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## About the Author

Millie Harrison started writing as a hobby when she was working full-time at a marketing company.

Although her writing had started as a diversion, Millie decided to submit some articles to trade publications. She wanted to see if her standard of writing was good enough for someone to pay her for it.

She had some rejections, but the occasional successes encouraged her to write more and to aim her new material at higher paying markets.

Millie said, "I have been through the whole process from being an unpublished but hopeful writer to where I am today. My income from writing is a very important part of our family budget. Soon, I will leave my job to spend more time looking after my family and traveling more than I have been able to do in the past."

"This means that I will be able to be at important events in my children's early years which I could not do as often in my present job."

Millie believes that her book can help other people achieve their writing ambitions because it is based on actual experience.

"Writing is a wonderful hobby and can be a great way to earn part-time or full-time income. I believe that my readers will find many great ideas and strategies to help them achieve their writing goals more easily and with less stress."

"I never had any special training or talent, so my suggestions will be useful to every reader who has the dream and is ready to take action."

"Whether they want to write books, articles, poetry or any other type of writing, my book will supply them with inspiration and also ensure that they have a real understanding of what it takes to succeed as a writer."

## Introduction

This book is based on my experience as a writer which started as a pastime and developed over the last few years to being a part-time business.

With the increasing pressure on everyone to produce more and do it with less, my writing income has been a buffer which helped to smooth out the demands on the family budget and even provide a few treats which would have not been possible otherwise.

I think you will get some valuable tips and ideas to make your progress smoother and quicker, whatever your own personal or professional writing goals.

This book is intended to help writers of every kind of material, but I have not tried to teach specific techniques for particular types of writing.

I have focused on the nuts and bolts of writing, such as finding time, overcoming problems and maintaining a professional standard in your work and when dealing with editors and readers.

My intention has been to cover those areas which many books and courses don't cover but which can make the difference between dreaming of being a writer and achieving success in whatever form you desire.

I don't hold any special qualifications as a writer, but I have considerable experience in the field.

I have written articles and books and edited a wide range of material. Most of what I have written has been published under a variety of names but I cannot claim to be 100% successful.

I don't know any writer that has everything they write grabbed and published, except for some famous names but that usually only occurs after they have been widely recognized.

I am very happy with my rate of acceptances and will give you suggestions about dealing with rejection, criticism and other rarely mentioned things which are part of writing.

I suggest that you read this book through completely to get a general

understanding. Then, read it again because you may find some things which were not clear at your first reading are easier to understand and benefit from because you got more information about that particular point in a later section.

I hope that you will continue to use it as a resource for information and inspiration as you progress toward your personal writing goals.

I hope that my book will help with all the success you deserve.

***Millie Harrison***

## Where to Start

One of the many advantages of writing is that almost everyone can start whenever they want to without any need to buy any special equipment or study for a special qualification beforehand.

It's a good move to look at a wide selection of the material which is being published in your particular area of interest, but you can also be writing some practice pieces while you do that.

### Researching the Market

While you may be reading for enjoyment, you can also study the pieces which are being published, what publications are accepting them and any feedback about them which you find.

You can get information from the publisher through their website or from information in the publication and entries in Writers' reference guides such as the annual Writers' Market, and the magazines The Writer and Writer's Digest.

Take special note when a piece is featured on the cover of the publication or in any promotions, particularly if the author is not very well known to the average reader. This indicates that the publisher believes the piece will be of special interest to their readers.

You can also learn by dissecting the piece to see the way that the author has approached the topic, how it initially grabbed their interest and how successfully you think they delivered what their title promised.

Also remember that you should keep a record of any magazines, books and other material you buy which might be deductible if you are selling your writing. In most jurisdictions, you need to be able to show that you are actually making money and have at least a reasonable expectation of making a profit or your writing will be classed a hobby and no deductions will be allowed.

Always consult your accountant for specific professional advice on your personal situation.



## What You will Need

While most new activities require some level of investment, writing does not usually require anything that you don't already have, except some re-arrangement of your personal timetable.

There are many things which would be useful to have but you probably can make a good start without investing anything except some time.

You can use your regular computer and probably have a word processing program already.

If you don't have one, you can get a free and Open Source office suite called LibreOffice from <http://www.libreoffice.org>. This suite was developed by people that were previously involved with another free suite called OpenOffice.org which became the property of Oracle. The developers became concerned that Oracle might limit the Open Source status of OpenOffice.org or even discontinue it.

