



Penwheels Newsletter

Fall Issue 2021

For Escapees Writers, Published or Not

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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.

[Archives Available](#)



Jaimie's Tips

One of more of these magazines might want an article you could write! "9 Magazines That Pay Writers Up to \$500 or More Per Article" – by Biljana Tadicin. See [Writers Weekly 6/11/21](#).

If you want to write and sell articles, read this! "Friendly Advice from an Editor – READ THE @&*\$#! GUIDELINES!!" – by Brian Whiddon. [Writers Weekly 6/24/21](#).

In case you were thinking of publishing, read this. If you only want a few copies for friends or relatives, it's doubtful you'll make any money. If you want to break even or make a profit, be sure to read this column in the [7/29/21 Writers Weekly](#).

Beyond Medium, Vocal Media, and News Break, here are 20 online and print publications currently accepting submissions. These will pay you between \$25 and \$1,000 per article. [Nicholas Carteron, Medium.com](#)

Ten websites that pay you for your writing. [Maryam](#)

More Little Library Photos

From Jamie and Joanne



Writer's Challenge Response

NONE



Read As If Your Writing Depends On It..

Ellen Behrens

...because it does!

Last year I read about fifty books, which is a lot for me, and Goodreads tells me I'm reading at roughly the same pace this year. But every time I pick up a book a little voice whispers: *You should be writing.*

Maybe the events of the past year were too much. I just didn't feel like writing. Inventing a new Rollin RV Mystery book seemed, well, trivial. So I read instead.

Along the way I began to identify the writers who read a lot of books and those who didn't; writers who wanted to publish a book, despite not being much of a reader. Their stories were poorly structured, their characters uninteresting, the settings hard to picture, their mechanics (stuff like grammar and spelling) needed more editing than they got.

It's okay to want to write and publish a book, even if you're not much of a reader – but don't expect your readers to be happy if they think you're practicing on them. (Do you like it when you purchase a meal in a restaurant, get a lousy meal, then find out the cook was learning on your order? Same thing.)

Don't believe me? Here's someone who has a lot more clout than I do. Stephen King said, "If you don't have the time to read, you don't have the time or the tools to write."

Reading is good. *Reading as a writer* is even better, because you can use every book as a lesson to improve your craft. Think of it: the best trainers are right there in published, easy-to-access novels by the best writers. You just have to know how to use those books as learning tools.

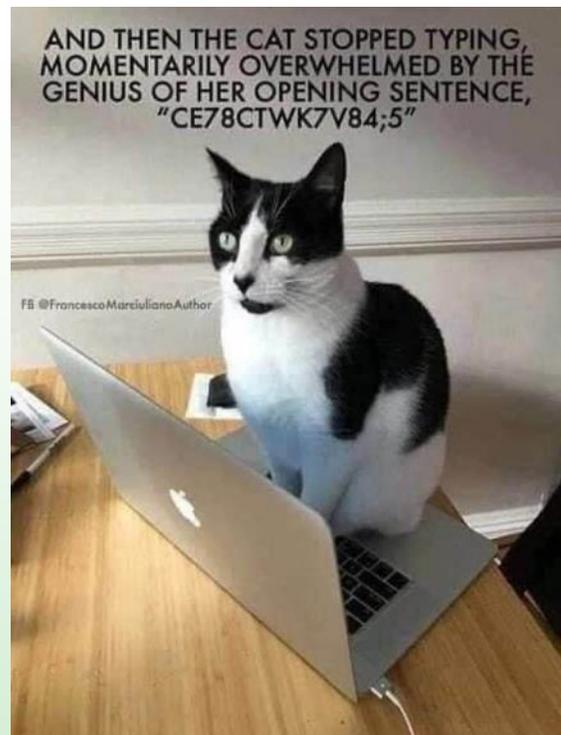
Worried that using books this way might spoil the fun of reading? Don't be. Movie lovers devour the special feature bonuses that come with the movie DVDs. Why? They give more insight into the production itself, so when viewers watch the movie again they see

more and appreciate all that went into making the film. This is similar to that.

The more you read as a writer, the more you'll see what the best writers are doing – *and how they do it.* Want to know how Stephen King gets you to turn all the lights on? Or how Diana Gabaldon plunges you into times past with such power you forget you live in the twenty-first century? Their secrets are right in front of you. You just have to know how to read closely enough to find them. And once you find them, you can learn from them.

The best free training in writing is right there on your shelf!

Ellen Behrens practices what she preaches, and teaches what she can. If you'd like a free copy of her newest book Read to Write: How to Improve Your Writing Through Reading for review purposes, please e-mail ellenbehr@aol.com with your request. This book is available in e-book and PDF formats only. Learn more about her books at www.ellenbooks.com.



