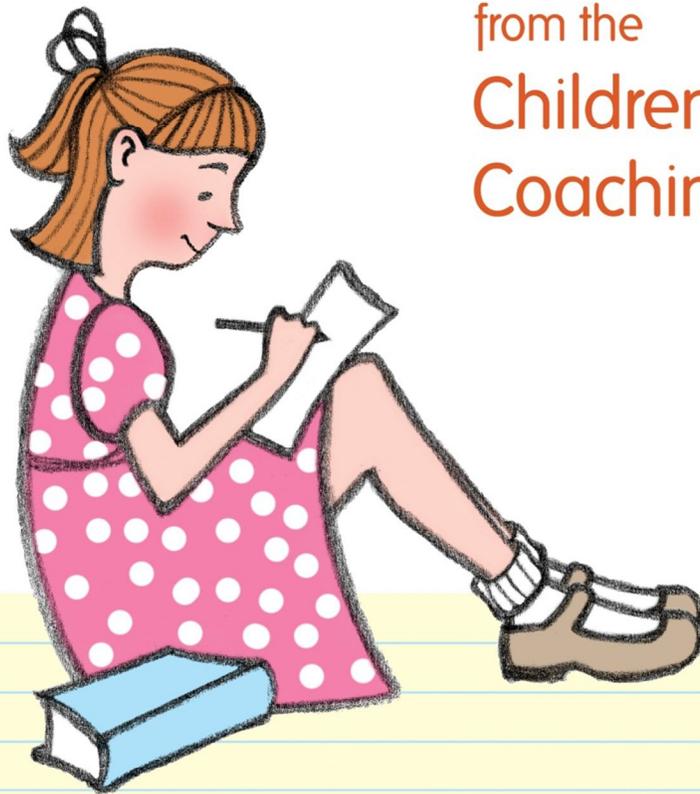


# Writing Tips

from the  
Children's Writers'  
Coaching Club



Cover art by Veronica Walsh



Veronica Walsh has been making pictures for as long as she can remember. She is the illustrator of the children's book, *Too Many Visitors for One Little House*, and is a regular contributor of illustrations to the Los Angeles Times Kids' Reading Room. Ms. Walsh studied art and design at California State University, Long Beach, and put her artistic skills to good use as a graphic designer for many years. She enjoys eating sushi, bargain shopping for antique furniture, and cruising on her bike at the beach with her husband, Dominic. Visit her website at:

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This e-book is composed of articles written for children's authors and illustrators by some of the members of the Children's Writers' Coaching Club and Suzanne Lieurance, coordinator of the coaching club.

To find out more about the Children's Writers' Coaching Club, visit

<http://www.cwcoachingclub.com>.

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# Staying Motivated as a Writer

by

Marge Gower

For me and for most writers staying motivated is hard. We have family members popping in every time we sit down at the computer. We often use the cry, "There just isn't enough time." In our busy lifestyles, many things can distract us. We have housework, company, vacations with busy schedules full of activities for the children, chores to do, and barbecuing. We don't see where there are enough hours to fit our writing in. However, there are particular moments and ways to get our writing done that we don't even consider.

Set up a writing schedule. That sounds daunting. However, it just means to pick a time good for you. Writers can't stop writing because of commitments. If writing early in the morning isn't good, write after supper dishes are done. I don't have children home, so between six and eight o'clock is a prime time. Nothing is on TV and my husband is dozing on the couch.

Leave your laptop up in the living room. Grab time, when everyone is busy doing their own thing. Children go out after supper or have homework. Grab those flashes of quiet time. They can add up to hours of writing time.

Let your husband (wife) and children know of your writing time. Put a sign on your doorknob. Kids do. "Quiet please, Mom (Dad) writing." Let kids and dad (mom) know that they are to go to him (her) during that time. Even if it's only a half an hour, you can get a lot done.

Skip the urge to check email, until you have done at least a half an hour of writing. Sometimes, I forget this rule and an hour can pass and all I've done is read, delete, and answer emails. If you start with writing, you'll feel great about what you get accomplished.

If you have toddlers, sneak in some writing during naps. You can throw laundry in while the kids are playing in the tub or dust, while watching TV later.