The two suites are similar but there are expected to be more differences between them as time goes on.

The default office suite for most businesses is Microsoft Office. The suites mentioned above have programs which are able to use and produce compatible files for most of them.

Many small businesses are using the Open Source equivalents but they do not have every feature of the commercial programs.

An Internet connection is very useful for research and communication.

Again, nothing special is required unless the type of writing you do requires that you produce special pictures or charts.

A printer is essential and a scanner which links to your computer is very desirable. Although scanners are fairly expensive, you can economize by getting a multi-function printer which has a built-in scanner. Most of these machines have a full version or at least a trial version of an O.C.R. (optical character reading) program which will create a digital version of any documents which you scan.

Most writers find that they make a lot of phone calls, so a V.O.I.P. (Voice Over Internet Protocol) account which lets you make calls through your computer to almost any place in the world at much lower than normal landline rates can be a time and money saver. You will need to get a headset to get clear communication through the computer. If you and the people you connect with have your V.O.I.P. account with the same service (such as Skype), then you will probably not be charged for your calls. If you call people that are not connected with the same service provider, then you will be charged. The providers also offer other paid services such as answering and message forwarding services.

## Benefits of Writing

I’ve already mentioned a couple of things which I believe make writing an exceptional choice as a way to earn money or even just as a hobby.

It’s also something which can be done by almost anyone, whatever their circumstances, background, education or location.



If you are not subject to a deadline, you can fit your writing task into your daily schedule. I know of people who have the responsibility of looking after children or other family members, which means that they cannot hold down a regular job, but they can earn some money by writing.

The costs of writing are low and the potential benefits can be very rewarding.

Many writers can also adjust the amount of writing they do. If they are expecting a large bill, they can do more writing to help cover it. Depending on their circumstances, they may be able to cut back on their writing time to focus their energy on other tasks which are more urgent.

The extra income can be a useful addition to the family budget and, sometimes, even replace other sources of income. That can be a good backstop when the general economy is bad or there is reduced employment prospects in their area of work.



Many writers are able to charge some expenses against their tax obligations. That may include the cost of travel to writers’ conferences or other reasons related to the sort of writing which they do.

Writers are able to work almost anywhere and many are able to decide when they work. Most employers won’t let you come into the offices at 2 am but if you’re a self-employed writer and you can’t sleep, you can get a head start on your next piece at any time that suits you.

## Hobby or Business?

I mentioned the potential for writing-off some of your writing-related expenses earlier. That can be done if you keep proper records in accordance with your country’s tax system.



This section is only a broad overview. The rules are different in every country and most States have their own as well. Also, changes are being made when law makers adjust the taxes themselves and also when courts decide legal cases which affect the way that those laws may be applied.

You will need to consult a qualified expert in your area who can advise on what you need to do to conform with local regulations and what, if anything, you might be able to claim.

I suggest that you do that as soon as possible after you decide that you will put some serious time and effort into your writing and definitely before you start to spend money on any expensive equipment.

Often, the authorities want to be sure that you are working on your writing in a professional manner as part of their determination as to whether you will be eligible for any tax deductions.

The most important thing is to keep your expenses to a minimum – you probably can do that easily as a writer because you will have all the tools you need.

Instead of spending money you could use the resources you have and start keeping records of stationery and computer supplies which you buy that you use for your writing. If you need a particular book for reference, check whether you can get it from your library. If you decide you will need to get your own copy, use the library until you start getting some payments for your writing and then buy your own.

I’ve met many people that have started different kinds of part-time

businesses and one of the most common mistakes is spending more money than they have to in the first twelve months.

Set up a proper filing system for your research materials, ideas that you intend to write about and, of course, expenses and income.

You can do this on your computer and there are many good quality programs which are free.

If you don't already know the names of some programs, use the Search Engines to find some information about what ones are currently available for your type of computer.

Type **free office suites for Mac** (or Windows) into your favorite search engine. You might put **best** before, or instead of, **free** to find some comparisons between different programs.

If you just want to compare word processing programs, type **word processing programs** instead of **office suites**.

When you have a few names, type **review:** and put the name of one of the programs you are checking on after the colon to find reviews of it.

