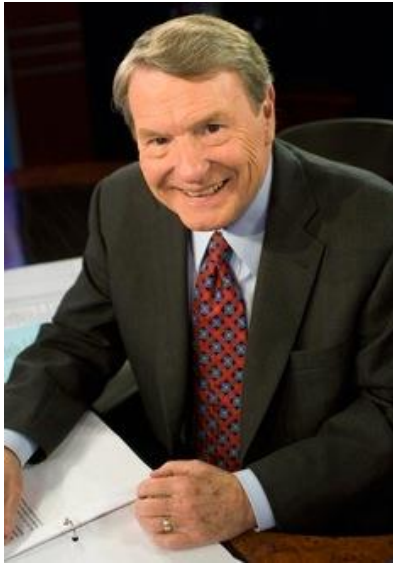


Becoming a Writer—A Preview



A new series is coming on writing and publishing a book. Like other topics, it will be neither exhaustive nor comprehensive—just something to get you started. The first substantial look at this will be in the February edition. For now, we will just do a preview. From an interview with Jim Lehrer, PBS guru and author of many books, comes these pithy words in the [Washington Post Book World](#) from December 2007,

"A young man came up at a book-signing once," he recounts, "and said, 'Mr. Lehrer, I'd write, too, if only I could find the time.'

" 'Do you think you could write a page a day?' " Lehrer asked.

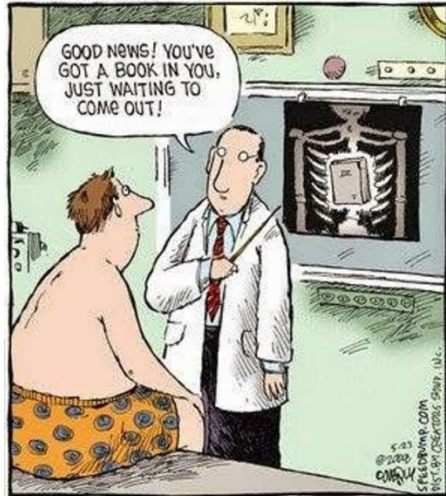
" 'Oh, sure!' "

" 'Well, at the end of 300 days, what would you have?' "

The youth looked puzzled, and then light broke over his face like morning. " 'A novel?' "

How more profoundly simple can you make it than this? Be persistent; just do it! Of course, it really isn't quite *that* simple. Beyond will and determination some research will be required. Like anything else, you get out of writing what you put into it. Little effort produces little result. Ask yourself *what* and *why* before you get too far along in that effort. Take the *why* first; *why* do you want to write a book? To become famous? It's far easier to be famous **first** than expect a book to make you so. But if that is what you are really after, then you will either need to write something spectacular or do something very noteworthy—like generate a big hit on YouTube. Maybe you want to get rich? Well, take a look at the bestseller lists for the past few years and see how many *new* authors appear there; you will be disappointed. Maybe you just have something to say or feel *compelled* to write. Now you are in a better or at least more rational place. Getting somebody else to read that important topic you want to write about is a whole other thing that we'll talk about later. We will get into the *what* and more in February.

Becoming a Writer—Part 1, What Will You Write



We provided an introduction or preview in the November edition of the Quarterly. Let's briefly revisit the point of all this. For some reason, like me, you decided you want to write. Maybe you *do* have a book in you, just waiting to come out. Maybe you want to become famous, share your innermost thoughts, pass along your vast reservoir of knowledge *or* simply have fun. One dose of reality: One of the common complaints from "professional" writers is that while at a party or some other social gathering, it is allegedly commonplace that someone will mention that they want to "write a book, too, someday" as if this were a small or uncomplicated undertaking. The writer must restrain himself or herself from responding to, a doctor, for example "ah, yes; I would like to perform surgery sometime." The point being, ***it is no small task*** successfully writing and publishing a book. Note that I said successfully. With relative ease one can, of course, create an eBook on Amazon or another company. That doesn't mean anyone will ever read it, let alone buy it. So that is one reason why this series is appearing here, to help you avoid those awkward moments. Still, it might be prudent to avoid telling all your friends, family and coworkers your plans. But when you are ready to let them know (and ***long before*** you ever get to the publishing phase) you will want to establish a following or create a "platform" via the web and social media so that when that great work comes out, there will be an audience impatiently waiting its arrival. That's for later in this series.

First, a little aside. I always wanted to be writer—at least from the second grade. But I have also always been a procrastinator. That character flaw, along with having grown up poor, caused me to put off attempting writing for publication for the most part (I did do plenty of writing in high school, college and for work—including educational materials) until retiring from full time employment. I began working on *Waiting for Westmoreland*, a memoir, in 2004 and published it in 2007. It has not achieved bestseller status nor have I become wealthy as a result. In the meantime, I have devoted many hours to blogging, this website, social networking and working on some fiction projects while interrupted by moving from the east coast to the southwest. You can see the quality of my own writing most clearly on my blog with excerpts from current and future projects [here](#).

So what then, you may ask, are my qualifications to educate you about writing? Let me be clear about this—I will not be providing an online writing course. What I will do is offer some suggestions on self-education you should pursue based on my own experience and on knowledge I have gained from others more successful than myself. There will also be some tips on how to get started. I should also note the oft repeated refrain from many in the company of authors, that no one can teach you how to be a great writer. There are many things that can be taught, or at least learned about writing, which *IS* the whole point of this series. With that caveat, let's proceed.

Before putting pen to paper—or more commonly today, fingers to keyboard, you need to have some idea of *what* words will appear. What will you write *about*? What topics, what subjects, and in what form. Whether you are writing poetry, short stories, novels, essays or articles, they are all *about* something. Dogs and cats. History. Technology. Relationships. Politics. Romance. Whatever you find interesting and important to you. Whatever it is, you need to decide whether it will be truth (commonly referred to as *non-fiction*) or fiction. The latter might include biography, history, nature, medicine, social or physical sciences, politics, technology, etc. Are you already an expert in some field? Do you feel compelled, or at least inclined, to share that knowledge with others? Then non-fiction may be the thing you will write.



That gives you an advantage over the novice fiction writer. Why? Because if you are expert, you will more easily be able to attract an audience through your credentials or reputation. Not only that, provided that you work in and enjoy that field of expertise it makes sense that you may enjoy writing about it. Still, sharing technical or scientific knowledge with the general population, as opposed to peers, demands a different set of writing skills. You must be able to make the subject readable by anyone. The late Isaac Asimov, well known as a science fiction author and a professor of biochemistry, had great skill in simplifying complex science. For an example, do a “Look Inside the Book” on Amazon of his *Guide to Earth and Space*. Maybe you won’t be in his league at the outset, but if you want to write for the general public as opposed to your peers, that’s what you will aspire to.

