

# Penwheels Newsletter



## Spring 2016

*For Escapees Writers, Published or Not*



### Tips From Jaimie

*By Jaimie Hall Bruzenak*

👤 "Writing essays for publications that publish strictly according to specific themes or theme lists can be fun and easier (well, a little easier) than writing for publications that do not."

"7 Paying Markets For Theme-Specific Essays!" by Barbara Weddle in [Writer's Weekly](#). Good tips on how to get started plus links to paying markets.

👤 "Creative nonfiction is a combination of journalistic skills and storytelling abilities" says an article in [Writer's Weekly](#). The [article by Flora Ojow](#) goes on to list 10 paying markets for this sort of writing.

👤 Good [article](#) on 25 words writers should eliminate from their vocabulary.



### Making It!

"The key to making it as a writer is to write a lot, write great stories, and even publish them yourself. Spend more time writing, study the industry, act like a pro, network, be nice, invest in yourself and your craft, and most of all be patient.



If you can do all of these things, you'll earn some money. Maybe enough to pay a bill every month. Maybe enough to get out of debt. Maybe enough to quit your job. Thousands of writers are doing this, and we are welcoming all comers with open arms."

- Hugh C. Howey ["My Advice to Aspiring Authors"](#)

Hugh Howey is the author of the award-winning *Molly Fyde Saga* and the New York Times and *USA Today* best-selling *WOOL* series.

Don't tell me the moon is shining;  
show me the glint of light on broken  
glass. . . . . Anton Chekhov

Easy reading is damn hard writing.  
. . . . . Nathaniel Hawthorne

The story I am writing exists, written  
in absolutely perfect fashion, some  
place, in the air. All I must do is find  
it, and copy it. . . . Jules Renard,  
"Diary," February 1895

### This Issue

Tips From Jaimie  
Making It!

Braggin' Rights

Final Financial Statement

Fiction Tips From Ellen

From the Editor

Flash Fiction

The World of Publishing

Writing Jobs

Guidelines for Story Lengths

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Penwheels is a private group of  
Escapees members who enjoy writing  
and discussing the writing adventure.

The Penwheels Newsletter is  
digitally published quarterly. Free to all!



## Braggin' Rights

By Joanne Alexakis

Source: *Escapees Jan/Feb 2016 magazine:*

**Ramona Creel** SKP#97787, *"The Life and Death of an LP Tank,"* page 12. Ramona writes why and how to refurbish or replace your obsolete LP tanks. Thank you, Ramona, for putting this task in words even I can understand.

**James (Jim) Browne** SKP#20964, *"Benefits of Volunteering,"* page 30. Jim has been a passionate volunteer for many years in many ways. He writes about the benefits of volunteering and encourages us with the how and where to get started.

**Margo Armstrong** SKP#47139, *"The Magic Age of 65: RVing and Medicare,"* page 34. Margo spells out the steps needed to get signed up for Medicare, advises us how to use Medicare once you are a policyholder, and also creates a Travel List for Healthcare to track your doctoring and medications while on the road.

**Mark and Dortha Hall** SKP#102095, page 38. Mark and Dortha are pictured in their roll as Escapees Chapter Directors. Also on page 50, Dortha is listed as the new Escapees BOF Coordinator. Mark and Dortha are new members to our Penwheels BOF and we warmly welcome them both!

**Joanne Alexakis** SKP#19367, *"Chair Caning at Rainbow Plantation,"* page 62. In the TIPS section of the magazine, Joanne tells about her experience of weaving a cane chair seat at the SKP Rainbow Plantation RV Park in Sumnerdale, Alabama. She highly recommends learning this craft to any and all who may be in that area. What fun gaining a new skill!

**Betty Prange** SKP#22195, *"Battery Point Lighthouse,"* page 82. In the SKP STOPS section of the magazine, Betty takes us on a tour of the lighthouse that guards the harbor of Crescent City, California.

## Final Financial Statement

Since the Penwheels Escapees BoF no longer collects fees for membership or the quarterly newsletter, this is the last financial statement rendered here.