### **Two things to be careful about:**

- 1)** Some reviews will be biased. Some sites review products and provide you with links to those which they recommend, but may not disclose that they may receive a payment from the product supplier for sending a customer to them.
- 2)** Some sites may offer programs which are illegal copies or that contain viruses and other malware which can damage your computer or compromise your personal information. Always use the most up-to-date version of respected antivirus and anti-spyware programs to help keep yourself safe. But, these programs cannot guarantee that they can protect you against every threat, so you still need to be wary, especially if anything looks strange or too good to be true.

You can use similar searches to find anything else which you may need for your writing or other interests.

I still buy a lot of my supplies and equipment locally even when the prices

are a bit higher than I can get them from sources which I find on the Internet.

That’s because:

I can get them straight away.

I value the advice and support which many local dealers provide.

It’s easier to return or replace anything which needs repair or replacement under warranty. Often, the cost of returning something in the original packaging and waiting for a replacement can wipe out the original amount saved on its purchase.

## How to Become a Successful Writer

Many people ask me, “How do I become a successful writer?”

The simple answer is that you just need to write clearly and offer high-quality information or amusement, or both. Then, you have to put what you write in front of people that are willing to pay you for it.

These are some of the qualities which the most successful writers I have met or researched have and which I believe are important for success:

**A Compelling Reason to Write:** You have to have a compelling reason to write that will keep you going when you hit bumps, or even boulders, which litter the road to a successful future.

No-one but you can find the best reason for your quest. It must be something which you truly want, that is important enough to keep you going despite whatever obstacles you have to meet and overcome.

My reason was to add another source of income which could help to provide a cushion for my family against unexpected expenses. My secret hope was that I could also build that income up to a point where it would also enable us to get a few things that would make our lives a bit more enjoyable like trips and entertainment that were out of our reach at that time.

I got there, although it wasn’t a completely smooth journey. After I had gained some experience, I found that I was able to make my goal a bit bigger.

**A Professional Attitude:** Success will be very difficult unless you treat your writing as you would if it were a full-time business from the start.

You will hold yourself back if you put off doing anything which you don’t like doing. That might be making important phone-calls, replying to some emails or doing research on subjects which don’t hold much interest for you personally.

**Accountability:** Some people want to work for themselves because they like the idea of being their own boss. They are sometimes disappointed when they find that anyone who goes from being an employee to running their own

business swaps being accountable to one or two people in that company to having many bosses. They have to satisfy the demands of each of their clients as well as government and industry regulators, and they cannot pass any of that responsibility on to anyone else.

**Keep Learning:** Most writers have an ongoing need to stay up to date with new developments in the areas which they write about.

You will also want to keep a close eye on changes in publishing so that you can take advantage of new opportunities and technology.

Make sure that you give priority to your current commitments.

And remember that new technology can have drawbacks as well as advantages and not all new devices deliver what their promoters promise.



## Do You Need Training?

A common question I hear from people is, “Do you need any special training to be successful as a writer?”

I always tell them that taking a course can be helpful but it is not essential for most people.

Unlike many other activities, there is not always any requirement for someone that wants to write to undertake some sort of training and get a particular qualification before they can start writing and submitting their work to any publisher they choose or even publish it themselves.

If they are able to meet some minimum basic requirements and have the necessary equipment, they can become a published writer fairly quickly.

Of course, it’s usually best to do some basic research about:

- The most appropriate place to submit your writing
- Whether your material is at least of a similar standard to the material which is currently available in that area
- The format which you should offer your writing in to a particular market, and
- The topics which are currently of most interest to people in that area.

Some people believe that taking some sort of formal instruction will be helpful to them in ensuring that they avoid any mistakes with their first submissions which could damage their chances at building a good reputation and a lasting professional business with their writing.

I can see the point and, provided you have the time and funds available, you could improve your chances of good results with your first attempts by getting instruction and feedback from successful writers, especially any that have proven results in the area which you will focus on yourself.

Some of the resources which you might consider using are professional criticism, courses, coaching and conferences.

## Professional Criticism

There are companies and individuals which advertise that they will provide a professional evaluation of something you write which may help you to improve your writing and chances of making sales.

My personal view is that some of these services offer little value.

The only opinion that matters is that of a person who will decide whether they will pay you to publish or just to read your material!

But, should you get the opportunity at a workshop or conference, you will benefit from feedback from more experienced writers who have experience in the same type of writing that you do.

Feedback from your readers is also of great value. It's very direct sometimes, but I always respond because it means that they have been affected by what I wrote.

But, some of the services I referred to just make their money from providing criticism and not from actually writing the type of material which they critique!