Maybe you are not an expert in some field or don't really want to write within your field of expertise. You prefer fiction. What do you read yourself? Do you read suspense/mysteries, action/adventure, thrillers, romance, spiritual or religious fiction, science fiction or some other genre? Or do you prefer general fiction or perhaps classics—great works of literature? You want to become a bestselling author so maybe you assume you need to write what is most popular. But if you don't read and like it yourself, how are you going to write it?



Worse, if you are not much of a reader at all, you will have a much more difficult time being a writer. As Stephen King says in *On Writing, a Memoir of the Craft*,

"If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot. There's no way around these two things that I'm aware of, no shortcut."

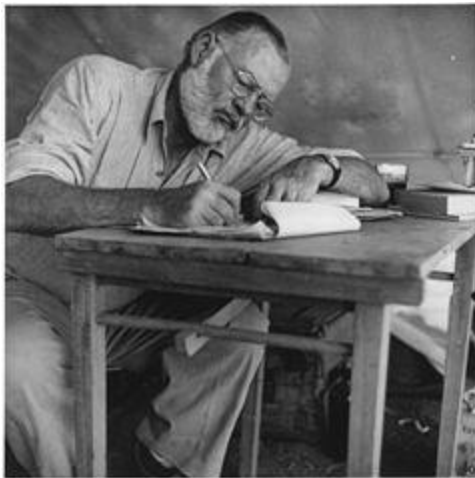
Without reading mysteries, for example, you won't have a perspective on the genre to draw from. Better than taking any writing class is simply reading other writers and absorbing the techniques you find. What can be taught are things like grammar and the "tools of the trade." More on that later in the series.

Back to the *what* of writing. While it is possible to write in multiple genres, many "experts" recommend against it. Why? Simply because each genre has its own history, style, vocabulary, common themes, plots, story arcs, etc. The jack of all trades handyman has a place in maintaining a home, but you probably would not want one to tinker with your computer or service your home's main electrical panel. But you like what you like; don't let anyone dissuade you from challenging conventional wisdom. It's just a hurdle that you can overcome with determination and diligence.

Check Asimov's catalog of writing for an example. In addition to science fiction and hard science, he wrote countless non-fiction books and articles on a vast range of topics from the bible to Shakespeare. More brilliant than most, perhaps it came easily to him but if you want it, just do it. In fact, don't get hung up on genre at all in the beginning. Just write. Yes, eventually you will need to identify genre for ease in marketing and publishing. Back to the bestselling or most popular. If you happen to like what is popular, more power to you. But remember, the bigger the pond, the bigger the other fish and the more of them. If you have a narrow niche, you have less competition. So don't worry about genre or popularity; write what **you** like--not what you think everyone else likes. Your writing will be better for it.

Becoming a Writer—Part 2

Learning How to Write and Thinking About Where



You already decided you *want* to write and you have an idea of *what* you want to write. So now you are ready to get started. You fire up your computer or your tablet, or you pick up your pen or pencil.

Sure, you *can* just jump right in. You can **start a blog**, if you don't already have one, **on Blogger or Wordpress.com**. You can **post your poems, your short stories** or whatever thoughts may occur to you **on Google +**. You can find many sites on the web to submit flash fiction—the really short bits of writing that are much less than the typical short

story. You can submit feature articles or stories to print or online magazines. You can even go to Amazon and create a Kindle account to **upload your work to publish an eBook**. Or you can use CreateSpace on Amazon to create a print book. There are **plenty** of other **options for self-publishing** as well--Kobo, Smashwords, Lulu and many others. ***Should you? No, not right away,***

Why not? Because you want to make sure what you write is of a quality that won't embarrass or short circuit eventual success at attracting readers or selling your work in

whatever market fits what you are writing. If you surf the web, you will find countless complaints (rants even) about the “crap” that can be found among eBooks and on websites. You have probably seen some of it yourself. What *should* you do? Learn more about writing well **and** before putting something out there in print or as an eBook make sure it has been edited. Take your chances on blogs and social media if you like, but remember—**nothing** ever leaves the web, it will be discoverable forever. OK, enough of what not to do; read on for how to get there.

As the quote from Stephen King emphasized in the February edition, ***the best way to learn how to write is read a LOT***. Finding ideas for content is the easy part—they are everywhere. People around you in cafes, stores, waiting rooms, etc., talking to one another or on their phones—heedless of anyone within earshot. You will hear many interesting things. You will also learn something about creating realistic dialogue in the process. Ideas for content are all over TV, the web, print media and in school or the workplace. If you are writing non-fiction, the same is true; news about current studies, reports or inventions—not to mention political or scientific controversies. Back to fiction, you don’t need the ideas of other writers for creating your own work. What you can learn from other writers is how they express those ideas. How they show the conflict that a protagonist must deal with and how that moves the story along. How a plot works. What works and what doesn’t.

Still in college? Take some literature classes. Take some composition classes. Take a creative writing class, if there is one. Out of school? Try a community college for writing classes or adult education through the local school system. Find writing prompts online. Writing prompts typically include a few sentences, sometimes more, to stimulate thought that will get you started. Find a writing group at a local writing group when you have something to share.



If your grammar, syntax, sentence structure and the like are not optimal, you can get help through classes or from books.

The venerable Strunk and White’s *Elements of Style*.

Eats, Shoots & Leaves, by Lynne Truss with its somewhat more humorous way of explaining the importance of grammar and punctuation.

Less didactic but very helpful books like--the previously mentioned Stephen King book,

William Zinsser's *On Writing Well* (for writing non-fiction)

Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*,

Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life*,

Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*

Ray Bradbury's *Zen in the Art of Writing*

Philip Gerard's *Writing a Book That Makes a Difference* (for both fiction and non-fiction)

Judith Barrington's *Writing the Memoir*—to name just a few.

You can find most of these books in your local library. Many are now also available as eBooks in multiple formats. They are also available from used bookstores, new from brick and mortar stores or online. If you want to search for and buy them from Amazon, you can use the search box on the home page of this website (*disclosure: that may result in a small pittance coming Eagle Peak's way from Amazon*). For many more books on the inspirational side, you can also see Stephen King's list of books that have influenced him, [at this site](#).

OK, you have done all that or decided you will just wing it, now what? As we said at the beginning, this article is neither comprehensive nor an online writing course. What follows are general principles that apply to anyone who wants to write. We will start with suggestions that apply to both fiction and non-fiction and then will move on to concepts and tips that apply specifically to one or the other. Some of them may seem simple or obvious but many people still overlook them. The most important advice is this: there are no hard and fast rules to technique; there are strong advocates for one prescription or another but ultimately you have to find what works for you and not feel you are "doing it wrong" if you don't follow some "expert's" advice on how to write. It is important, nonetheless, to know what those "rules" are so that you can break them not out of ignorance or impunity but because you know when it's OK and again, what works for you and your writing.