Write on outings. By taking a writing notebook, a small laptop, or a manuscript to revise tucked into a bag, you can catch snippets of conversation or situations that would be lost otherwise. I don't swim at the beach anymore, but I love to sit and people watch, bird watch, and gather scraps for my idea folder.

During lunch, rather than sitting around and gossiping (although that can produce fruitful ideas for writing) use a work computer and save your writing on a flash drive. That can be a very relaxing time.

Writing is an adventure or a lonely venture. Writing isn't done alone. It's done with cooperation of our families. They need to know how important writing is to us. If all else fails, bribe them. Tell them with your first acceptance check, you'll all get something special. Get motivated, stay motivated, and write.



Marge Gower is a freelance and children's writer living in central New York. She is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Writers, Finger Lakes Writers Group, SCBWI, and Children's Writers' Coaching Club. She has a bible story and an article about St. Valentine accepted at *My Light* magazine to be published in their Jan./Feb. issue. Her poems have been published in church bulletins, and devotionals in the FCW Newsletter. [www.margegower.com](http://www.margegower.com)

# Dos and Don'ts of Writing Children's Stories

by

Margo L. Dill

Do tackle difficult issues that kids are curious about such as drug abuse, lying, sibling rivalry, jealousy, peer pressure, and so on. However, do feel like you can also write about simple topics such as picnics, recess, or a day at the river. Not all children are living in turmoil.

Don't make your story preachy. The last thing children want to read is a story where a lesson is being preached at them. You can have a lesson in your story, but it needs to be subtle!

As a rule, do make your characters a little older than your target audience. For example, if you are writing for a magazine with a target audience of 9 to 12, make your main characters 12 or 13 if possible. Children enjoy reading stories about older children more than younger children.

Don't follow the age rule if it messes up your story. Don't feel like you have to tell in the first few paragraphs how old the main character is. If you can work the age into the story naturally, fine. If not, then the reader should just get a feeling that the main character is around the age of the reader.

Do allow children to solve their own problems and be the main characters in the story.

Don't allow adults to come in and save the day. In most children's stories (and of course, there are always exceptions but these are usually written by experienced writers), adults should play a background or minor character role.

Do follow guidelines exactly. If the magazine says the story must be between 300 and 500 words, then make it no shorter than 300 and no longer than 500 words. Titles do not count in the word count.

Don't use words like "she shouted" or "he exclaimed" or "she questioned" after dialogue. Don't be afraid to repeat the word "said." It is the best dialogue tag. Instead of having to use "said" all the time, you can also use action or setting details as dialogue tags. For example:

*"When are you going to let me come into your clubhouse?" Martha stood with her nose at the door, trying to peek through a crack in the wood.*

*Henry sat in the middle of his clubhouse and thought about it for almost a whole second before he said, "Never."*

*She stomped her foot and screamed. "I'll just stand out here and scream until you let me in!"*

*Before Henry answered her, he put earplugs in his ears. "Okay." He hummed and went back to carving his statue.*

Do use humor in children's stories. Magazine editors are always looking for humorous stories. They get tons of stories on divorce and other "serious" kid issues. These are important; but if you are a new author, try something that editors always need. (Usually, editors are looking for stories that appeal to boys, too.)

Don't write a story for a magazine or website if you have never seen the magazine or website. Do read back issues or sample stories on a website before you start writing for the publication; hopefully, your local library has a great kids' section. Try to find out what subjects their recent stories have covered and send something different.

Do send seasonal material at least 6 months in advance. Some magazines want it even further in advance. Also, check websites and magazine guidelines for themes. Brainstorm ideas to fit the themes, and think outside the box. Themes can sometimes be a catalyst for a story idea that you would have never thought of otherwise.

Don't give up if you get one or two rejections. Look for new markets; online magazines or children's newsletters that would be interested in publishing your fiction.

Do use Times New Roman or Courier as your font. Also, use 12 pt. font and double-space your fiction stories. Put a heading on each page; page number, your last name, and part of the title.

One of the most important pieces of advice I was ever given in workshops and classes about writing for children is: READ the market you are targeting. You don't want to copy other writers' stories, of course, but you need to read the types of materials the magazine or publication accepts. You can even analyze them; do authors write stories with first-person or third-person narration? What types of subjects are they tackling? Do they like urban or rural settings or both? How old are the main characters? If it's a Christian magazine, are Bible verses quoted or are the biblical themes subtle? Once you have analyzed a few stories for the target publication (or a few

publications), then you are ready to pen your story. If you don't have a library close by, then go to magazine websites and read any sample stories or archives available.