They may also offer add-on services to help improve your writing or marketing. If you find value in the feedback from the person that is reviewing your submission, then the service may be worth its cost.

The only proof will be if their input gets you more paid publishing opportunities at rates which more than cover the additional costs of their service.

## Courses

There are many courses offered that aim to help you improve your writing, business methods or your knowledge of how to present your work to potential publishers and editors. They vary widely in cost and features. I have taken part in courses provided by Adult Education organizations which are presented in



schools and other educational buildings on weekends or in the evenings. If you have the time and the particular course has relevance to the type of writing you are doing or plan to do, I would make some effort to attend.

Some companies started their offerings where everything was done by mail. They have updated the content and focus to reflect changes in the industry and now conduct their courses through the Internet.

Some courses are presented in person by well-known successful writers who are often supported by other experienced writers. Although some of the appeal comes from meeting and learning from the featured author(s), the greatest benefits for you will probably be those sessions which are directly relevant to your needs and discussing your writing and the problems and tips you share with the other attendees.

With such a wide range of offerings, many of which are high quality, you should be able to find something that will be of interest and benefit to you. Before you invest money and time (which can be even more valuable) in a course, you should consider what specific benefits you can expect to get from the content.

Also, where possible, look for testimonials from people that attended previous offerings by the same organizations.

I have not taken part in any course that I have not got some valuable content from, but I started small and would not incur debt to do some training. I have always kept these sort of expenses within a budget which is based on the amount I have available rather than what I *think* the course might help me to earn in the future.

## **Coaching**

Individual coaching can be useful where you believe that the person offering the coaching is not only an experienced writer but can also be someone that you will be able to learn from.

They don't have to be someone whom you would be socially compatible with, but they must be someone that can connect with you to the point where you are willing to adapt your current methods in line with their instructions.

You should already have some experience as a writer with a good knowledge of the basics and a strong desire to improve to get the most benefit from personal coaching.

## **Conferences**

Writers’ conferences often combine presentations by successful writers who may talk about their personal journey as a writer, with others that buy what we write. They may have training sessions on particular types of writing and the opportunity to meet and mingle with other writers who are at various stages in their own writing ventures. I usually find the training sessions helpful.

Some events feature the opportunity to have some of your writing critiqued by real experts. This can be quite valuable because you rarely get any feedback from editors when you submit material to them. They don’t have the time and also don’t want to get into an email exchange about any piece which they aren’t going to publish.

To get the maximum value from a professional critique, you should take the advice onboard and not take the feedback as personal criticism. Then, make sure that you at least make a serious attempt to use the suggestions in the next several pieces which you do. Otherwise, the whole exercise will be of little use to you.

The famous writers’ presentations range from dull self-promotion to useful information, and some are positively inspiring.

Many conferences now offer their main presentations on DVD or by download from the Internet. But, for me, the opportunities to interact with other writers and editors and publishers outside of the formal sessions have always been a highlight of the live events. They can be the most valuable part!

Writing can be a very lonely experience and sharing your experiences with others who have the same challenges and dreams can help you a lot.

Some of the most valuable ideas I have brought home from these events have come from people that are doing quite different types of writing than myself.

I suggest that you get some business cards printed, or do them yourself if you can produce ones that really look professional, so that you can give them to anyone that asks for them at your next conference.

Always put your email address and your website address (if you have one) on the cards. The address you use may start to get spam after a while, so use an address on a service such as Gmail and not your main email address.

## **Your First Draft**

The first draft is a milestone in your writing. Organizing, market research and other preliminary steps are important, but this is where you actually start to produce something which you can publish and maybe even sell!

Two things which are very important to remember with the first draft of any written piece is that:

### ***It just has to be good enough, not perfect!***

You don't have to have everything perfectly in place before you start your first draft. If you don't have a particular piece of information, you can still start and add it when it becomes available. Action is more important because it lets you move without further delay.

### ***Write it without Editing!***

Your first draft should be written without taking any time for editing until after you have finished it. This was my biggest problem when I started writing, and I know that it causes problems for many other writers.

I was amazed how long that it took me to finish a simple first draft at that time. And, they were often not as good as I felt that I was capable of.

Sometimes, I lost interest or enthusiasm and put it aside. I found a few of those incomplete drafts recently, but there is not enough in them for me to take the time to fix and finish them. The research materials I spent so much time gathering when I originally started them have long since been buried in the files.