General writing tips



- **Find a quiet, distraction free writing space** if possible—make it so with headphones, a door or other means. Writing is a mental exercise; don't try to multitask.
- **Devote a solid block of time, whenever possible**—build up to a few hours, if your circumstances permit, from 30 minutes. Otherwise, you will find it difficult to focus and get into a flow.
- **Make use of the writing tools that work best for you**—try pens, laptops, desktops even typewriters if you have access one, until you find a level of comfort.
- **Set meaningful goals or determinations for progress**—words or pages, time, etc. Here is an example of varying opinions or advice: some will suggest you must set a goal of X number of words no matter what; others will say you must spend at least a certain number of minutes/hours. It is up to you, in analyzing your own level of self-discipline versus laziness or procrastination (among other things) to make your own commitment in a way that makes sense to you. Artificial rules won't help and will only frustrate you.
- **Have everything you need to be comfortable**—clothes, food, beverages and the right chair; you can't write if you are uncomfortable. Poor posture is not good for the body or the mind. Use a keyboard properly to avoid wrist problems. Blink and look away from a monitor from time to time to protect your eyes.
- **If you are using a computer, consider what software you will use**--Word-processing software will work for a start. Eventually you might want to consider specialized software such as Scrivener (usable on both Mac and Windows). If you

want to blog or put stuff up on the web, you don't necessarily have to start with a word-processor but it's not a bad idea to get your work together in the final form you want before you load it up on the web.

- **Is there such a thing as "writer's block?"**---You have heard the phrase often enough. It means you are staring at a blank page and can't figure out what to put there. Some say it's a myth or it really is something else. Don't get hung up on the concept. Consider these options to deal with that empty page:
 - Get up and walk around for a few minutes. Step outside for a change of perspective, fresh air, etc.
 - Open or pick up another writing project and work on it for a while, then come back to the one that isn't moving for you
 - Re-examine notes, an outline or whatever planning document you may have
 - Just work through it, if you can, putting something/anything on the page; you can always change it later
 - Switch media—put down the pen and boot up the computer or vice versa
 - Get some coffee, tea or another beverage; have a snack or a meal
 - Only as a last resort, shut it down for the time being and come back to it later—but be sure you do

Nonfiction Writing Tips

There are only two major categories of prose—fiction and non-fiction. The distinguishing feature of non-fiction, of course, is that it should be *true* that doesn't mean it can't be creative—especially for those writing memoirs and personal essays. Which simply means that these and similar types of writing can make use of a narrative style which includes imagery, potentially a story arc and where necessary to proceed can sometimes use dialogue embellished with what the writer honestly believes is reflective of what individuals might have said during conversations 40-50 years ago or supplement details of events that follow logically. Could anyone truly believe that Frank McCourt accurately recalled every conversation and every incident in his bestselling and critically acclaimed *Angela's Ashes*? I don't, yet I'm sure it's close to reality. But when you're writing most other non-fiction, truth is critical. More on that and other tips below:

- **Be truthful;** facts and not fiction are what you must write or risk justified criticism—exceptions:
 - Memoirs and personal essays, as noted above, may necessarily require some invention
 - Opinion pieces, which represent your beliefs and conclusions about possibly controversial issues where the facts are in dispute (climate change, for example)

- Satirical essays, which often might include hyperbole and inventions but aren't really fiction if their point is to criticize or suggest change
- **Do the research** necessary to be truthful—Google and Wikipedia may be a starting point today, but unless you are writing an item discussing the value of them versus other sources, they are not sufficient
- **Primary research trumps** relying on **secondary** sources (see Google and Wikipedia, above); that means going to the original studies, reports, etc., on which the secondary sources rely
- **Reference librarians are helpful**; that's what they chose to do with their lives and they can direct you to sources you might not think of or find on your own but don't expect them to do your research for you
- **If you are a scientist or researcher** yourself in any field and you are writing, **you already know** much of **this**—especially the need for data, statistics, analyses, etc. to back up conclusions but these tips are not meant for your publication of studies in peer journals but for articles or features intended for general audiences so,
- **Avoid jargon** and write at a grade level of readability that a general audience can understand the meaning and import of what you are writing
- **Cite sources** and attribute facts and conclusions of others properly
- **History is** written by victors or survivors, whose inclusions, exclusions and conclusions about what really happened are **not necessarily consistent**; certainly not on what significance is attached to events (recently President Recep Erdogan of Turkey strongly condemned Pope Francis's remarks about the 1915 genocide of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire, for example; an issue now 100 years old) so where there are differing views, you do well to present the various scenarios and **defend your position** on which is correct **if you are taking one**
- No matter whether it's a **short piece or a full-length book**, you should **consider how and why your work is different** or better than any others out there on the same topic;
- If not, why should anyone bother reading it—the web is full of regurgitated tips or news about making use of this technological advancement or that
- Make yours fresh by putting a new spin on it or distinguishing it from what others have written
- **Establish your authority** through work and educational credentials, as well as commenting on the books or writings of others via the web, magazines, etc., to the point that by the time that you publish your item or book your expertise will be recognized.

Fiction Writing Tips

Fiction, no matter the length or the genre, has a number of elements that you probably already are well aware of:

- **Plot**—the narrative or storyline of events that make up the story; depending on the length and complexity of the work, there may be a number of subplots
- **Protagonist**—the main character, often at odds with an antagonist also known as the bad guy
- **Secondary characters** with whom the protagonist interacts
- **Setting**—where the story takes place; there could be multiple settings for different scenes but there is still likely a main focal place for the story
- **Theme**—the overarching issue or concern of the story; it could be love, war, man's inhumanity to man, etc.
- **Conflict**—an internal or external challenge to the protagonist; how the protagonist deals with the events that precipitate the conflict are an essential part of the plot
- **Climax**—when the plot elements of the conflict come to a head, a time when the tensions reach the maximum
- **Resolution**—how the protagonist and any other essential characters resolve the climax, the payoff of the story, if you will

So how do you make these disparate elements into a story—from a short story to a novel? You need a beginning and an end. A good story, no matter its length, connects readers to the protagonist so that they empathize with him/her—feeling what they feel. A story arc introduces the protagonist and through a series of events escalates the conflict to the climax and resolution. Along the way, the story shows the possible character flaws, shortcomings or other reasons that make the challenges the protagonist faces difficult. The speed at which the story progresses from beginning to end depends in part on the genre (action/thrillers are typically fast-paced and sacrifice character development to the plot; romances, mainstream drama and other stories may take a more deliberate pace) and in part on whether it is a short story or novel.

