



The Write Stuff

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Award Winning Author

Five Reasons to Write a Book

1. You have a story to tell.

Perhaps it happened to you or to someone you know- sickness, death, victory, defeat, or something as simple as everyday life but with a twist. If you think it's interesting, others may feel the same way. Ask a half-dozen friends, whose judgment you trust, if your idea is any good. If they agree, start writing.

2. You know something that most people don't.

If you have a specialized knowledge about a given topic, consider a how-to missive on the subject. Even a short electronic version of your book could be in great demand if the subject of your discourse is useful and is likely to save the reader both time and money.

3. You have an ancestor with an exciting or checkered past.

Genealogy has become a national past time. If you have an ancestor that fought in any war, lived in historic times, or led a remarkable life, consider a book. It could be history or historic fiction or pure fiction. There are no limits except those you impose upon yourself. When my wife announced to me that my great, great grandfather fought in the Civil War, my first novel was born. (**"War Calls, Love Cries"**)

4. You have an idea for a children's book.

Everybody seems to think that writing and illustrating a children's book is easy. It is actually the most difficult and least profitable book you can undertake. But every now and then a parent or grandparent who knows what children like, strikes gold. Your idea may be the one that kids everywhere truly love. Trust your instincts, test your idea, and then get to work.

5. You are a hopeless romantic, a creative genius, or an amateur sleuth.

A love story, an exciting fantasy, or a murder mystery are still the most popular genres in today's publishing world. It will be difficult to get published and then succeed in any of these genres because the competition is that stiff. But the market for good writing that is original and interesting is huge. Do not be intimidated by the competition. Focus instead on your reader. If he or she can't wait to turn the next page, you have a winner.

A New Author's Five Biggest Challenges

1. Finishing the book.

A quick review of online sites for new authors will reveal a plethora of writers who have yet to finish their first missive. The combination of marriage, kids, a job, and the normal pressures of day-to-day living, impede, if not stop entirely, an author's progress on their first book.

2. Finding a publisher.

If you insist on a traditional publisher versus a hybrid publisher, (where you will pay for a portion of the publisher's professional service but receive a significantly higher royalty), it may be a long wait. Most new authors are reduced to finding an agent who in turn may or may not be able to find a publisher for your first book.

3. Editing the book.

So many authors refuse to pay a professional editor, preferring to do it themselves or call their friend, the English teacher. More often than not, this is a mistake. Even the best editor will miss the occasional typographical error. Amateurs will miss too many and the result will be that both the publisher and the reader will be turned off.

4. Marketing the book.

Speaking in public, social media, direct mail, advertising, book fairs, and email lists, can be the bane of an author's existence.

Many times, such endeavors are so far removed from the author's comfort zone, that little or nothing is done in this regard. Even worse, too many authors expect their publisher to do such work and they rarely do. Marketing is your job!

5. Self-doubt.

Too many authors are intimidated, if not openly frightened, by the apparent success of their fellow writers, the myriad of "rules" that new authors are instructed to follow, and the seemingly impossible task of getting their book noticed when anywhere from 600,000 to 1million new books are published each year in the United States alone. That fact alone has silenced the pen of too many authors. The answer to this challenge, not unlike any other challenge in life, is the same. Welcome adversity, practice patience, be persistent, work smart-not hard, and along the way, help others. And remember. Each time you fail, you are that much closer to your first success.

Five Highly Effective Habits for Writers

1. Write every day.

The worst writing in the world is still better than no writing at all. If you want to finish a book, your writing has to be a daily habit. A day off will be necessary and advisable, now and then, but make your daily writing session a habit.

2. Market every day.

Marketing your book is your responsibility. Even a traditionally published author must market their book because the publisher will do little or nothing to increase your sales. Each day's efforts need not be a massive undertaking but each day should be your opportunity to accomplish at least a small portion of the "Marketing Pie."