I found one reasonable explanation for the wasted time and effort several months ago. The reason that we try to do the editing as we go is because we want anything we write to be as near perfect as possible. Until we realize that a first draft will probably never be seen by anyone except ourselves and is just a means of getting the broad details of the piece into written form, we will continue to waste time and probably cause ourselves some unnecessary stress as well.

We need to understand that writing and editing are different tasks and

require different focus (mindsets).

If we keep changing our focus from writing the draft to fixing each spelling error or improving a section, our mind has to continually switch from the writing to the editing mindset. Then, we have to switch it back again until we see something else we want to change.

It takes us an appreciable amount of time to make the adjustment and get up to speed with the editing. Then, we have to reverse the process and waste about the same amount of time again. These periods are small but they add up when we are writing from five hundred to a couple of thousand words.

Also, our focus becomes a little fuzzy each time that we switch from one state to the other and our work may not be as good as we could have produced if we had not changed focus.

The bottom line is that this editing-as-we-go does not make the piece any better, because we will save time and probably do a better job of the editing if we do it in a separate session.

That one revelation has helped me to reduce the time and effort required.

It guarantees that I produce a first draft that is good enough each time and I avoid wasted effort.

## Research

For those who write factual material, the importance of research is obvious. But, research is an important part of every kind of writing. It can improve the writing you do and its reception in the marketplace, even with poetry and fantasy fiction.

Your research should include checking out the market as it currently is for the type of writing which you concentrate on. You also need to be aware of any new developments which may improve or have the potential to negatively affect the financial returns which you might get from your work. In that regard, I suggest that you keep a careful watch, but don't start worrying too much too soon.

There are and will continue to be technological and cultural changes which have changed the value of many types of work, and they may cause serious problems for some of the people involved. But, the main thing is that by maintaining a watch on new developments and improving the depth and breadth of your abilities, you can often adapt what you do to ensure that you are not too badly affected by those inevitable and unavoidable changes.

All writers need to find and read what their peers are producing and especially what their readers are buying and responding to. Tastes change, and we all need to be aware of trends that affect our markets and future potential sales.

If you only write fiction, you may think that it might all be drawn from your own experience. But, if you write about people in another time or country, you will probably need to check for differences in what were the generally accepted standards of behavior, the food and entertainment options and the aspirations which people had then.

Otherwise, your characters will not fit into the environment of the time and your story will not ring true with your readers who are familiar with that era or the country.

If you write fantasy, you can make your own rules, but you need to work out a consistent set of values and “natural laws” which govern how the



characters behave and how they affect or are affected by their environment. This should be worked out in detail and then checked so that one factor does not conflict with something you invent to achieve a particular result in another section.

You will probably not use much of the framework that you develop but you need to have it as a reference so that your readers can follow the story or series without any glaring inconsistencies making it too hard for them to continue to accept what you put in front of them.

Even fantasy creatures and super heroes must behave consistently with the natural laws that apply to them.

## Editing Your Own Work



After you have finished your “good enough” first draft, you should leave it for at least a few hours to let your mind disengage from the sharp focus which you had on that piece while you were writing before you do some editing.

After you have more experience, you might find that you will be able to do this editing without a relatively long break from the writing. Some people find this easy while others may still need to wait a while.

I always find that I can find areas which need fixing more easily if I read the whole piece aloud at this point.

If we read through it again, we are likely to miss some fairly obvious errors. Hearing it seems to give us a different focus on our own work than we get by just reading through what we have written.

After a first read to pick out obvious errors, you can go through it again but read it silently.

This time, you look for ways that you might improve the flow of the piece.

Try to imagine that you are a reader seeing it for the first time.

Did you write it for local consumption or for an international audience on the Internet? If it will appear on the Net, check whether there are any parts which may not be understood. This includes expressions which are used by particular groups, and jokes which may fall flat with people in other countries or cultures, then you can put it aside and read it again after a couple of days.

Sometimes, you will find that some lines just don't fit with the general pace or focus of the piece. You might want to try to edit it so that it fits better, but that can take a lot more time and effort than it is worth because it can get to the point where you are writing it all over again.

I've found that it's more productive to ask yourself if the extract is of any particular importance to that piece of writing. If not, I file it for possible use

some time in another future piece where it may well fit more easily.

## Getting Feedback

Writing is often solitary work and that makes it hard for some people to keep their attitude at the high level needed to keep them producing their best work. That is one of the reasons why we value meaningful feedback so highly. But, that objective feedback and relevant criticism can be very hard to find.