The Mechanics



- **Point of View**—the perspective from which the story is told; from whose head is the story being told to the reader; for an excellent explanation [check out this site](#)
 - **First person** (“I walked along the shady trail”) common in memoirs and autobiographies
 - **Third person** (“Fred walked along the shady trail”)—which can be limited or omniscient; most books today use limited third person (inside the head of one person only)
- **Second person** (rarely used, talking directly to readers)
- **POV can** and often does **switch from scene to scene** but not within a scene; imagine if two people are talking and then the story first offers one person’s thoughts about the other and then the story switches to the other character’s view—very confusing
- **Flashback**—You know what this is, right? A character’s thoughts go back to events of the past; used judiciously for a setup or for character definition and development it works well but done too often in one story it can be confusing
- **The beginning**—ideally, the opening of any story will cause a reader to want to continue reader; hence, the advice to begin with a “hook”
- Set up an action sequence—something is happening with or to the main character
- Do a flashback of some event from the past that sets up a plotline
- Introduces the main character or another key character
- **Show don’t tell**—Tears fell from Lisa’s eyes at the viewing. Her knuckles whitening as she gripped the seat back before her, “What will I do without him?” she voiced her thoughts aloud. [an example of showing] Lisa cried at the viewing, overcome by the loss of her beloved husband Bill. [the same scene told instead of shown]
- **Avoid unnecessary adverbs**—“Stop it,” Sal yelled loudly (loudly is redundant); “Stop it,” Sal yelled; “Stop it,” Sal said loudly—yelled does the work of expressing Sal’s emotion without need of loudly and much better than by modifying said with loudly
- Speaking of **said**—some (including Stephen King, who rails against adverbs) insist that it **works fine to attribute dialogue to a character**:

- He said, she said is fine—especially if you are showing and not telling so that any emotion that hissed, laughed, growled, etc., might convey is unnecessary; only if it is critical and more expedient to use something like “yelled” as in one of King’s own examples in his book, *On Writing* should you consider something else
- Often, if not most of the time, dialogue attribution can be omitted altogether when two characters are having a conversation; it should be obvious who is speaking
- **Be sparing in the use of cliché’s**—consider “It rained cats and dogs, soaking his pants and shoes” versus “The rain fell hard, bouncing drops soaking his pants and shoes the moment he stepped outside”
- **Dribble out character details**—dialogue works well for this, as well as responses to events during scenes; it’s more interesting and keeps reader’s attention learning about the characters as they go along, it’s another aspect of showing versus telling; don’t try to do a biography of the protagonist and other major characters all at once
- **Reveal a character’s faults or flaws**—it’s OK for the main character to be imperfect, in fact it may be essential in presenting the scope of the conflict and getting through the climax to the resolution as the character succeeds despite his or her shortcomings—which most humans have, even heroes
- **If you can plan, do; if you can’t, don’t**—there are two (or more) camps of writers: those who swear by complete planning with outlines, character sketches, setting descriptions, plot lines, etc. and then there are those who completely wing it, letting the characters take the story where it should go; you will have to decide what works for you—try them both on for size and see which you prefer
- **Get it all down, then revise**—this is a mantra sworn to by many, for the sake of not getting bogged down by constantly editing while you are trying to complete a story; it may be hard to resist but if you can, you might find it worthwhile so long as you can forgive yourself for what appears on the page or the screen on the first draft—because it is only that (and should be)
- **Polish and revise until you can do more**—except that will probably never happen; you just have to stop and say enough but then you need to have beta readers and/or an editor look it over, preferably both, if you want you have written to be something others will really want to read and pay for to do so
- **Use spellcheck and grammar/usage checking if using a word processor**—it’s far from perfect but it will give you a start on editing; it won’t catch everything, it will annoy you with its recommendations that are incorrect or unhelpful but it still is useful

These are just *some* of the mechanics that you should consider. There are more, that you will find exploring them on the web or in books about writing, as noted above.

We will get back to some them as we proceed in the August edition of the quarterly. Just write and have fun doing so. But remember, while you can get some tips on improving your writing by posting it on the web on sites of your choosing, you do risk having people take you less than seriously by putting up less than your best work, writing that will forever remain discoverable with only a tiny effort by anyone.

Becoming a Writer—Part 3

Ready to publish? How, choosing where, and more

In part 2 we began with a short discussion about where you might publish your writing and then moved on to how. We focused on tips, techniques and mechanics. Did you take all that in? Maybe as much as you feel you needed? **You** checked out some other resources and you **are ready to put your work out to the world. So now you need to decide how and where.** As we said last time, you can upload your stuff to the web for all to see for free. Let's assume you want people to pay for your material. Then you want to be able to sell it to them directly or through a content provider such as a magazine or publisher (we will get to online versus print later). Even if the objective is to sell your work, **you still may want to first engage readers via the web.** Why and how should you do that?

Have you heard of **building an author platform**? No, it's not an elevated structure on which you park your chair and your desktop for writing. **It's a place where prospective readers learn who you are and what you write. They can become followers even before you have published something.** It's not, unfortunately, an easy thing to attract subscribers or followers to a blog; we can attest to that. But let's come back to that in a bit. **Remember: Regardless of what or where, once up on the web, whatever you post will be available forever. Ranting, being snarky or feeding trolls will hurt you.** Note that a blog can be on a self-hosted site where you pay a service provider for access to a server.

With **a self-hosted site** you can download what you need to create a blog from places like WordPress.org (also typically found on some sort of installer found on your host's control panel). Don't want the hassle or expense of a webhost? You can get **use a free blog site** like WordPress.com or Blogger (part of Google) and use your regular ISP (that connects you to the web, your email, etc.) for the blog. The appearance of your site is determined by a template. There are both free templates and ones you can buy. Premium packages are also available from the sites that offer additional bells and

whistles. Aside from blogging, there is also social media—Facebook, Google +, Goodreads (more on this later), LinkedIn and many more. The good news on blogging and social media is that you can, potentially, attract many followers. The bad news is that you can spend an inordinate amount of time doing this, at the expense of time that could be spent writing what you want to be publishing and selling. **How easy is it to attract followers? Not very.**

Just as there are countless books published both in print and online on a daily basis, **there are countless blogs out there** as well. One blog which we follow is titled, *Snowflakes in a Blizzard*. Its goal is to help authors reach readers. The title reflects the reality of doing so. There are countless blog posts as well on improving **SEO (search engine optimization)**—that is, how to make your site more visible to Google and the others so that your site will show up at the top of the page in a search. The catch-22 is that the more popular (i.e., more followers and page views) your site is, the higher you show up on a search. Sort of circular. There are posts and software which, theoretically, will help you write better headlines that will help—and so on. **So, in addition to learning about writing, you need to learn about all of this—OR pay somebody to do it for you. Why? Because as the snowflakes analogy emphasizes, it will be difficult for anyone to find your work unless they already know it's there.** There are exceptions of course. If you are a celebrity—a politician, an athlete, a prominent entertainer, TV personality, etc. you will have little difficulty attracting a following or selling books. Not one of them? Hard work or money spent is in your future.