3. Learn every day.

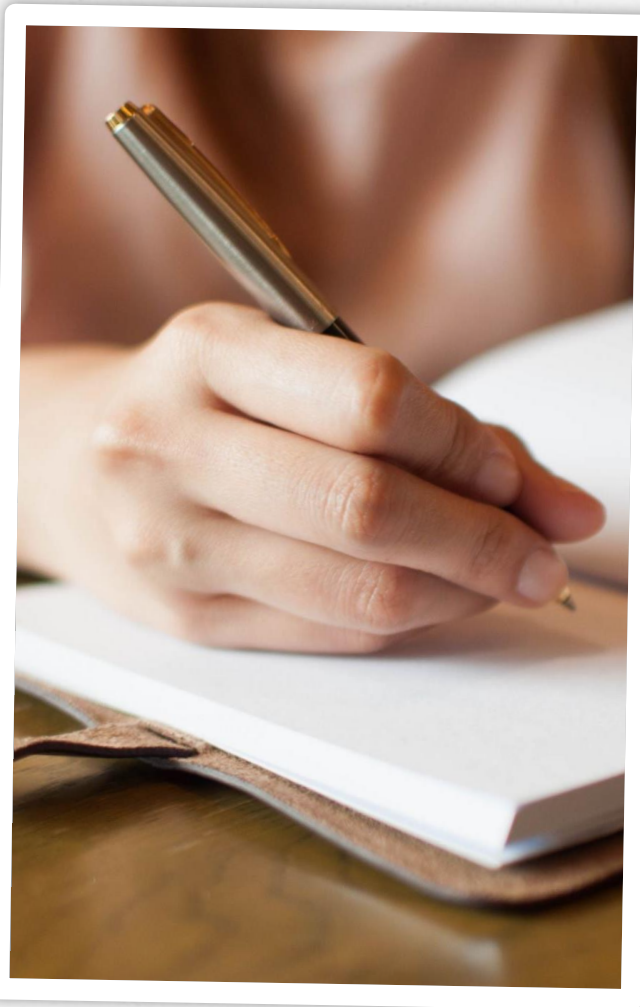
The Internet is overflowing with articles, helpful hints, and great stories, that are directly related to marketing, writing, editing, cover art, research, and a whole lot more. It should be your goal to learn something new about your industry every day.

4. When you finish a chapter, leave it alone.

Do not edit the chapter, do not polish it, do not even reread it. Put it away! When your book is finished, take a 2 to 4 week break and then read the entire book. The passage of time will improve the clarity of your vision, your editing, your writing, and therefore your book.

5. Have fun.

So many authors have transformed their craft into a time-consuming and tedious chore. If your writing has become a "job", it will suffer. The pleasure of writing is directly related to the quality of your writing. When it ceases to be fun, take a break, regain your perspective, and begin anew.



Five Ways to Market Your New Book



1. **Start with your Facebook friends and family.** Give them a book or get them to buy one on Amazon. But ask each of them for a review. The more reviews you get, the more books you will sell.
2. **Write a speech.** It doesn't matter if it's a how-to book or a historical fiction novel, write a speech about something that you learned as a result of writing the book. Reach out to every service organization in your area. They are always looking for speakers. Bring some books, you may sell a few. But the real purpose of the speech is to get a photo and some free press. Post it on Facebook and send out a press release.
3. **Offer a free book to the libraries in your region.** They may take you up on the offer. When they do, inquire about events for local authors. You'll be surprised at what libraries can do for you. Do not be shy about arranging for your own event at the library. Tell them that you'll take full responsibility for the publicity and light refreshments. All they have to do is provide the room.
4. **Send a free book to anyone who might write about it.** Send a personal pre-approach letter to a named individual. If they want the free book, (and it's good), chances are they'll write about it. Reporters, columnists, bloggers, etc. are all fair game.
5. **Start a newsletter e-mail list.** Begin with your friends and family. Add to the list as often as you can. Do not make the newsletter about your book only. Include interesting articles, links to related sites, free drawings for fun stuff, a calendar of upcoming events, and plenty of pictures, of you and your happy readers. Most authors will tell you to write something every day. I would add to that. You should also be marketing every day.