I comment on feedback from professional services and experienced writers elsewhere in this book.

There are other ways which can be useful.

Asking members of your family and close friends is usually less successful than we might hope.

These people have a close relationship with you and will probably be concerned that they might cause some friction if they say anything which is not completely positive.

The other problem for them is that they probably have no idea what factors they should be looking for in the piece, and they may not have any knowledge or interest in the subject or the type of writing and they will feel that their comments would have little merit.

But, if we gently insist that we want to hear what they feel, they are likely to be either far too generous or too general.

The general but non-committal comments don't help us and the over-generous ones may encourage us to continue producing material that will not reflect well on us and hinder us getting closer to our goal to be a more successful writer.

It's best to wait until people offer their feedback without being pushed. Then, it will be genuine, although it may be more generous than they would say if they didn't know that you wrote the piece, it will be their own opinions and feelings.

## **Reacting to Feedback**

Are you good at accepting compliments and criticism? Many people have difficulty with one or the other. You have probably had the experience of complimenting someone on something they have said or done and been surprised and even disappointed by their reaction.

They might say that it really wasn't that good or not say anything at all. They give an impression of false modesty or just not having any regard for our honest opinion. Neither reaction would give you any encouragement to try to acknowledge anything you admire about them or their actions in the future.

And, if you say anything to someone which may seem even slightly critical, even when you have been asked to do so, many people will become offended or even aggressive.

It's worth thinking about how we treat compliments and criticism before we seek them out.

Handling them well can be important in our business and social interactions.

If someone criticizes something we wrote, keep at the front of your mind that they are not aiming that at you but the written work.

It isn't a personal attack. It may be extremely helpful for you as you try to improve your future efforts if you take it as the other person intended it.

That is one quality which most of us admire – maintaining a professional attitude. It can make people more willing to work with us and lead to more and better word of mouth about you personally, even if they don't like your writing as much as you hope.

Always thank anyone who is generous enough to put themselves out and offer comments or suggestions.

And, if you get a comment on a rejection slip from an editor who you submitted your work to, that is a good sign. Rejection slips are something which almost everyone gets, but few editors bother to put any comment on them unless they believe it will help the writer of that piece to improve their chances of writing something which that editor might find acceptable.

Don't send them a thank-you note, unless they sent you a lengthy critique or asked for you to reply (both are most unlikely). But, do take it as a positive sign and take the comment into consideration when you very carefully prepare the next piece you offer to that editor.

Don't be surprised if some people you ask for comments politely decline. Many professionals get to a point where they have got too many negative reactions from people they have tried to help, so they say "no" a lot more often than they probably used to.

## **Coping with the Downside**

Writing involves some risks and potential disappointments as well as the potential for great rewards, recognition, and personal satisfaction.

Sometimes, just the expectation of having to deal with the negative aspects is enough to stop people progressing very far with a project.

### ***Dealing with Rejection***

Rejection of some of their work is a common experience that almost no writer can avoid. That can be hard to accept but we learn to deal with it in our own way.

These suggestions may help you in those circumstances.

The best way to soften the effects of any rejection is to keep busy. Don't just put all of your focus and expectations on one particular piece of writing.

I know that can be hard for a writer that has invested most of their efforts over weeks or even months on a major piece and then has it rejected.

But, it is easier to take when you have already started to plan another piece and can see it coming together well.

Always take a fresh look at the piece. Don't ask yourself what is wrong with the piece - that implies that you are starting to doubt your own judgment.

Ask what other outlet might be best to send it to.

Keep moving forward!

Always take careful note of any comments from the editor. When they do comment, it is usually a sign that they see some potential in your work, even if that particular piece didn't get approved.

Try to apply the suggestions to the next piece you write.

Rejection of that piece may be for a different reason than lack of suitability. You may be a victim of timing – they could have recently released a piece on a similar subject or have one about to be published.

You might find it useful to adopt the tactic which is recommended in many books on salesmanship. Some experts in that area suggest that you look at a negative response as a step on the way to your next success.

My approach is a little more direct. I just read and carefully note any comments, and then submit it to another editor. Then, I put it out of my mind so that I can focus on whatever piece I am currently writing.

You can't afford to spend much time on anything which you cannot change. Writing, like selling, is a numbers game to some extent. The more writing you do and the more submissions you make, the greater your chances of success.

And those two things also affect how long you will have to wait for your next acceptance.