Writing for children is difficult and takes a lot of work, but it's fun and rewarding, too. By following these simple dos and don'ts, you'll be that much closer to seeing your story in print and entertaining young readers.



Margo L. Dill is a freelance writer, editor, and teacher, living in St. Louis, Missouri. Her work has appeared in publications such as *Grit*, *Pockets*, *True Love*, *Fun for Kidz*, *Missouri Life*, *ByLine Magazine*, and *The News-Gazette*. She is a columnist, on-line instructor, and contributing editor for WOW! Women On Writing. <http://www.wowwomenonwriting.com/WOWclasses.html> and an instructor for the Children's Writers' Coaching Club: <http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/?af=1183129>.

She has a weekly book review column in the Sunday book page in *The News-Gazette*. Her first book, *Finding My Place*, a middle-grade historical novel, will be published by White Mane Kids.

She writes a blog called, Read These Books and Use Them <http://margodill.com/blog/> (for parents, teachers, and librarians) and owns her own copyediting business, Editor 911 <http://www.margodill.com/editor911.html>.

# Successful Research for Children's Historical Novels

by

Kathy Stemke

According to Nilsen and Donelson (2001), "As with any literary form, there are standards for judging historical novels. They should be historically accurate and steeped in the sense of time and place. We should recognize totems and taboos, food, clothing, vocations, leisure activities, customs, smells, religions, literature, and all that goes into making one time and one place unique from another."

Research is like an adventure where the writer discovers the mysteries of the past and captures the setting of a novel. It will enable and equip you to make your novel flow and come alive. Here are twelve steps to successfully researching children's historical novels.

*The Timelines of History* by Bernard Grun and Werner Stein gives a year-by-year listing of scientific, social, and political events that can help you decide which era is best for your novel.

Keep accurate lists of all the books, articles, and websites you use to research. You may need to refer back at a later date.

Read several children's books with illustrations to get the big picture. They offer basic information, and the illustrations will give you great ideas for writing descriptions like a medieval castle, or the interior of an old school house. Books about what life was like for boys and girls during that time period will help you with your character development. Check encyclopedias, reference books, and websites too.

Now concentrate on social habits of the time period. Seek out books that reveal the details of people living during that time. Local historical societies usually have documents and pictures to enhance your story. They might also have works of art and photographs.

Visit historical sites in your subject area. Attend reenactments and take a historical tour.

Organize your findings to get a clear picture. A notebook with moveable pages works best at this point. List things like housing, money, music, food, clothing, furniture, medicine, transportation, weapons, hairstyles, entertainment, politics, religion, women and marriage, and maps.

A special list should be made of common names and terms used in the time period you're writing about. This will help you write dialogue. *Slang and Euphemism* by Richard Spears is a great resource book for formulating dialogue. Include plenty of illustrations and photos of objects and scenes of the time period.

Now it's time to consider the particular story you're writing. Use a highlighter to mark the things you will need to write this story. It's time to focus in on the details of your main topics, character development, and settings that you will need.

Start with character profiles. List good and bad physical, emotional, and intellectual characteristics of each of your characters. Perhaps you could list how the characters may interact with each other and a sample of their dialogue.

Next, tackle the different settings you envision for your story. Pull from your research and mark helpful sections with post it notes.

Use post it notes to mark the details you may want to include in your main themes.

Research will allow you to help the reader hear, taste, touch, smell, and see the setting as well as your characters.

Great websites for research:

PBS's American Experience: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/>

Jaclyn Reding's Useful Research Links for Authors: <http://www.jaclynreding.com/links/>

The History Net: <http://thehistorynet.com/>

Pages of Time: [www.pagesoftime.com](http://www.pagesoftime.com)

The Historical Novelists Center: <http://historicalnovelists.tripod.com/homepage.htm>

Books about writing historical fiction:

*The Art and Craft of Writing Historical Fiction* by James Alexander Thom (2010) is a long-overdue guide to researching and writing historical novels in the age of the Internet.