What can you do? Engage with other bloggers. Comment on posts on their sites. Follow their blogs. Careful, while writers may also be readers, you can be in an incestuous circle which doesn't necessarily get you more exposure—but there is camaraderie and the potential for mutual promotion. Don't think of other writers as your competition. Be aware that **Facebook**, with its millions of members won't necessarily give you the exposure you hope for—it is the paradigm of *social* media focused on connecting with friends and family. If you want all of them to know about your book, that may work. But it won't do much with strangers without paid advertising, which is not inexpensive and probably won't produce spectacular results. **LinkedIn groups typically are not fond of self-promotion. Google +does have groups for writers and readers, but the cautions on self-promotion apply there to a lesser extent** than on LinkedIn. **Goodreads theoretically should be a prime choice for an author**—offering the opportunity to have an “author's page.” That only happens once you have a book published however. You should also be aware that once you do have that book out, you will get your share of hard-hitting negative reviews among the good ones—these are real readers, not your friends or family. In the meantime, before you are an author, you could be engaging other readers. **Both on**

Goodreads and Google + it's probably most effective to focus on the genre(s) in which your writing will be published.

What else can you do? Once you have a book published, you can **do book giveaways on your blog, Goodreads or Amazon, among other sites.** On your blog you can use special software such as "Rafflecopter" for giveaways. You can also do (**print only**, currently) **giveaway promotions on Goodreads.** On **Amazon** you can do short term **free downloads** as a promotion if you are in the Kindle Select (90 day minimum exclusive book sales by Amazon). What you can do, **how often and whether print or eBook is site specific.** In all cases, your blog and social media is a place where this can be done. All of this discussion is a bit ahead of where we need to be right now, but it fits here because we are talking about blogs and social media. Part of this is that while having an author platform in advance of publishing is far better than starting one after the fact, the platform should continue for both reader engagement and continuing marketing of current and future work.

OK, now that we have done a small discussion on blogs and social media, let's get **back to the question of where to put your actual work.** Shorter items most easily fit in **magazines, journals or newspapers**—whether in print or online. There also are some **websites which will pay for content.** Finally, there are (often college/university related) **literary journals or reviews.** They typically pay little, if anything (other than free copies) but are potentially valuable for exposure and credentials. How do you find such markets? You can buy a print or online edition of Writers Market or similar publications. **Most important** is carefully **scrutinizing their submission requirements and adhering to them.** If not, your submission will be rejected outright. You need to read closely any magazine or site to see that your work meets their style, genre, etc. Again, doing short stories, even if your goal is to write a novel, may be a good steppingstone for attracting followers. Breaking into top tier magazines is difficult at best, but they will be of the most value for the future, not to mention the higher compensation they pay at the outset.

If all you want to do is sell web content or magazine articles, we could plug in a lot more here, but since many of you want to **write and sell books**, we are going to move along. **You have two roads to travel—traditional or self-publishing.** There are even hybrid authors, who do some of each. Let's talk traditional first.

Traditional publishers rarely ([see this site for exceptions](#)—and other good information) **accept submissions directly from authors**, even established ones. **Instead, you need an agent** who will try to hook your manuscript up with a publisher. **More on agents in the next paragraph.** Traditional publishers only want authors whose books they expect will sell well. The nature of the traditional publishing

model is that the company will have a press run of a few to several thousand books (many more for anticipated blockbusters). Those books will go to brick and mortar booksellers through buyers and wholesalers at a steep discount to the cover price. Unsold books at brick and mortar stores will be remaindered (returned for at least partial credit) and/or the covers torn off or otherwise identified as no longer to be sold. An advance is given authors against what the publisher thinks a book will earn. You get to keep the advance, as part of the gamble the publisher makes in printing your book. As a result of the risks the publisher makes, you get a percentage of the net which may be as little as 7.5-15% (the highest percentage goes to well-regarded books or well-known authors). But you don't start getting royalties until your book sales have earned the back the advance. The traditional publisher will also make print editions of your book available from online sellers on similar terms. Finally, they also will make eBooks available as well but the royalty terms will be somewhat different (a higher percentage on a lower price).

Agents often specialize in audiences of a target market, like adult, young adult or children and **in genres like romance, mystery/suspense, fantasy/sci-fi, etc.** The non-fiction market is somewhat different as well. It can be even more difficult finding an agent interested in representing you than it is in getting a publisher. Agents only want authors whose books will be attractive to top-paying publishers since the agent's income is based on a percentage of the advance and the royalties you receive. An agent, among other things, will also negotiate contractual rights for you. What are those you may ask? Consider this: books are sold throughout the world, in translation or not. A book might be republished in a new format by the publisher. Is it the publisher or you who have international rights, etc.? Subsidiary rights (film options, derivative works and more)? The list goes on and on. It's wonderful getting the book out, but you need to be careful not to give away the farm, so to speak, in your joy at being a published author. *There is way more to know about author rights than can be explained here, so I leave it to you to do the **research** you need to do beginning on those **sites listed in the next instalment of Becoming a Writer, in the November Quarterly.***

Self-publishing means either print-on-demand (POD), eBooks or a combination of both. Let's discuss POD first. It means that a digital version of your book is stored at the publisher. When someone orders a copy of the book, it is produced on a high-speed printer not unlike (but of higher quality and complexity) a photocopier and shipped to the buyer. **For POD** (like with traditional publishing) **books can be hardcover, paperback or trade paper, among other things.** The physical form has more to do with the heft and the preferences of buyers. In traditional publishing, some books may start out and remain in paper because they are not of the stature to be hardcover. Others start out as hardcover and later also come out in paper. You have to think hard

on whether there is a point to doing a hardcover for a POD book; it will cost much more. It might work for specialty, non-fiction books but not so well for genre fiction unless you are a superstar. So what about eBooks?

You know all about Kindles, Nooks and iPad readers, right? Some readers buy both; some prefer one or the other. But if you really want people to read your book, you want to make it available in as many formats as there are potential readers, right? Even **audio books** (not going to spend much time on those, but note that like other things, going professional likely is worth it—in other words, professional voice artists and recording specialists rather than doing it yourself, unless you have an impeccable and mellifluous voice) **may be a worthwhile choice.** For people with long commutes (plenty of them near major cities around the world) an audio book can be a popular thing. OK, back from the tangential—**with self-publishing you need no agent.** What you do need is a skeptical eye and a close watch on what someone may be trying to sell you. You will make considerably higher (3-4 times or more) in royalties than with traditional. You will also have somewhat less respect among critics, reviewers and the populace at large. Many, not without reason, think a lot of the self-published material is poorly written and edited stuff that a traditional publisher wouldn't touch. But that's within your control to change.