Five Reasons Your Book Isn't Selling

Ellen Behrens

You wrote your book. Your friends and family love it. You decided to publish it. You either paid a company to produce it for you or you did it yourself. Now you're trying to move on to the next project but you can't keep yourself from checking your book sales. One. Two. A couple more. A long gap. Maybe a few more.

Why isn't anybody buying my book? you wonder. You've done all the marketing you can think of, including spending some money on ads. Even paid for a few reviews. So what's happening? Rather, why is nothing happening?

I can't tell you for sure, but I have a few guesses. I've been reading a lot over the last couple of years—more than usual, and I'm a pretty voracious reader. I subscribe to several daily e-newsletters promoting free and bargain (usually under \$3) e-books (thanks to Margo, I recently added another...!), and I've noticed a few things about many of those books.

1. Poor book blurbs. These brief descriptions of the book are meant to entice people to go from reading about the book to a purchase point. For example, the blurb appears in one of those e-newsletters; its intent is to get me to click the button that takes me to its sales page on Amazon (or another ebook sales site). If your book blurb doesn't intrigue readers, they'll never go to the sales page.

2. Trying to sell to other authors rather than to readers. If you're spending time on writers' forums and other places where writers hang out hoping they'll purchase your book, it's time to re-think your marketing strategy. They're all there for the same reason: they're trying to sell their book to *you*. If you have a legitimate discussion topic for other writers, by all means connect there. But too many authors mistake these forums as marketing opportunities, which just turns a lot of people off.

3. Lousy editing. I started to read a book I'd discovered through one of those newsletters. What had sounded like a great premise (and an intriguing blurb!) wasn't enough to get me to read past numerous problems, from plot issues to characterization problems to basic grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

I ended up contacting the author, worried that maybe a draft version had ended up getting published instead of his final manuscript. Instead, he confessed he was a new author, had published because his friends and family encouraged him to, and if I wanted to help him with a revision, he'd welcome it. Ikes! He'd made the mistake of thinking people who *buy* books want to help revise them. Not so. I won't be purchasing any more of his books, and he didn't get a good review from me, either.

4. Charging too much for your e-book. Pricing your printed versions (if you have them, and you should, but that's another article) is easier, in some ways, because you have to account for the printing costs and other factors. But e-books range from free to wildly expensive.

There are all kinds of theories about where to set your prices for your books, but here's something you should take into consideration: most readers don't know you. They don't know if you're a good writer or a bad one (see #3). If you charge more than a few dollars for your e-book, especially if you don't yet have a following, then you're risking losing sales just as buyers are about to click the Purchase button.

“\$9.99!?! I can get two or three or more books for that price,” is what they're probably thinking when they back out of your page and go to someone else's. Be willing to start low to attract readers so they can appreciate your work.

5. Lack of credibility. This is close to #4. Your readers must believe they're in safe hands when they fork over money. Think of every purchase *you* make. Don't you want to be sure you'll be getting your money's worth? How do you do that?

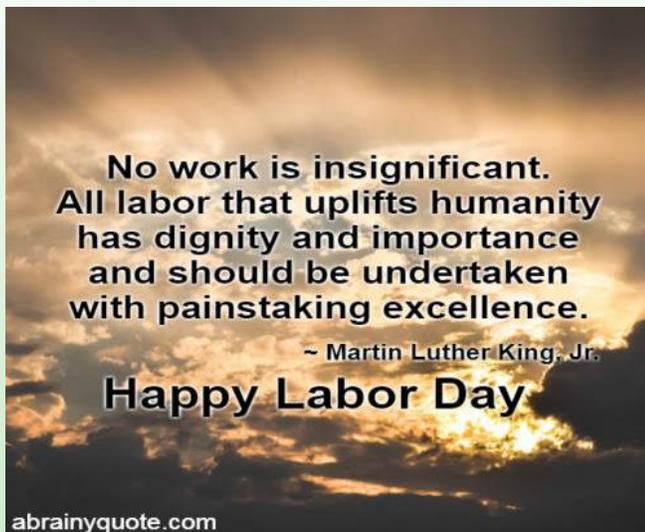
You rely on a company's—or person's—reputation, right? Make your bio note (the info explaining who you are) interesting and relevant. I went into some detail about this in a previous article. In my case, letting readers know I'm a full-time RVer who's won awards, finished a creative writing degree, and been widely published helps establish my credibility. It suggests that, even if they don't like the book because of themes or other issues, they should feel they're in the hands of an experienced writer.

The good news is you can always pull your book, make any necessary revisions to it, and re-publish it later. Publishing a book might be easy these days, but that doesn't mean you should put just anything out there. In the long run, doing that will only harm your chances of building an audience for your work and selling more books in the future.