- Our free official forum and communication tool, [Rvillage.com](http://Rvillage.com), can be accessed by everyone. Members must be registered online to use this free tool.
- Past and current issues of the newsletter are stored online:  
[Penwheels.MovingOnWithMargo.com](http://Penwheels.MovingOnWithMargo.com)
- The membership voted to donate the last funds in our account to CARE.

### PENWHEELS BoF Financial statement 2015

Balance January 1, 2015 \$65.55

Income Jan 1 - Dec 31 \$0.00

Expenses Jan 1 - Dec 31 (\$65.55)

(Donation to CARE - Aug. 19, 2015)

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Balance December 31, 2015 \$0.00

Number of members on Jan. 1, 2015 = 39

Number of members on Dec. 31, 2015 = 50

Submitted by Joanne Alexakis, SKP #19367

Penwheels BoF membership coordinator

Submitted - January 1, 2016





## Getting Started

A Penwheels member recently posted a question on the *RVillage* forum about transitioning from writing non-fiction to fiction, and while I've responded to him there, his situation got me thinking about how we become fiction writers. Let's say you have an idea you think would make a great story. Where do you start?

Ernest Hemingway once said, "Write as well as you can – and finish what you start." Easy for him to say, right? But how do you know if you're moving in the right direction or wasting your time?

First of all, you're never wasting your time. Every sentence, every page – even if you eventually throw them out – has taught you something. We're surrounded by **finished** stories – products of a long, often fretful process. It's easy in the beginning to focus on a finished product rather than the process, but the process is the only thing that's important.

Even if you've published a dozen successful non-fiction books, you're still in new territory. Embrace your fiction apprenticeship: give yourself permission to make mistakes as you learn. Be patient with yourself.

If an outline helps, create one. If you'd rather write by the seat of your pants, go for it. You might plunge in only to make an outline later, or write a detailed outline only to abandon it. Whatever helps you get the story drafted is what you should do.

Decide whose story it is. Who's the main character (MC)? What does the MC want and what's in the way? If your chosen MC is not working, take a different approach.

Keep in mind that the narrator for "The Great Gatsby" is neither Daisy nor Gatsby, but a close observer. Knowing whose story you're telling will help you frame and focus the narrative. You might change things later, but for now, you've got a solid starting point.

Most of all, be honest with yourself about why you want to write fiction: for fun? To impress your friends and family? Because you've always wanted to publish a novel?

**Why** you want to write fiction matters because, if you want to publish, your apprenticeship lasts longer and covers more ground. If you want to write for fun – self expression to release tension or entertain yourself, friends, or family – then jump right in, jot down the story, and enjoy the process!

Oh, and the process I mentioned? More on that next time!

In a dilemma about something you're working on? Have a topic idea? Drop Ellen an e-mail at [ellenbehr@aol.com](mailto:ellenbehr@aol.com) or – better yet! – post it on the Penwheels forum so we can all benefit!

*Ellen Behrens' newest novel, **Pea Body**, is the first in a series featuring characters Walt and Betty Rollin, full-time RVers who solve mysteries. She is a former fiction editor and the recipient of an Ohio Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship. She and her husband have been living the "full-timer" RV lifestyle since 2009. Learn more about her books at [www.ellenbooks.com](http://www.ellenbooks.com).*

## Pricing eBooks - The Debate

With e-books rising and print's share declining, there's a fierce debate about what e-books should cost. The publishers recently won the right to raise their prices on Amazon at will, but signs suggest it's not paying off. At least, if you measure the payoff in dollars. Evidence suggests higher prices may not be the best way to make more money in the digital literature market, but publishers may have other reasons for jacking up costs.

Read the rest of the story [HERE](#).

## FROM THE EDITOR

### Filter Words

Susan Dennard passes on these words of wisdom about “filter words.”

Keep the number of “filter words” in the manuscript to a minimum—especially when the story is told in first person.