Before you either try to find an agent to hook you up with a publisher or go the independent self-publishing route, you want to make your book the best it possibly can be. What does that mean? It means you have gone **through several drafts, revising it** until you think it is the best thing since sliced bread. **THEN you want to enlist some beta readers** (not your spouse, friends or family—who are torn between not wanting to burst your bubble and telling you not to give up your day job or not really understanding what they are supposed to be looking for) to tell you what they liked or didn't like about the work. More than that, it's good to give them at least a short list (too long/complicated and they may rebel) of things you specifically want their input on—pacing, characterization, plot, dialogue and some nebulous things like what they particularly liked/didn't like. Most importantly, did it hold their interest to the point where they didn't want to put it down? **After the beta readers, most experts (especially the professional editors) will urge that you have your book professionally edited.** It's not bad advice, well calculated to avoid embarrassing mistakes. Only then should you seek that agent or start the self-publishing process. In a book world long ago and far away, traditional publishers had their own editors that would polish up sloppy work; today they would never have accepted it in the first place. They will still clean up some stuff because their name is on the cover too.

What else needs to happen before your book is seen by the public? You need **a cover. Traditional publishers** should design a decent cover (for all formats) to your

book. **Self-publishers** will do it themselves or pay somebody for it (are you a very *good* graphic artist or designer too, with excellent skills?) Well you can design your own book cover. Otherwise, book covers need not cost a fortune. Do they help sell books? You know the old saying, “you can’t tell a book by its cover.” Since you are talking about a cover that prospective readers will be seen most often (if not 100% of the time) on a computer, tablet or smart phone screen rather than on the shelf of a bookstore you have to consider how it looks as a relatively small image. Any text must be readable and the cover should grab attention. Go look through the books on the web in your preferred genre to see ones that look good or bad. If the book were on a shelf, the cover might determine whether a person picks it up to look or not. Does the same hold true on the web? Maybe or maybe not. But why take a chance on a less than good cover.

You also want **rave reviews** to put on that cover (or inside) as blurbs. Once again, there are differences between traditional and self-publishing. **What about the reviews? Traditional publishers will send out advance review copies (ARCs)** to critics to get (hopefully) favorable words to put on the back or inside covers. You theoretically could do that as a self-publisher but it’s not likely to happen. Kirkus will allow you to pay for a review, but we wouldn’t bother, based on complaints we have seen about the quality of the paid reviews.

At least **one more thing to consider, ISBNs** (International Standard Book Number). **The ISBN is what the industry uses to identify and track books.** They link a book format and edition to a publisher. Traditional publishers will supply them, as they are the publisher. The self-publishing providers will supply them OR use one you provide. If it’s **an eBook, it doesn’t necessarily have to have one**, but it’s good if there is one. If you are self-publishing, do you want someone else to have the ID as the publisher? Your call. **Why do you need to consider this ahead of time? Because the number goes on the book, of course.** How do you get one if you want to buy it yourself? In the US, there is ONLY one seller of ISBNs, Bowker—at ISBN.org. Elsewhere in the world the numbers may be cheaper and available from sources whose motive may not be maximizing profits. Bowker offers various packages, often including 10 numbers (if you are planning on publishing more than one book—you are, aren’t you?) You might as well do that because the numbers don’t expire. Have hardcover, paperback and eBook versions? Each has to have its own ISBN. You can buy the barcode (you might be able to download software to create one but do you really want to go there?) from Bowker or elsewhere,

What happens after the book is out? Stay tuned for the November edition of the Quarterly. You weren’t ready to jump in right now, were you? Sorry.

Decided to self-publish? So which company? How to choose? Again, that's coming next time.

What else is coming in November? Every link to every writing resource we have seen and consider worthy of checking out (there are a LOT of them). So come back in November for the conclusion of this series. If you missed any part, you can use the archive function. But to make it easier for you, we will collect it all in a PDF.

Part 4: Self-Publishing, Marketing & Resources

Decided to self-publish? So which company? How to choose?

Let's say **you have decided to self-publish. You will do** or pay for **all of the marketing and promotion.** Most sites or companies that will help you self-publish will happily sell you these services as well. **Here's where the skepticism and smart shopping comes in.** There are bad actors out there that will charge high fees for services which aren't worth the cost. **Go to pred-ed.com (Preditors and Editors—yes the site spells it that way on purpose) to find the good witches and the bad witches.** And, as previously noted, you will still need to do some promotion/marketing yourself even with a traditional publisher, so you will want to check Preditors and Editors for independent providers of these services.



As in so much else, Amazon is the 800-pound gorilla (or in this case, maybe the 5-ton gorilla). Still, there are many other choices as well. But as we said earlier, why would you want your book to NOT be available in or from as many places as it possibly can? To exclude some means that readers who prefer one format or one seller over another won't buy your book—not a good outcome. All, or virtually all, of the POD/eBook publishers make it *relatively* easy to upload your book for them to publish. Relatively refers to formatting. Most will convert your book into whatever format will get your book out to the public. But before you upload it, after all the editing/proofing, etc., is done you will probably want or need to make a table of contents--even for a fiction book. The sites have explanations of how to do that and to deal with other issues like page numbering (unnecessary for eBooks), fonts, footnotes, etc. Beyond their requirements, look at any book on your shelf. You will see a series of things inside the

cover—a title page, “front matter,” your name, copyright information, etc. There are protocols for this. Learn them.

All right, the moment of truth—who are the publishers you want to consider? Bear in mind that whoever you go with, some will want to make your book available through their site or company alone—as we have already suggested, don’t go there. Instead, most of them will also offer distribution through various wholesale outlets (for POD). Some of them will also offer conversion of eBooks into the various eBook formats. Kindle (Amazon) and iBook (Apple) have their own formats; everyone else, including Barnes & Noble’s Nook use the EPUB standard. You can separately offer those sites your eBooks as well. NOTE: you can do this individually with each and every eBook seller OR you can work through a wholesaler/publisher that will charge you a distribution fee to make your book available on multiple sites. So here are the links to some (not all) of the major publishers you may wish to consider:

- Amazon—[CreateSpace](#), their print on demand publishing option
- Amazon—Kindle, if you don’t know what this is, stop reading and go watch TV; what you DO need to know are various flavors/options
- [Kindle Direct](#)—this is the basic option; you upload your book following their guidelines, set a price and can get 70% or 30% royalties (depending on country choices, etc.)
- [Kindle Select](#)—this is a minimum 90 day deal in which your book is available exclusively through Amazon; your book will also be made available via Kindle Unlimited (in which subscribers can read as many books as they want in a month) and the Kindle Owners Lending Library (there’s a limit on the number they can borrow). The carrot is that you earn 70% royalty on some countries that otherwise your sales would earn only 30%. The Unlimited and the Lender programs will pay you from a pool of revenue based on the number of pages of your book read by the subscribers (yes, per Amazon’s agreement with the subscribers, they know that—it’s based on “normalized” pages since Kindle and other ereader users can change the font size and hence the page count. The other big deal is that you easily offer free downloads of the book for short periods of time. **Why would you want to do that? Because a whole bunch of free or reduced price downloads MAY result in your book being an Amazon best seller AND generate word of mouth sales for that book as well as attention to future ones.**
- Barnes & Noble (B&N)—almost a year ago B&N jumped into the POD business, adding to their existing Nook eBook.
- [Nook](#) is their eBook brand name. Nook uses the EPUB format; Kindle uses a proprietary MOBI format. Both have apps to enable to read them cross-platform, on computers or tablets.