Five Traps for New Authors

1. Awards

For a fee, sometimes substantial, you can enter your book into dozens of contests. But be careful. Some competitions are nothing more than moneymakers for the sponsor. In addition, the so-called "judges" in such contests, are neither qualified nor respectable. Research each contest you enter, confirming its longtime existence, its reputation in the industry, and its process for determining the winners. Without such research, you will be a loser for sure.

2. Author conferences/book fairs

Before you spend money on registrations, travel costs, lodging expenses, and display materials, do your homework. Does the conference/book fair you wish to attend, offer what you need? For example, will there be tips on writing, editing, and publishing from experienced authors? If it is a book fair, will there be substantial aisle traffic with potential book buyers or simply a bunch of other authors, also trying to sell their books. Check out the history of the conference/book fair. Organizers should be willing and able to provide you with the type and number of attendees they have attracted in the past. Attending one of these affairs without first doing your homework is foolish and quite possibly very expensive.

3. Book reviews

Be cautious of any organization that offers to do a review of your book for a fee. If all they do is provide raving reviews for anyone willing to cough up some money, you know that their review is worthless – to both you and your potential readers. Contact the organization. Ask for references and look for a history of consumer complaints, if any. Companies which do useless reviews will be obvious.

4. Book promotions sites

Once you become an author, you will discover a plethora of companies who want to promote your book. For a fee, of course. Exercise great caution when dealing with these firms. Do they have a proven track record? Are their customers pleased with the results or not? Exactly how do they promote your book and what, if any, results are they willing to guarantee or at least predict. Marketing your book is your chief responsibility and contracting with someone else to do your job, is rarely successful.

5. Vanity presses

If you are paying a company to publish your book and they appear to publish every author that comes through their door, you are most likely dealing with a vanity press. It is acceptable to pay for professional services like editing, layout, cover design, and website construction. It is not acceptable to pay a "publishing company" for banging out a book that fails to meet even the minimum industry standards and will make you the laughing stock of your industry.

Six Tips for First-Time Authors

1. Write what you love.

What do you enjoy the most? Your memoirs, the great American novel, a how-to book, a biography? Pick the one that interests you the most. Writing a book takes time and patience. If it is not a labor of love it will soon become your worst nightmare.

2. It's not a race.

You will read about authors who pound out thousands of words each day without fail. Others struggle with their first paragraph. Unless you are under a deadline, your best writing will not be the result of rushing. Take your time, enjoy the process.

3. Edit, Edit, Edit.

Whether you self-publish or not, there will be thousands of edits. Everything from typos, grammar, names, dates, places, etc. Get help from friends or professionals but do not attempt to edit your book entirely on your own.

4. Self-publish or use a hybrid publisher.

Random House isn't going to call. First-time authors who wait for a publisher or even an agent to knock on their door, will wait for a very long time. If you really want to publish a book, do it yourself. At least the first time.

5. Market, Market, Market.

It is a myth that a large publisher will market your book. It's the author's responsibility. Social media, direct mail, speaking engagements, book fairs, author conferences, all of those are YOUR responsibility. If you hate marketing or refuse to learn how to market, you will sell a few hundred books at best.

6. Google everything.

The first and only rule in the publishing industry is: There are no rules. I have discovered that what works for one author may not work for another. Learn from other people's successes and failures. Trial and error are required, but above all, you must be persistent. That and that alone, will guarantee your eventual success in the publishing industry.

Hit The Road

1. Develop a speech.

Your talk should be much more than a speech which promotes your book. Talk about becoming an author, about the surprises that you discovered while writing your book, or even a how-to speech about the do's and don'ts of writing, research, and marketing. But do your research and be comfortable with your topic. And remember, even Winston Churchill, the great Prime Minister, practiced his speeches seven times each!

2. Go online.

Google the email or street address for every community service organization in your county. (Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, etc.) They are usually struggling to find speakers for their weekly programs. Send a letter to a named individual or to the Club Secretary, and then wait for your phone to ring. It will.