Virtual museums:

Causes of the American Civil War: <http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/cwvm/cwvmtg.htm>

From Revolution to Reconstruction: <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/> <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: <http://www.ushmm.org/>" <http://www.ushmm.org/>

Museum of Anne Frank's house: <http://www.annefrank.nl>



Author/Educator, Kathy Stemke, has a B.S. from Southern Connecticut State University and Covenant Life Seminary, and graduate coursework from Columbia University. As a freelance writer Kathy has published several articles and is a contributing editor for The National Writing for Children's Center. Sign up for her free monthly newsletter, Movement and Rhythm, on her blog. <http://educationtipster.blogspot.com>

*Moving Through All Seven Days*, her first e-book, is now available on lulu.  
<http://www.lulu.com/content/e-book/moving-through-all-seven-days/7386965#>

*Trouble on Earth Day* and *Sh, Sh, Sh will the Baby Sleep?* are slated to come out in 2011.

# Where Does One Begin in Creating a Media Kit?

by

Donna McDine

Media Kit? Why would I need a media kit, I'm not even published yet?

To be quite honest with you it's never too soon to start. To begin now will make it much simpler to add to as you move forward in your writing career.

The essential components in creating your media kit are:

**About the Author or Writer (Bio):** This one pager consists of your current bio, education, current work-in-progress, and contact information (email, blog and website addresses). After you become published, update your bio to reflect each success.

**Appearances:** Appearances may include volunteer reader at your local library and/or school visits and later on as you become published you will be known as the local children's author which then will open up doors to school visits.

**Interviews (online and in-person):** Before I became published, my fellow aspiring writers and I interviewed each other for our blogs to get our names out there. It's fun and simple. Contact a fellow writer and exchange questions and there you have your first finished interview.

**Awards and Publishing Credits:** This may be blank for now, but create the page with this heading and you can fill in your information as you go along. Your publishing credits include no-pay, low-pay, and paying markets, both online and print.

**Media Releases:** Even without publishing credits you can create a media release about upcoming interviews and book reviews on your blog. Make sure you write up a media release about your reviews and interviews. It's important you send out your media release to your network and post on free media release sites such as: <http://www.prlog.com>. For a more detailed list of the services I utilize visit: <http://donnamcdine.com/dynamicmediareleases.html>.

**Book Reviews:** Yes, even if you don't have a book published yet do not forget this important part. When you do, you can insert excerpts of book reviews for easy reference.

Some of your pages will be blank for now, but you will be surprised how quickly they will fill up. All of my pages started out blank and are now filling up. My book review page is

still blank and I'm eagerly awaiting reviews to fill in below the title. The saying from the movie *The Field of Dreams*, "Build it and they will come," is true for your media kit too. The intention and creation of blank titled pages will bring it to fruition. Oh, and yes, working at your writing craft is essential too.

If you have any questions I'd be happy to help. Feel free to email me privately at <mailto:dmcdine@optonline.net>. You may also view my media kit at <http://donnamcdine.com/mediakit.html>.



Award-winning children's author Donna McDine published her first book *The Golden Pathway*, August 2010 with Guardian Angel Publishing and has two more books under contract with said publisher for *The Hockey Agony* and *Powder Monkey*. She writes, moms and is the Publicist Intern for The National Writing for Children Center and Children's Writers' Coaching Club and the Editor-in-Chief for Guardian Angel, Kids Ezine and from her home in the historical hamlet Tappan, NY. McDine is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators and *Musing Our Children*.

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# Which Came First, the Chicken or the Egg?

by

Nancy I. Sanders

If you're in the children's book industry long enough, you'll find out there are two schools of thought. Some editors, authors, and agents believe the chicken came first. Others argue it was the egg.

Personally, after writing over 80 books for such publishers as Scholastic, Reader's Digest, Tyndale, and Chicago Review Press, I'm a firm advocate of the egg.

What am I talking about? The "chicken" I'm referring to is a manuscript. The "egg" is a contract. If you want to have success, build a rewarding career, and earn a steady income from writing, which should come first, the manuscript or the contract?

There are countless articles interviewing successful writers who believe the chicken came first. These say, "Write the manuscript first and then get it published." These articles explain how it took years for the author to hone her skills, revise her manuscript innumerable times until it was polished to perfection, and then catch an editor or agent's eye. There are numerous conferences where editors and agents speak and repeat, "Send me a manuscript that knocks my socks off, and I'll publish your book."