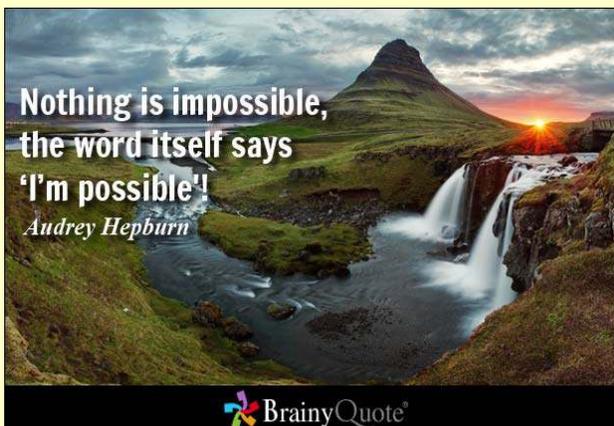
In first person, these filter words crop up and affect your storytelling.

Heck, filter words are the reason I cannot enjoy some books—why I cannot always connect with the main character, why I cannot feel the world he/she lives in, and why I might not feel an emotional response to the story.

So what the heck are filter words? And is there some more official term for them? As to the latter question, I have no idea. As to the former...

*Filters are words or phrases you tack onto the start of sentence that show the world as it is filtered through the main character's eyes.*

[Read the rest of the story...](#)



## Publishing a Hardbound Book

**1. Write the content.** Use short sentences and short paragraphs. Write to the 5th-grade level. If you need help with punctuation or grammar, search the Internet for a professional editor, or give it to a friend to read.

**2. Write a Query.** Here are two links to information and examples.

[http://www.agentquery.com/writer\\_hq.aspx](http://www.agentquery.com/writer_hq.aspx)

<http://www.charlottedillon.com/query.html>

**3. Find an Agent.** To find an agent, buy a copy of *Writer's Market*, or join the online version ([writersmarket.com](http://writersmarket.com)). This is the industry's bible. The link below also has some suggestions. Read the contract carefully before signing with any agent.

Usually 15% or more of your royalties go to the agent assuming they find you a publisher.

<http://www.charlottedillon.com/query.html>

**4. Option 1: Send the query directly to the Publisher.** Normally it is up to your agent to find the publisher, but if a timeline is important to you, send your query directly to a publisher.

The publisher takes care of the cover design; assigns an editor to help you tighten up the text; tries to get shelf space in the bookstores; and possibly set up the book signing or two.

The average attention span of the publisher is six weeks. Be aware that most books wind up on the fire sale table for lack of promotion by the publisher. This leaves real promotion to you.

Most of the book's income is absorbed by the publisher for their services, leaving about **\$.50** a book for you. If you have a topic that shakes the world, an advance payment may be offered by the publisher.

Advances on future earnings are the only way authors make any money in the first few months or possibly years. The cycle from publisher to market is about one year. Use [Writer's Market](#) to find the right publisher.

The secret to making money as an author is to write a lot of best-selling books. Each time your book hits the top list, a higher advance is usually in the offering. It only takes 100,000 copies sold to make that list.

**5. Option 2: Vanity Press.** If it is important to see your work hardbound, it might be wise to consider a vanity press. You pay the publisher to print a limited amount of books.

It would be up to you to sell your book to the bookstores, get reviews for publicity, and all the rest of the work usually done by publishers. You can hire someone to do this for you. The upside is all the royalties are yours.

**6. Option 3: POD (Print On Demand)** companies aligned with bookstores are now available. This service is free to you if other print services are not required.

Amazon's POD version is [Createspace.com](#). Upload the book to Createspace in PDF format for the best results. Within five days, your book is on the Amazon website for sale. They take their profit from a percentage of the book royalty.

When the book is ordered, it is printed and shipped by Createspace. Within the Amazon network, for another percent of the royalty, they ship the book to customers worldwide.

The latest trend is "expresso book machines" being set up in mall kiosks and bookstores.



Customers walk in and wait for their book to be printed and hardbound.

## **Adverbs - Good or Bad?**

What is so wrong about adverbs?

English language is rich and beautiful, and all parts of speech are aimed to make this language better, brighter and full of meaning.

An adverb is a very important part of English speech: it is used to modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. But many writers, linguists and researchers believe we should be very (not very, but VERY and very) careful when it comes to adverbs use.

Why does it happen so? What is the fault of these poor adverbs? What have they done to get on the wrong side of English language, written language in particular?

No, adverbs are not bad at all. The problem is, many people just do not know how, when and why to use them properly.

