoid, but circle them as well.)
4. Avoid PPP: Purple-prose punctuation.
5. Ruthlessly cut adverbs. (Usually comes from using a weak verb and an adverb to do the work of a strong verb.)
6. Avoid “it is” and “there was.” They’re wordy and rarely needed.
7. Watch the order of words in a sentence. The two power positions are the beginning and the end of a sentence. Put less important words in the middle.
8. Avoid “it is”
9. Remove the filters.
10. Try the “as opposed to” test.
11. Try the “so what?” test. (who cares?)
12. Cut ruthlessly.
13. Ask: Can I say it in simple English? The most powerful words tend to be the shortest and the ones most basic to the English language.
14. In dialogue: use SAID unless you absolutely need something else.
15. To break up dialogue, use beats.
16. Be sensitive to the white space.
17. *What* is happening in a scene is usually more important than *when*, so avoid clogging sentences with time words.