What I want to know is, how did those authors pay the bills all those years? How did they maintain their sanity through the mountain of rejections? How did they build a career?

You see, I believe the egg came first. If you talk to career writers, those successful authors who earn a decent and steady living writing for children, you'll find a surprise. More often than you realize, these writers land a contract before they write the manuscript.

How did I discover this? It happened at my very first conference. A friend said, "I signed you up for an appointment with an editor!" After I got over my shock, curiosity got the better of me. I went to the appointment. And listened. The editor told me about a new book idea she wanted. I found myself nodding my head and saying, "I'll send you a proposal for that idea." I went home, followed her directions, and sent her a sample of a potential manuscript. I landed a contract. And then I wrote the book. My very first book.

At that same conference, I stood in the lunch line next to a different editor. I asked her what she published. She said a series of Bible storybooks. I asked her if I could try to write one.

She explained what to do. I went home and followed her directions. I landed a contract. And then I wrote the book.

And so the story continued. Time after time, I landed a contract first, and then wrote the book. I was starting to see a pattern here. It was exciting, and it sure helped pay the bills!

I found a blurb in a writer's magazine saying Sleeping Bear Press was looking for alphabet books about multicultural topics. I studied their website, noted which topics their books already covered, and saw they didn't yet have an alphabet book about African American history. I e-mailed a query asking if they'd like to see a proposal for such a book. They e-mailed back and said sure. After submitting the proposal, I landed the contract. Then I wrote the book, *D is for Drinking Gourd: An African American Alphabet*. Which came first in the picture book genre, the chicken or the egg? Once again, the egg. The same was true for my teacher's book, *Readers Theatre for African American History*. Which came first in the educational market, the chicken or the egg? The egg, again!

My search for a new contract usually follows the same pattern. I look in market guides and writers' magazines, browse bookstores and libraries, and network at conferences and writers' groups. I look for a publisher who accepts queries. When I find one that interests me, I study their website, look at their catalog, and think of three to five ideas that could fit into their product line. Then I send a query asking the editor if she'd like a proposal on any of those ideas. When that query is in the mail, I look for another publisher to target. If an editor replies and asks for a proposal, I prepare one to submit. If I've never written for that genre and the editor requests a writing sample, I ask for a sample assignment so I'm submitting a sample targeted to that publisher. Once that's in the mail, I continue the cycle again.

And so it goes. This method works in every genre. From middle-grade novels to nonfiction to novelty books to fiction picture books, I have landed the contract first and then written the manuscript. It's daunting. It takes work. But it's very, very rewarding. And it helps pay the bills.



Nancy I. Sanders is the bestselling and award-winning author of over 80 books with publishing houses both big and small. She has written a children's writer's column in *The Writer's* online magazine, the Institute of Children's Literature e-news, and *The Christian Communicator* and is on faculty with the National Writing for Children Center where she teaches teleclasses each month. Nancy shares her strategies for success in her groundbreaking and essential book for children's writers, *Yes! You Can Learn How to Write Children's Books, Get Them Published, and Build a Successful Writing Career*.

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[www.YesYouCanLearn.wordpress.com](http://www.YesYouCanLearn.wordpress.com)

# Every Journey Begins With a Clear Road Map

by

Grier Cooper

Getting started as a new writer can feel overwhelming. On the one hand, you're enthusiastic about getting out there, yet on the other you might not have a clue about what to do first. However, the only way to be certain that you will get where you want to be is to create a clear vision and a solid game plan. In other words, your first step of action is to draw up a road map so you start out headed in the right direction.

Start off with a little brainstorming to determine what distinguishes you as a writer. All writers need to find what differentiates them from other writers in order to create a niche. You have a particular body of knowledge that is yours and yours alone. This is your area of expertise. A PhD is not required for you to be an expert; it is your life experience that defines your work. You'll also need to decide what types of projects you want to write, from short articles to educational textbooks. Ask yourself the following questions to chart your area(s) of focus:

## **What are your interests and passions?**

When it comes to the work of writing (and it is work), it is far easier to dedicate yourself to projects that truly excite you. Knowing your areas of interest helps you narrow your focus when looking for work. Save yourself from barking up the wrong tree and throwing away valuable time and energy.