3. Look for other speaking opportunities.

Approach libraries, museums, bookstores, and historical societies, if applicable. Offer your talk at no charge and consider the donation of a signed copy of your book, for the library's collection or for the service club to raffle off. Have bookmarks and business cards available for your audience. Circulate signup sheets, (emails) for a free prize in a drawing which will occur at a later date. That is a great way to grow your mailing list!

4. Do a Press Release before and after each talk.

It may or may not get published, but even if a small percentage of your press releases make the newspaper, it's free advertising for you.

5. Expand your horizons.

After you have exhausted all of the possible speaking venues in your county, move onto the next county. Collect references, (names and phone numbers) along the way and use them in your next series of pre-approach letters.



No one will promote your book or your career as an author, better than you. Speaking in public is one of the easiest and least expensive ways in which to establish yourself as a credible author.

Five Mistakes by Amateur Authors

1. Lousy Editing

You edited your own manuscript without professional help and as a result, there are grammatical and typographical errors in your book. This is a sure sign of an amateur author and likely to turn off both readers and publishers.

2. Amateur Cover Art

You decided to scrimp on the cover art for your book and your book cover looks like a sixth grader did it, for free. This is a huge mistake. People DO judge a book by its cover.

3. Talking Heads

This means that you wrote all or part of your book from the point of view of more than one person. This is acceptable, (see third person omniscient), but only if you clearly indicate when the point of view has changed. Use chapter headings, decorative stops between paragraphs, changes in scenery or time periods, or even a revealing first line in the new paragraph to alert the reader that a different “head” in your book, is now doing the thinking.

4. No website

Every author should have a website and it should be about more than just your most recent book. You, your photo, your upcoming schedule, testimonials, a regular column, contests, and anything else that might attract readers or get them to give you an e-mail address, are candidates for inclusion in your newsletter. Websites are advertisements for the author and must be constantly revised. Authors who have poorly designed websites are not much better off than those authors with no website.

5. No email list

The coin of the realm in the publishing world is an author’s email list. The people on your email list are your preferred audience, your most likely supporters, and your best prospects for book sales. Before you put the first word on paper, begin the process of collecting email addresses. Start with family and friends and from that point on, you must solicit email addresses everywhere you go. At book signings, speaking engagements, author events, and social occasions, swap your business card for their email address. I use Constant Contact to stay in touch with my email buddies and to ensure that “friends” who wish to “Unsubscribe” are able to do so with relative ease.

Five Tips for Writing Historical Fiction

- 1. Research, Research, Research.** Readers of Historical Fiction demand that the author accomplish the required research. How your characters talk, how they dress, what they do for a living, and the normal activities of that time, must all be accurate. In my novel, "**War Calls, Love Cries**", I referred to a rubber sheet. A dozen pages later I called it a plastic sheet. Plastic was not invented until 50 years later. Ooops!
- 2. Be Historically Accurate.** Historical fiction does not give you permission to change or rearrange the events of history. If you can "Google it", so can your readers. Any narrative which includes well-known events or people must be accurate.
- 3. Use Explanatory Notes.** It is not unusual to take small liberties with minor historical events and explain it at the back of your book in a series of footnotes. A good example would be the description of two particular events as having occurred just days apart when in fact the second event occurred a month later. These minor changes are not usually a problem.
- 4. Blend Your Character into History.** By this I mean insert your character into the major events of that day. How did your characters react to natural and man-made disasters, political events, or anything else of significance? If the characters are not genuine it won't matter if the events are historically correct. Your readers will be disappointed.
- 5. Start Early.** Historical Fiction is a time-consuming and tedious process. Experienced writers will tell you that almost every paragraph requires at least some research. At times, it takes hours of research just to confirm or abandon a particular sentence. Pick any time period you wish. Do you know the mode of transportation, the commonly eaten foodstuffs, what a woman wore on her wedding day, a day's wages, the average man's height, a child's playthings, or the cost of a rented room? All of these facts are critical to the author's most important task which is transporting the reader to a specific time and place.

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Florida writer Mark Barie has earned state, national, and international recognition for his novels on love and war. His books are available at Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com

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