- [Nookpress-print](#) is the new POD program they started
- [Kobo](#)—originated in Toronto but now owned by Japanese company Rakuten. They will enable you to publish eBooks directly with them (EPUB) worldwide. They do not offer POD.
- [Lulu](#)—offers both POD and eBooks. They, like others, also offer various add-ons like cover design, editing/proofing, marketing plans, etc. They also offer distribution through various channels. The basic POD costs little and eBook nearly nothing. The cuts into your revenues come in the way of distribution charges for eBooks.
- [Smashwords](#)—as the landing page will illustrate, they are exclusively an eBook publisher which also makes your book available through multiple sellers in multiple formats, including Apple’s iBooks and for a variety of EPUB readers (NOT including Kindle).

We have intentionally omitted the large remainder of POD publishers out there. If you search the web for Print on Demand publishers you will have no trouble finding them. **BUT you must BEWARE:** there are many which will take much money from you for various services, as previously noted. **Many of them are subsidiaries of an infamous company that need not be mentioned here** assuming that before signing up with any, you follow our advice and **check [Preditors and Editors](#)—where you will quickly learn who is who.**

So, you have edited your book and are ready to upload it, somewhere—but wait, there’s more, as they say in the infomercials.

Some things you may want to have at the back of the book, after the ending:

- A request for a review, assuming they liked it, on whatever site they purchased it from (or downloaded the free or discounted copy you offered as a promotion)
- More about yourself—a brief profile and perhaps more about how you came to write this book
- For eBooks, links to your social media sites, your website, etc.
- An excerpt from your next book (ideally you already are far enough along on that next book to include this; if not, you can always revise an eBook later to add)
- Perhaps an invitation to subscribe to an email newsletter that will announce when your next book is available, **with a caveats that you will NOT share their email address, will not spam them** with frequent messages and that **they can opt out at any time** [a legal requirement in the European Union and elsewhere].

What happens after the book is out?--AND some other very important pre-release tasks

Promotion and marketing of course! Schedule whatever marketing you can afford or feel comfortable doing WAY BEFORE THE BOOK IS OUT:

- News releases (although not necessarily that helpful anymore).
- Features or interviews with your local news media.
- Book signings at a local bookstore. Note that independents are more likely to do this and that you may need to supply the books on consignment; even a chain *may* do it at one or two local outlets.
- Advertising on selected book sites (see the list in the resources section).
- Guest blogs or “blog hops” on other sites (not as popular as they once were).
- Reviews on blogs.

Yes, that’s right, book signings, TV and radio interviews (seriously, do you think all those will happen?) Maybe they will if your traditional publisher set some up for you. Once upon a time traditional publishers spent time and money promoting and marketing your book. Not so much anymore. Sure, for James Patterson et al, not for you. The interviews are possible, but difficult for the self-publisher except at relatively low-rating outlets which offer limited exposure. Plan ahead to make them happen when the book comes out. You can also pay for ads, if you can afford it. Press releases are free, but are themselves an art form—you can learn about them or pay to have them done. You can do some of the marketing yourself via social media, the blog, etc. (you did get that platform up and followers in advance, right?). According to a leading agent who gave a talk at the Southwestern Festival of the Written Word, **word of mouth is the biggest reason people buy books. In other words, get some people to like your book and tell their friends.** *More on this later.* Book signings at brick and mortar sellers may work if you can talk a local book store into taking some of your books on consignment (independents may be better targets than chains) because they seldom will stock self-published books. Book signings can also happen at community events, libraries and elsewhere. Maybe there are book clubs in your community that might want you to appear for a reading/discussion/signing.

How do you get a copyright?

Your book is legally copyrighted (in the US) by publishing it with your name, the title and a date. **However**, if you want **to be able to enforce that copyright** you need to do something more. **You need to register your book at U.S. Copyright Office** in the Library of Congress. You can do this online now. **Everything you need to know** about the process is [on their website](#). It takes a *very* long time before they eventually send you a certificate acknowledging your registered copyright. How will this

vary if you are using a publisher? Don't guess; ask them during the contract negotiations. Whatever you do, don't pay somebody else to do this for you; the copyright office charges enough as it is and doesn't require a professional submission from someone else.

Web resources that will help in all aspects of writing—from the first draft through marketing



Here are links to websites, articles on blogs and more that you may find useful. Some have appeared in the series before; most appear here in this series for the first time. They are categorized by topic in alphabetical order. NOTE: we cannot attest that they are all update, but as of October 2015 all are active. **No evaluation or approval is implied by the listing**; you must evaluate the merits of any site you check on the list. On just a few listings there will be some pros or cons. Some items on this list contain lists of their own—links to other sites just as this list. So there is a great deal of information to be gleaned here, some better than others. **This is just a small sample of what's available**, but it's a start. To update that old biblical quote—search the web and you shall find [some good stuff and some junk].

Advertising/Marketing

- Advertising/promo sites
- [90 sites to advertise your book](#)
- [35+ Alternatives to BookBub](#)
- [BookBub](#) (a paid service that doesn't take all submissions; for free or discount books only)
- [Book Promo Sites curated by Indies Unlimited](#)
- [Book Promotion Opportunities](#) (free, may be time-specific; see site) by Chris McMullin
- [Bookchoic4u](#)
- [Booklikes](#) (based in Europe; authors can have a page once a book is published)
- [An Interactive List of Book Promotion Sites](#) & Free Submission Tool—table with lots of information and links to sites
- [Snowflakes in a Blizzard](#)—descriptive of what most books are; free promos of your book
- Email marketing
- [Beginners Guide](#)
- [Email list building tips](#)
- [MailChimp](#)--more like the gorilla of email; up to 2,000 subscribers are free-- check the site for details of what they do

- Miscellaneous promotion techniques
- Building a book trailer on a shoestring—four part series on The Story Reading Ape site: [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#) [Part 3](#) [Part 4](#)
- Talk radio—[Gordon’s radio list](#) is NOT free
- [Strategic Use of Book Giveaways](#)—from Jane Friedman
- [Book Marketing Buzz](#)—“book promotion and marketing tips for authors”
- Press releases, etc.
- [Free Press Release Distribution Service](#)—check the site to see if this is for you
- [EMSI](#) (Paid PR firm) does lots of stuff, may not be inexpensive

All of the above and all of below—special multifaceted sites

- [Indies Unlimited](#)—writing tips, marketing, publishing and much more; good site
- [Michelle Rene Goodhew](#)—primarily a good cover designer but also has articles for authors
- [Publishing and other forms of insanity](#)—author Erica Verrillo’s site with frequent info on new agents, publishers accepting submissions without agents, writing contests and more (great)
- [Preditors and Editors](#)—*preeminent source* for checking on agents, publishers, editors, etc.
- [The Story Reading Ape Blog](#)—guest posts on writing, marketing, design and much more **including free author profiles and book promotions** (a great site); follow/sign up
- [Writer’s Digest](#)—major source of information; not all free but check it out

Author blogs/sites of interest—most have many tips about self-publishing, writing, etc.