## **What sort of life experience do you have?**

Maybe you traveled to remote corners of the globe, or spent the best summer of your life working with kids. Perhaps you have three children, three jobs, or three homes. No matter what, you've got information to share with others.

## **Which magazines do you read and enjoy currently?**

The magazines you read provide valuable clues about your interests. More importantly, they might be a great place for you to submit your work. All writers must know the publications they wish to write for inside and out. If you already read the magazine, you will know what types of stories they run, which types of stories have run recently, and what writing style(s) the magazine uses.

## **Which genres of books do you choose to read?**

Ideally you read the types of books you'd like to write. If not, it's a good idea to get started. Writers have the ongoing homework assignment of knowing the current trends in the publishing industry, and it's also helpful to have examples of how books are structured, and which types of books sell.

### **What sort of subject matter intrigues you?**

There may be some subjects that simply arouse your curiosity. Even if you don't have past experience dealing with the subject, with careful research you can gather whatever information you need to complete your project. Never before has there been such a wealth of information available to writers, with such ease of access. It is now possible to write wherever, whenever, or even in bed, if you choose.

### **List your past writing experience, including any related projects, such as teaching.**

Your previous experiences are like stepping stones, leading you on to the next step and the step after that. You will want this information close at hand, anyway, when you put together your writer's resume, one of the most important tools in your author toolbox.

Once you have a clear idea about who you are as a writer, you can then define your goals. Maybe you have always wanted to write for magazines, or you might be a parent who is passionate about blogging. No matter how large or how small, make a list of three goals you wish to pursue in the next year, and be specific. Instead of saying, "I want to write for magazines," use, "I intend to write regularly for the print magazine market." List your top three magazine choices. Write these goals down and post them in a visible place so you can refer to them each day and make sure every action you take is aligned with those goals.

Becoming a writer may not be easy, but it is simple. There is a proven formula that works, and it all begins with clarity of vision. After all, anything that exists began first as an idea. Once your vision comes alive, you're ready for the journey to make it real.



Grier Cooper is a California based children's writer, photographer, and dancer. She draws on over twenty years of experience as a dancer, teacher and performer to create both fiction and nonfiction that inspires, educates and enriches the hearts and minds of her readers.

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## 5 Reasons to Join the CWCC Today

by

Terri Forehand

Writing for children is fun and rewarding. It is also hard work. The road to publication can be downright frustrating. Many authors find a writing coach or writing club to help them on the journey. Here are 5 great reasons to choose the Children's Writers' Coaching Club for your journey into writing for children.

1. **Improve writing skills-** The CWCC offers weekly teleclasses given by Suzanne Lieurance and her team of talented and published authors. These classes focus on the variety of skills it takes to succeed as a children's writer and to continue to hone your writing skills. Examples of what you may learn include:

- Finding a niche
- Writing exciting action
- Revising and cutting unnecessary words
- Show, don't tell
- Character development
- Creating realistic dialog

2. **Grow as an author-** The CWCC offers critiques for your work giving club members concrete ideas on how to grow as a children's author. Each month there are additional writing assignments that focus on a topic to help the member improve, pushing their talent beyond what they might accomplish on their own. The critique of your work teaches not only how to accept criticism but how to improve. The feedback is constructive and members soon begin to write tighter. It shows in the number of acceptances our members boast after only a few months in the club.

3. **Set goals and a plan for success-** The club requirements include setting realistic writing goals and actions to reach those goals. The encouragement offered by club members will go a long way to help each writer set challenging goals and design a set of actions to make those goals happen.

**4. Exposure for your work-** As a club member you have many opportunities to present your writing to the group. Your work can be presented on a personal blog, as a guest post on another member's blog, as an e-book for others, through affiliate programs on the sites of other authors, through contacts available from other club members, agents and publishers who frequent the club sites, or through other instructors who present for the club. Club members have access to contests, agents, publishing sites, and other potential contacts that would not otherwise be available for their work.

**5. Networking and Marketing-** Club members develop a marketing plan through club assignments and learn the skills for promoting their work. Club members write weekly marketing plans for promoting and begin early on to network on social media sites in preparation for their published children's book. Members can participate in virtual book tours for other published children's authors and develop techniques to build a writing platform for their own work. Lifelong relationships are built between club members, many who are published or have valuable connections to the publishing world.

