

Tips & Ideas

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Tips, Ideas and Other Great Stuff!

One of the major benefits of any writers group is the wealth of information and ideas you can get from other writers. That's what this page on our website will be all about. To be really effective, it will be important that all of us participate, so please give us your input. Please send your tips, ideas, comments and other good stuff to: molsen@policewriter.com.

Here's just a start on what we hope will be a major source of great stuff that can both make you a better writer and help you get your work published.

Marketing Ideas

Approaching a Local Bookstore

Your local bookstores can be a good place to market your books but they will be more likely to carry your book if you approach them on a businesslike basis. Some bookstores may still have a public relations or promotions person in place. Many have eliminated that position. If so, you'll need to talk to the acquisitions manager. In any event, make an appointment to talk to this person. Don't just drop in. These days a bookstore will also be much more likely to carry your book if you can show them a marketing plan. This is the best way to show them you're serious about the business of marketing a book. This plan should include:

1. Speaking engagements you have planned to local clubs, libraries and organizations
2. Media appearances with local TV or radio stations you have scheduled
3. A list of who you would invite to a book signing at the store and a draft of invitations or flyers you would use to invite the guests to your signing. (Some bookstores may still organize a book signing for you. Most won't).
4. An up-to-date biography that highlights your expertise in the field in which you are writing. (Hint: Start the bio with the information that will have the most relevance to your book, not where

you went to grade school ? unless, of course, your book is about your grade school.)

5. A current photo
6. Any marketing materials you already have such as postcards, a marketing kit or bookmarks.
7. Directions to your website or blog.

Websites

Many authors are finding that having a website is an indispensable marketing tool. The cost of creating a website, like any other professional service, may range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars depending on how many features you put on your site. However fancy or plain the site is, however, most authors agree that the most important factors to consider are visibility and timeliness. With literally millions of websites out there, it is important that you find ways for people to find your site. One way is to link your site with as many other sites as possible. Obviously, you should include your URL on all of your printed materials and your book cover.

What other ways have our members found to increase visibility of their websites?

Give us your thoughts.

Additionally, since the idea is to keep people coming back to your site, it is vital that it contain new information on a regular basis.

What ways have our members found to keep people coming back to their websites? We'd love to hear from you on this subject.

How do you get a website? As mentioned previously, you can spend from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars to get a professional to host, design and maintain your website. If you'd like to try to do a site yourself, Bill Pflieger who writes a technology column for the Woodstock (NY) Times, suggests you check out a site called www.freewebsiteproviders.com. Among the hundreds, perhaps thousands of choices listed there, Pflieger recommends Tripod.com. We have no opinion on whether or not this is the best site. *Do any of you know a better one? Have any of you had experience setting up your own website? If so, has it helped you as a writer?*

Blogs

Many authors also have also had great success getting the word out about their books and articles by using blogs. The cover story of the May 2, 2005 issue of *Business Week* is all about this

subject. You might want to check it out. *Also, are any of you successful bloggers? If so, would you be willing to share your tips on how to do this?*

Interesting Facts and Figures

1. According to a recent poll reported by iUniverse, 83% of Americans say they want to write a book.
2. Five conglomerates control about 80% of traditional publishing.
3. In 2003, just 22,914 books were published by the big publishers.
4. A book that sells 10,000 copies is considered by the big publishers to be a success.
5. The "sales cycle" of a book published by a traditional publisher is approximately 90 days. The two weeks after a book is published are considered the most important. If a book doesn't sell in 90 days, the publisher will move on to other books.
6. In 1980, there were approximately 12,000 small presses. Today there are approximately 56,000.

Got any factoids like this you'd like to share?

New Stuff

Really small presses

By now, most of us are familiar with the idea of on-demand publishing. Now, inventor Victor Celorio has created a process by which he can transform basically any manuscript into a nicely bound book in just a few minutes using a machine that's about the size of a desk. Called the Instabook Digital Bookstore and Self-Publishing Center, his patented product has been used in Mexico, Italy and Canada. For the first time in the US, one has been installed at Books By Bookends in Ridgewood, New Jersey. Cost? \$150 for the first 10 books, less for a larger quantity.

Know about any new stuff that might interest your fellow writers? Contact us and we'll post it on the site.

Publishing Tips

Covers

The old adage that you can't tell a book by its cover may be true but the experts will tell you that you CAN SELL a book by its cover. Before you publish your book, go to the local bookstore or library and look at all the other books like yours. Which covers really stand out from the rest? Why? With that knowledge in hand, find a good graphic artist to design your cover. If you're working on a tight budget, local colleges are often a good place to find talented graphic artists who are not only affordable but will jump at the chance to have

a book cover to add to their resume.

Blurbs

The back cover of your book can also be a very important marketing tool. If you don't think so, spend an hour or so at your local bookstore and see how many people pick up a book and immediately turn it over to see what's on the back. What they see there may very well affect their decision to buy. How do you get good blurbs? One sure way to is join the Public Safety Writers Association. Many of our experienced and best selling authors may well be willing to write the all-important blurb for you.

Order Form

Fern Reiss, lecturer and author of The Publishing Game series of books including *Publishing a Book in 30 Days*, suggests that you always include an order form in the back of your book. The form should include as many ways to contact you as possible (phone, fax, e-mail, website) in addition to exact costs including handling and postage. If your book is part of a series, you should also be sure to include the opportunity to buy your other books.

Have any other publishing ideas you'd be willing to share? Contact us!

Writing Tips

Tips for Writing a Novel

by Marilyn Meredith

www.fictionforyou.com.

**To outline or not to outline is up to you. Some people like to write out the entire plot of their story, chapter by chapter. Others just jot down a few notes and go from there. You do need to know where your story is headed, what the theme is and you must have a beginning, middle and end.

**Finding out who your main characters are and something about each one is vital before you begin. Where is your story going to unfold? What settings are you going to use? Will they be real or fictional?

**The first draft is getting all these ideas out of your head and down on paper. Don't worry about editing it at that point. Some like to end in the middle of a sentence or a scene, so that it's easy to start when you begin again.

**How long should a chapter be? As long as you want it. One scene

can be a chapter. A chapter can be 20 pages or one. There are no rules about this.

**Once you've got it down, print it out. You can't revise the manuscript on the screen.

**Read it out loud. Read the story as if you were reading to a friend. Mark sentence structure problems, grammar errors. Circle the typos that the spell checker didn't pick up. Read the dialog as if you were the characters. Does it sound natural? Make sure your characters aren't telling each other things they already know.

**Delete unnecessary adverbs, adjectives and other unnecessary words. Instead of adverbs, use the most descriptive verb possible. Instead of adverbs, describe the action. Instead of saying a person does something angrily, show them clenching their fists, glowering, teeth clenched, face scarlet.

**Get rid of meaningless qualifiers like 'well, just, but, very, etc.

**Make sure your dialogue is meaningful. It should move the plot along or reveal something about the character.

**What is the purpose of each scene? Did it move the story along? Did it reveal some new information? Never have a scene with a bunch of folks sitting around talking about nothing.

**When the characters are talking are they talking heads or do they do something and do we see them through your POV character's eyes? Have you let the reader know where the conversation or the action is taking place?

**Did you use the five senses?

**Was the pacing good?

**Have you varied sentence structure?

**Revise until you make it shine.

**Open your scene with something happening to immediately pull the reader in. Close with a hook or leave something hanging so they'll want to turn the page. Make your readers curious, shock and surprise them.

**Make sure you've tied up all your loose ends.

If you have writing tips to share, please contact us.

Send mail to tdees@policewriter.com with questions or comments about this web site.
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