When's the last time you decided not to buy a book? Why did you make that decision? Let us know on RVillage!

*Ellen Behrens' short stories, articles, essays, and reviews have been widely published. Her three Rollin RV Mysteries are available. If you'd like a free review copy of her newly released **Read to Write: How to Improve Your Writing Through Reading**, let her know via e-mail ellenbehr@aol.com. Learn more about her books at www.ellenbooks.com.*

Watch for a follow-up article on how to write these effectively.



Learn How to Write Faster

13 Tips for Writers

Dave Chesson, the Kindle guru and author of the *Kindlepreneur Blog*, offers this free guide to show you how to write faster.

"If you want to write more books, blog posts, or papers, writing faster is the key to unlock your goals. However, there is much more to it than just learning how to type faster. Instead, to become a successful writer, you need to position yourself for success, and arrange your schedule and surroundings so that you can become more efficient with your limited time.

Basically, it's not just about being a faster writer, it's also about making sure you get the most out of the time you have. Therefore, to help you put yourself in the best position to become a faster writer and create better content, I've created this full list of steps that can truly make a difference in your writing output."

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

Dave Chesson also teaches you how to sell books at <https://kindlepreneur.com/how-to-sell-books-amazon/>

- ◆ 70 book market tips
- ◆ How to sell your book on Amazon
- ◆ All sort of practical resources

There is also a link to his *Marketing Mastery Guide*.

To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme. – Herman Melville

It is perfectly okay to write garbage—as long as you edit brilliantly. – C. J. Cherryh

It took me fifteen years to discover I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous. – Robert Benchley

Publisher Fraud Increasing

Just a note to our readers that before you sign with any publisher, check their reputation by Googling their personal name and company separately. Keep moving backward in time, many google pages, until you exhaust your patience.

Publisher fraud is on the rise. It is easy to set up an online company, not fulfill its obligations, and fade away taking your money with it. Think of it as researching an investment opportunity.

The excitement of finishing that first book and eager to see it in print can lead to a lapse of common sense. Your ignorance of the publishing market can be costly. There are basically three categories of publishers:

Self-Publishing: Reputable online booksellers offer package deals with no upfront charges. They convert your content to electronic formats for Kindle and others, or to a print format. It is up to you edit, polish, or rewrite the content. Most booksellers offer these additional services, but the price can be high. It is also up to you to handle the promotional end.

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Draft2Digital are three booksellers that I have used in the past. They make their profit by deducting a percentage of the book sale. They ship the book, adding sales tax and a shipping fee, to the customer.

Some booksellers offer promotional services through book ads on their own site or special promotions, but it is largely up to you. Expect to pay hundreds if not thousands of dollars on promotion if you want a best seller. Just to get in the running for high sales, expect to pay \$10,000+ for a launch success.

In the highly competitive market today, most authors create a website or blog or both to entice customers. These customers can be directed to one of the bookseller's sites for payment, or build your own.

Vanity Publishers: These companies accept any book offered to them. Their job is to print and deliver those books to you at a price per book, often in quan-

ties of 100+. They may try to claim copyright to the content, so be careful here. Again, research this category vigorously because quality is essential to sales. Some vanity publishers offer editing, polishing and rewriting services. Promotion is up to you, although some vanity publishers may offer these services too.

Commercial Publishers: This category of publishers limit their annual book launches. They receive hundreds of books each month and may choose only one to publish. This choice works best if you already have recognition in your field, fiction or nonfiction, politics, financial areas, or health.

Signing a contract for exclusive use of your content may extend to 3 years or more. Commercial publishers expect to make a profit, so expect to receive a tiny royalty payment because they provide basic technical and artistic skills to get your book to market. Advance payment for future royalties is limited to known authors or celebrities.

By the way, if you want to make sales, commercial publishers only offer a basic promotion plan. Once again, promotion is up to you.

Fraudulent publishers may promote all the services of the commercial publisher but produce nothing. Fake news, if you will, is the motivation behind these scams. They spend thousands promoting their services, collect money from many thousands of aspiring authors, then fade away. These con artists crush the dreams of writers on many continents. They skip a beat, then start again under another name leaving more crushed spirits in their wake.

Keep in mind that fraudulent publishers promise the world, TV ads, public appearances, and success. They are right in that it takes promotion to sell books in this highly competitive market, and it costs hundreds to thousands of dollars to do that. These frauds, however, only take your dollars and fade away. Visit *Writer Beware: The Blog* for details on current scams. <https://accrispin.blogspot.com/>

Visit this website for more info on fraud: <https://www.sfwaworld.com/other-resources/for-authors/writer-beware/>