It does not mean people should avoid adverbs and forget this part of speech forever; it means they should learn all nuances of adverbs use in English speech.

This [infographic](#) will help you with adverb cleanup and become your short hint when you are in doubt whether to use an adverb in your speech and writings or not.

Answer the questions in this article and find out whether you should leave an adverb in a sentence or remove it to avoid conflicts and slow the reader's pace.

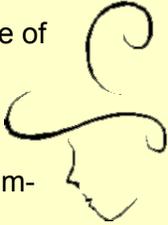
For an infographic and the rest of the story, [click here](#).

## Flash Fiction

### "Oh, Lydia the Tattooed Lady..."

By Sylvester Lewis

Lydia lit the wooden match with a scrape of her thumbnail and puffed life into the cigar clenched between her teeth. She sank back into the pillows of her chaise and, with a wave of her hand, commanded "Okay, boys. Shoot!"



Suddenly the dressing room was filled with flashing lights and popping bulbs as the newsmen scrambled to get that "front page shot". A riot of questions filled the room.

"Hold on, boys," Lydia shouted raising her arm so they all could get a good look at the huge diamond ring on her left hand. "Lemme give it to you straight. Me and the little guy is finally gonna get hitched," she continued. "Yeah, the little runt said he hadda have for me his wife. Imagine. Me. Mrs. Thumb!"

She breathed on the sparkling rock and polished it against her bosom. Hypnotized by the dancing lights inside the fiery stone, she cooed "Fifteen carats! I ain't never seen nothin' like it. We was having dinner at the Claridge and just finished eatin' them Ersters Rockefeller he's so nuts about. He always eats a double order of 'em when we go out on a date, don'tcha know.

All of a sudden, he climbs up into me lap, pops the question and slips the ring onto me finger. What's a poor helpless girl like meself's to do?"

"When's the happy day?" someone called out.

"Well, being the Queen of Tattoo, I gotta get a coupla new pitchas first, if they can find room for 'em".

She reached around and dunked her cigar into a glass of champagne. Her robe slipped from her shoulder to reveal a stunning depiction of Washington Crossing The Delaware. She flexed her bicep and Washington bowed. Then, the edge of her gown slid off her thigh to give them a view of the Grand Canyon. The room exploded in blinding flashes of popping bulbs and quivering "oohs" and "aahs."

"Then we's quittin' B & B's Circus," she continued.

"Ziegfeld called me from New York. He wants us to work up an act for his new show at the New Amsterdam soon's we get back to the States. Maybe we can get married on stage as part of the act. That'd be a show stopper!" She laughed and slapped her thigh. "Then take a little honeymoon trip. Hackensack. Hoboken. Someplace nice."

She couldn't take her eyes from the ring. She seemed to lose her brashness and became pensive. Her voice softened. "Who'da thunk it. Maybe a new career for him and me. Settle down in a nice little house, not TOO far from Broadway. Live like normal people. I know I'm not dreamin'," she said pinching her arm. "Ain't life grand? Can't wait to get started. A whole new life. I'm so happy I could cry." She wiped make-believe tears from her heavily mascaraed eyes.

"When are you leaving," another voice asked.

"Next week," she answered. "We's takin' the Titanic!"

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# THE WORLD OF PUBLISHING

## Latest Industry Stats

[U.S. book publishing industry stats from Nielsen](#):

Self-publishing and the Big Five publishers are crowding out everyone else. From Q1 2014 to Q1 2015, self-published books have grown from 14% to 18% of the overall market.

The print/eBook split is now roughly 74%/26%. Most publishers report eBooks represent anywhere from 15% to 30% or so of total revenue.

Price drives ebook interest. Almost 60% of respondents said they'd choose eBooks over Print if the savings is at least \$4 for the former.

Consumer prefer print "and" eBooks, not "or." Over 49% of consumers surveyed said they bought print *and* eBooks in the past 6 months vs. 42% who only bought print and a paltry 9% who only bought eBooks.

Amazon dominates subscriptions too. According to Nielsen only 5% of consumers have signed up for any ebook subscription solution.