As you can see, there are numerous benefits when you join the Children's Writers' Coaching Club. As a member with my first prayer book coming out in February, I can promise you a fun and successful learning experience if you choose to join.



Terri Forehand is a freelance writer with a passion for children. She loves animals, reading, quilting, and of course writing. Forehand is a wife, mom, grandma, and registered nurse. She has been a nurse in a busy emergency room, a pediatric intensive care unit at a University Hospital, a neonatal intensive care unit, and in the homes of medically fragile children. Her experiences make it easy for her to find things to write about that will be of interest to children.

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# The Importance of Proofreading

by

Irene S. Roth

An important aspect of the writing life is proofreading. Unless you proofread your manuscripts carefully, you won't be considered a credible, skillful, and professional writer. Instead, you may be seen as a careless writer who takes little pride in her work. And, if you don't really care about your own writing, why should anyone else? It is easy to be careless about proofreading, whether or not you're a novice or a well-seasoned writer. Proofreading can be such a boring job that a moment of inattention can occur. However, it is crucial to take the time to proofread so that editors and publishers don't disrespect your work and shove it aside in favor of someone else's. For this not to occur, writers must take steps to produce error-free manuscripts.

Here are a few tips to effectively proofread your manuscripts:

1. Read your manuscript looking for typos and grammatical errors. Choose a unique pen color, such as green, so that your corrections will stand out.
2. Next, put the manuscript away for a while. The longer you can put it away, the easier it will be for you to see your errors once you look at the manuscript again.
3. Use a yellow highlighter to highlight the verbs in your manuscript. Look for verb tense inconsistencies and correct them using another color pen, such as red.
4. After a day or so, reread your manuscript out loud, either to yourself, a friend, or writing partner. Reading your manuscript out loud is the best way to become aware of any choppiness in the flow of words, phrases or sentences. Set your manuscript

aside again for a day or so.

5. Read the manuscript in small chunks this time, looking for any redundancies and inconsistencies. Eliminate those words and phrases out of your manuscript.
6. If time permits, send your manuscript to your critique group. Revise the manuscript once more taking your group's suggestions into consideration.
7. After you make the changes on the computer, proofread them one last time to make sure you caught them all. Set the manuscript aside for a while one last time.
8. Before finally submitting the manuscript to a publisher or magazine editor, read it one last time, checking for sentence and paragraph cohesion. Now your manuscript is ready to send out.

If this sounds like a lot of work, believe me, it is. However, it's well worth it. Unless you put in the necessary time and effort to revise your manuscript, it will keep getting rejected. And this is something you want to avoid at all costs.

So, start the revision process as soon as you can. It can take over two months to produce an error-free and polished manuscript you can be proud of. You deserve to be treated as a credible and professional writer.



Irene Roth is a freelance writer for teens and tweens. She has published over 180 Ezine articles about adolescent self-confidence and self-esteem. She is in the middle of writing three E-books for adolescent girls about empowerment, self-esteem, and self-confidence. They should be available through her website toward the end of 2010. For more information on these and other related topics, please visit [www.adolescentgirlsblog.wordpress.com](http://www.adolescentgirlsblog.wordpress.com). When Irene's not writing for adolescents, she loves writing about the psychology of writing. To learn more about her writing tips, please visit [www.irenesroth.wordpress.com](http://www.irenesroth.wordpress.com). Irene is also a graduate of the Institute of Children's Literature.

# Submitting Manuscripts to Publishers

by

Suzanne Lieurance

Do you submit short stories and picture book manuscripts to children's magazine and book publishers on a regular basis, yet all you've gotten so far is rejection?

Is there something about your current fictional work-in-progress that just isn't working, but you can't figure out what it is? If so, then ask yourself the following 3 questions and make revisions accordingly:

1. Did you create an overall story problem and make this problem evident right at the start of the story?

What does your main character want more than anything, yet he can't quite seem to get? THAT'S the story problem. Without a story problem, you don't have a full-fledged "story." You have what editors call "an incident" or simply a series of incidents.

2. Did you provide readers with plenty of rising action?

Even a simple story can keep young readers quickly turning the pages to find out what happens next if things keep getting worse and worse for the main character. This creates dramatic tension or rising action that should lead to the story's climax.