- [Allen, Anne R. \(with Ruth Harris\)](#)
- [Best Author Blogs](#)—link list from Writers Write
- [Blake, Russell](#)--can be a bit pessimistic/misanthropic but you may find helpful kernels here
- [Colletta, Sue](#)—crime fiction writer
- [Cronin, Sally](#)--has a very eclectic site which includes helping to promote other writers and offering tips on this and that
- [Howey, Hugh](#)—very successful self-publisher
- [Kaye, D.G.](#)—lots of tips from essayist/memoir writer Kaye.
- [Rossis, Nicholas](#)—fantasy/sci-fi writer
- [Verrillo, Erica](#)—great blog with tips on agents, contests, submissions without agents and more

Blogging/content writing and related topics

- [Brain Pickings](#)—Maria Popova’s site has few tips but is an example of **great** curation/writing
- [Brevity](#)—a flash fiction website (very high end) to which you might submit 750 word pieces
- [50 Free Resources To Become A Great Writer](#)
- [Power words to increase traffic](#)
- [Liz Strauss—Successful Blog](#)—with over 50,000 followers, this is a very successful blog, although not quite so much as Brain Pickings

Book design/production

- [Barcode Graphics](#)—company will create barcodes for print books
- [E-book formatting explained](#)—simplifies the mystifying process
- [How To Make a Free 3D Cover Image of Your Book](#) (David Henderson has lots of tips on free and low cost techniques for book design, promotion, etc. while also offering paid services)
- [Michelle Rene Goodhew](#)—paid cover design and other assistance (see above)
- [Vedic Design](#)—paid cover design, etc.
- [Updating your eBook after publication](#)—YES, you can do that and may need/want to this tells you how

General self-publishing tips and resources

- [Aaron Shepard’s Publishing Page](#)—a little different; you may find it useful or not
- [Getting your book translated for global reach](#)
- [Independent Publisher](#)—has a monthly webzine, annual IPPY awards, reviews and more
- [Midwest Book Review](#)—major player
- [Money, Writing and Life with Jane Friedman](#) on the Creative Penn site
- [POD database](#)—free from author/designer Dehanna Bailee; *may* not be 100% up to date
- [SELF-e](#)—get your book into libraries; a BIG deal

Reviews of your book

- Author/Publisher Information ([Get a Book Reviewed](#))—Midwest Book Review (see above)
- [How to get reviews for your book](#)—from Your Writer Platform, with links
- [How to get Amazon’s top reviewers to review your book](#)--from a writer
- [Indie Book Reviewer](#)—links to bloggers who review books, organized by genre

- [Indie Author's Guide to Paid Reviews, The](#)—from Publishers Weekly (think long and hard before paying for a review)
- [Indie Reviewers List, The](#)—from the Indie View, with hyperlinks to reviewers in a table format
- [Kirkus Reviews](#)—expensive for and not up to par with the free reviews for traditional publishers; do a web search for authors' bad experiences with them
- [Prestigious Reviews and How to Get Them](#)—don't hold your breath or spend big bucks for a self-published book (especially an eBook) except possibly if you have your own company
- [Reviews Readers will Pay Attention to and How to Get Them](#)—from Sandy Appleyard

Social Media

- [Facebook](#)—if you are already on it, you may find it useful; don't join just to promote your book
- [Goodreads](#)—offers author pages, promotional opportunities, ability to blog or link to posts from elsewhere, networking, reviews, and more BUT must have a book out to get an author page. **You should be on here** and networking with prospective readers.
- [Google Plus](#)—Facebook competitor with blogging capability and brand sites
- [How to set up a Google Plus personal profile](#)
- [How to Use Google+ as an Author Platform](#)
- [Google Plus Pages for business and brands](#)—Martin [Shervington](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [How to benefit from the LinkedIn publishing platform](#)—(long form posts)
- [How To Use SlideShare To Market Your Book](#) (SlideShare is now a part of LinkedIn)
- [Long-form posts on LinkedIn](#)—overview with more links (on LinkedIn itself)
- More--Yes there are more, more than listed below. If you like or use any of them already or think they will help you market your book, go for it. **Just remember**, while it is important to have a presence as an author, **every minute you spend on social media is a minute you are NOT spending working on your book(s)**.
- [Instagram](#)
- [Pinterest](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Tumblr](#)

Other Writing Resources

- [Absolute Write](#)—great source for lots of things, too much to describe here just check it
- **Beta Readers**
- [Beta Readers Bulletin Board](#)—despite the name, this is much more
- [Everything you need to know](#) [maybe]
- [What to ask them to do](#)—how, when, etc. Don't just ask for general feedback from friends, coworkers, relatives, etc.
- [Copyright](#)—the government agency for the United States; sorry, no links for other countries
- [Creative Non-Fiction](#)—magazine, website, books, tips (memoirs, etc.)
- [Critters Workshop](#)—info/links, critique exchange for sci-fi, fantasy and horror writers; more
- [Library of Congress cataloging for print books](#)--not a great shot at getting your book on a shelf there, but you can go for it just in case
- [Morris Rosenthal's self-publishing blog](#)—one of the originals in self-publishing; site is technical and not so great for beginners but his information can be helpful
- [National Writers Union](#)—an actual union of all kinds of writers; offers lots of help and takes positions on issues concerning writers
- **Specific writing tips—dialogue, motif, etc.**
- [Chuck Palahniuk's tips for being a better writer](#)—his perspective
- [Conflict, using it to make your book a page turner](#)—an essential plot element
- [Crime Writers Resource](#)—links and tips compiled by author Sue Coletta
- [Dialogue](#)—how to write it; not new but these tips don't age
- [52 tips for writing better](#)—links to tips on other sites; still has good stuff
- [Keeping readers hooked](#) (turning the page)
- [Motif](#)—using the literary device of motif
- [Turning a blog into a book](#)—tips on how to do that
- [WritersEdit](#)—various resources for writers, book reviews and some opportunities
- [Writer's Guild of America, West](#)—NOT for *book* authors; this is for content writers-- screen, TV, web/mobile apps, etc.
- [Writer's Market](#)—paid subscription service; for freelancers and others—where to sell your work
- [WritersNet](#)—a site that includes agents, editors, publishers and writers (or so they say) with resources on various topics