### Editor's Note:

Both Oyster and Scribd closed down their subscription service in the last few weeks.

[Oyster](#) has announced that it is celebrating the two-year anniversary of launching its service by shutting down said service.

[Scribd](#) is reverting to the old system catalog, providing the same services as before the subscription conversion.



## Freelance Writing Opportunities

### Ongoing Freelance Employment

[Genuinejobs.com](#) (No fees, just links)

[JournalismJobs.com](#) (No fees)

[Writers Weekly](#) (job links)

[UpWork.com](#) (jobs for beginning writers - commission on fee)

### Articles

[T. Gene Davis's Speculative Blog](#): family-friendly science fiction, fantasy, or horror stories

[Contrary](#): online journal of fiction, poetry, commentary, and especially work that blurs the distinction between those categories



## Social Media Snake Oil

### Comes In All Shapes And Sizes

Authors want to sell books. But most indie authors know very little about how to promote their books. And when it comes to social media, authors everywhere are throwing up their hands. Is it a waste of time? Do I need to be on Twitter? How often should I post on Facebook?

I get email from authors who are frustrated. They see social media as a minefield and do not want to step in for fear they will never come out. Sometimes the easiest thing to do is just buy that package of hundreds of tweets for twenty dollars and cross your fingers hoping that somebody will buy your book. After all, everybody says you have to be on Twitter, right? We hear words like platform, brand, discoverability. How can an author break through the firehose of noise on the Internet and decide what, if anything, to do?

[The rest of the story...](#)

## ***Guideline for Story Lengths***

Here is an guideline for story lengths that meet most publisher's requirements.

**Micro-Fiction:** up to 100 words

This very abbreviated story is often difficult to write, and even harder to write well, but the markets for micro fiction are becoming increasingly popular in recent times. Publishers love them, as they take up almost no room. Pay rates are often low, but for so few words, the rate per word averages quite high.

**Flash Fiction:** 100 - 1,000 words

This is the type of short-short story you would expect to find in a glossy magazine, often used to fill one page of quick romance (or quick humor, in men's mags) Very popular, quick and easy to write, and easier to sell!

**Short Story:** 1,000 - 7,500 words

The 'regular' short story, usually found in periodicals or anthology collections. Most 'genre' zines will features works at this length.

**Novellette:** 7,500 - 20,000 words

Often a novellette-length work is difficult to sell to a publisher. It is considered too long for most publishers to insert comfortably into a magazine, yet too short for a novel.

Generally, authors will piece together three or four novellette-length works into a compilation novel.

**Novella:** 20,000 - 50,000 words

Although most print publishers will balk at printing a novel this short, this is almost perfect for the electronic publishing market length.

The online audience doesn't always have the time or the patience to sit through a 100,000 word novel.

Alternatively, this is an acceptable length for a short work of non-fiction.

**Novel:** 50,000 -110,000

Most print publishers prefer a minimum word count of around 70,000 words for a first novel, and some even hesitate for any work shorter than 80,000.

Yet any piece of fiction climbing over the 110,000 word mark also tends to give editors some pause. They need to be sure they can produce a product that does not over-extend their budget, but still be enticing enough to readers to be saleable. Imagine paying good money for a book less than a quarter-inch thick?

**Epics and Sequels:** Over 110,000 words

If your story extends too far over the 110,000 mark, perhaps consider where you could either condense the story to only include relevant details, or lengthen it to span out into a sequel, or perhaps even a trilogy.

(Unless, of course, you're Stephen King, then it doesn't matter about the length of your manuscript. Publishers are a little more lenient with an established author who has a well-established readership.)

**Page Counts:**

In most cases, industry standard preferred length is 250 words per page... so a 400 page novel would be at about 100,000 words. If you want to see what size book is selling in your genre, take a look on the shelves. If the average length is 300 pages, you're looking at a 75,000 word manuscript (approximately).

One reason it's harder for a new author to sell a 140,000 word manuscript is the size of the book. A 500+ page book is going to take up the space of almost two, 300 page books on the shelves. It is also going to cost more for the publishers to produce, so unless the author is well known, the book stores are not going to stock that many copies of the 'door-stopper' novel as compared to the thinner novel.