3. Did you create a satisfying ending that showed how the main character had changed or grown since the beginning of the story?

This can be the MOST tricky part for both beginning and experienced children's writers. Yet, without the right ending, a story just doesn't work.

Before you submit your children's stories to publishers, always check to make sure your manuscript includes each of these 3 elements. Often, that's all you need to do to provide a quick fix for your children's fiction!



Suzanne Lieurance is a fulltime children's author, freelance writer, and *The Working Writer's Coach*. She taught children's writing for the Institute of Children's Literature based in West Redding, Connecticut from 2001-2008, and she is the founder and director of the [National Writing for Children Center](#).

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# 15 Benefits of Reviewing for Aspiring Children's Authors

by

Mayra Calvani

If you're an aspiring children's author, the benefits of reviewing children's books are enormous. If you already review books, you know how true this is.

When you review books...

1. You learn about the craft of writing because you get to identify both the weaknesses and strengths of a book. You learn what works and what doesn't, and eventually you become more apt in avoiding amateurish mistakes when you write your own books. You can do this because you're able to look at someone else's book objectively, something that it's hard to do with your own writing. In this sense, reviewing can make you a better writer and a better judge of literature.
2. Your writing becomes easier and better. Reviewing is writing, after all, and the more you write, the better it gets. Reviewing helps to hone your skills as a word builder.
3. Your thinking skills become sharper because you have to ponder and reflect on why you liked or disliked a book. This sometimes takes keen perception.
4. You become familiar with publishers and the type of books they publish. This is especially helpful if you review in the genre that you write in and if you're looking for places to submit your work.
5. You become familiar with agents and the type of books they like to represent. How do you know this? Most authors thank their agents in the acknowledgements page.
6. You network with other authors who in the future might help you promote your book. Authors are very thankful to reviewers for taking the time to review their books, especially if the reviews are positive.
7. You develop an online presence, a platform. If you have an attractive blog where you post honest, intelligently written reviews, eventually you'll build a good reputation as a serious reviewer and readers, publishers, authors and publicists will want to become your

followers. Having lots of followers will instantly make you more attractive in the eyes of a publisher when you submit your book for consideration.

8. You develop an identity as an expert, especially if you review in the same genre you write in. For example, if you review only young adult novels, and you write reviews often enough, soon you'll acquire a thorough knowledge of the genre and what's new out there, and your reviews will become more insightful because you'll be able to compare works by different authors who write in the same genre. It's difficult to become an expert in all genres, but this is doable in one genre if you're dedicated enough.

9. You may land a contract with a publisher. This happened recently to one of the reviewers at one of the sites I review for. Her reviews were so well and thoughtfully written, they caught the eye of a publisher. They asked if by any chance she had a manuscript around. Well, she did and the publisher ended up offering her a contract!

10. You can build yourself a pretty nice library if you're one of those reviewers who read and review quickly. I know some reviewers who review several books a week.

11. You'll discover authors you didn't even know existed. Review blogs are especially attractive to small press authors and publishers because they usually have trouble getting reviewed by the big publications.

12. You build relationships with publicists who work at major publishing houses. Once they've come to trust you as a serious reviewer, you can request those books you're most interested in.

13. You get to feed your addiction—for free!

14. You can build a resume with publishing credits. They will come in very handy when you start sending out those queries to agents and publishers.

15. You can eventually get paid by submitting your reviews to those sites and publications that pay their contributors.

As you can see, book reviewing can be extremely beneficial for aspiring authors. What are you waiting for? Take out your book, pen and paper, and start reviewing. All you need is a love of books and a passion for words!



Award-winning author Mayra Calvani writes fiction and nonfiction for children and adults. In addition, she is co-editor of *Voice in the Dark* ezine and a reviewer for *The New York Journal of Books*, Blogcritics Magazine's "Kiddie Corner," and SimplyCharly.com. She's had over 300 reviews, interviews, stories, and articles published in print and online. Mayra is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) and the Children's Writers' Coaching Club. Visit her website at [www.MayrasSecretBookcase.com](http://www.MayrasSecretBookcase.com).



If you'd like to learn how to become a published children's writer, find out more about our club  
at:

<http://www.cwcoachingclub.com>