



To Market, to Market

Two approaches to marketing: 1) write what you want then find a place to sell it, or 2) study the markets where you'd like to appear, research their requirements, then write to fit their needs.

Organize your writing life so you spend some time doing market research, reading writing websites that include market listings, collecting copies of guidelines, organizing your ideas, etc. The most successful writers are those who consider marketing as important as the writing itself.

Meet and network with other writers. Share what you know about markets, submission strategies, etc. with them, and they'll do the same with you.

All editors are not created equal. Some will overlook small errors in query letters and submissions, others will put sloppy work straight in the circular file. Some will be happy to engage in long emails and phone calls about the state of an assignment, others simply want the work when you said you'd deliver it.

Read previous copies of the publication, or track down other books the publisher has produced. Check catalogues (many online at publisher's websites) and study guidelines carefully to ensure you're sending what they need, not just what you think you'd like to send them.

Keep track of what you send to whom. Follow up with a polite letter if you don't hear back in the stated time plus half the time again.

Editors are people too. They want to be surprised by the submissions they receive. They want fresh voices, powerful writing, well-presented queries and proposals. They get word blindness from reading so much text, so consider that in the fonts you use (serif fonts are by far the best), the paper you send your work on (nothing fancy or prettied up). They also want to be addressed personally, and be convinced that what you're sending them is meant just for them.

Tell other writers about new markets you hear about, publications you've discovered, and share your marketing and publishing experiences with others.

Take calculated risks from time to time. Sure, there are ‘best practices’ for marketing your work, but now and again thinking outside the box, taking advantage of contacts that suddenly come your way, staying alert for shortcuts into the business may pay off. Learn the rules, then be prepared to break them if you think the situation is justified.

Ownership and copyright of your work belongs to you by the mere fact that you created it.. You don’t need to do anything fancy such as mailing yourself a copy etc.

Manuscripts should conform to industry standards unless the editor or publisher says otherwise. Double space, use Times New Roman or Garamond font in 11 – 12 point font. Include your complete contact info. on the first page, use a header or footer with your name, a word or phrase from the manuscript title, and the page number.

Ask if in doubt. If you can’t find the answers to your questions in writers’ guidelines, on the publication websites, ask. Most editors are eager to find new writers, and so it’s in their best interest to be open to general enquiries that help writers submit the right work in the right way.

Read guidelines carefully, and adhere to them. If the word limit on articles is 3,500, don’t send 3,900. Don’t send pictures unless they ask for them.

Keep on top of new publications as they come out, new publishers opening up, etc. Good sources of industry news is Writers Write, Places for Writers and the perennial Writer’s Market directory. (see resource list below).

Email is usually fine for queries and brief requests for information. But avoid sending serial emails for follow-up info. Make sure your first one asks everything you need to know. Use email to submit queries and manuscripts if the editor or guidelines state that this is OK. Otherwise use snail mail. And ALWAYS enclose a SASE with snail mail submissions and queries.

Tie projects you’re pitching into current and topical events and situations. Don’t overlook all the national days of this and that, major anniversaries of institutions and individuals. Try to find a hook that makes your submission topical.

Useful Marketing Resources

Writers Write – articles, contests, and lots of market info. And publishing news. www.writerswrite.com

Places for Writers – Canadian markets, contests etc. www.placesforwriters.com

Writers Digest – includes a very good section on markets, updated regularly <http://www.writersdigest.com/>

The Writer’s Market – Print directory published by Writer’s Digest. Understandably, not very current.

Northwest Passages *Canadian literature online* www.nwpassages.com