Some writers use rejections to fuel their determination to succeed. That response might work very well for you, but I find it better to just move on.

### ***No Response***

Another thing which causes some writers to become stressed is when they don't get any response about a submission.

They don't know whether to contact the editor or hold off for fear of offending them and possibly reducing any chance of future offerings being accepted.

I have contacted some companies and asked them for an estimate of the likely turn-around time on submissions. There is a wide variation.

But, I am sure that most editors are probably too busy to be offended by a polite inquiry about the fate of a particular piece. Just don't start phoning them or sending multiple emails.

Rather than worrying about any delay, get on with writing your next piece and the one after that.

Although some writers submit some of their writing to more than one outlet at a time, I try to avoid possible problems by submitting each piece to only one publisher at a time.

If I don't get a response to a particular submission after a while and I want to submit it elsewhere, I will email the first editor about it first and give them at least a couple of weeks to reply.



## Being a One Person Business

The biggest downside faced by many writers is the solitary nature of writing. You are solely responsible for every aspect of your business and often don't have much direct personal contact while you are actually working.

While that is what makes writing a very attractive option for some people, it pushes others to look for writing jobs within organizations. This gives them some personal contact, a professional environment and a regular wage although their security is often not as assured as it might have been in the past. The trade-offs which come with those benefits may include:

- Few of those writers can choose what they want to write
- They have deadlines imposed on them, often without consultation
- They cannot usually earn more than the agreed rate per hour
- They may have to sacrifice writing time to attend meetings of dubious value and they still have to meet the deadlines
- Office politics may have more impact on their opportunities for advancement than their actual work.

Each individual has to decide which option is best for them.

For some, the need to have an assured income so they can look after themselves and their family is most important.

Others are prepared to deal with the relative uncertainty which comes with “flying solo”.

They deal with the isolation by taking breaks to walk around the block, take their laptop or a writing pad to a local coffee shop for a while or visit the library or a bricks and mortar bookshop to check what is available there.

They value the possibility of earning more money through writing more when the opportunity arises.

They love the fact that they have a wide choice in the sort of thing they write.

Whichever choice you make, you can find plenty of positive aspects and writing will also give you the option of successfully changing your path on

your terms which is seldom available to people that do other types of work. Remember that a writer is not confined to an office and their opportunities are not usually restricted by their lack of particular qualifications, their location, their appearance or the way they speak.

The potential rewards are only limited by the size of their dreams and their determination and focus.

## Doing the Business

This section covers a few points which I learned from some successful one person businesses. They are not all new but they’ve been very valuable to me and proven to work for almost everybody that takes their business seriously.

### Procrastination Solved?



Many writers find it very hard to get started.

They want to wait until the conditions are right. But, they waste their most precious resource – time!

If you sit at the computer or facing a

blank writing pad, the best way to overcome chronic procrastination is to start writing almost anything. But, don't stop for at least ten minutes.

What seems to happen is the physical act of writing and your own growing annoyance at writing meaningless stuff actually gets your ideas flowing.

Sometimes, it's hard to remember that you need to stop for a mental and physical break.

That's good. But, you need that break to. Just don't make it so long that your enthusiasm dries up again.

### Set Limits.

Few of us can afford to set up a separate office for ourselves when we are just starting to make a serious effort at our writing.

But, the psychological benefit we get by making a definite break is worth working towards.

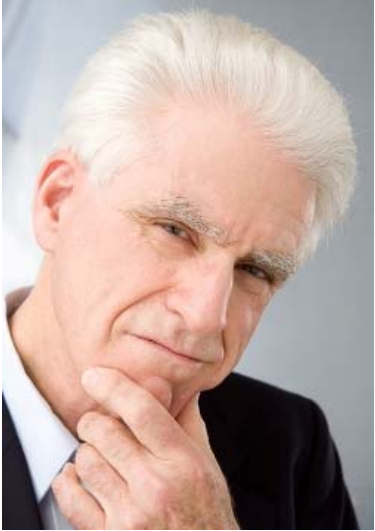
I suggest you try to set up a room or perhaps just screen off a section where

you do most of your writing.

Ask everyone (family and visitors) to not disturb you when you are working.

That is well known to help you cultivate that all-important professional attitude. A most successful writer set up his first office in his garage. It was necessary to make that switch before he could accept that he was “at work”.

## Ideas



The first point which I want to make about ideas is that they are almost worthless in themselves. I won't pay you two dollars for a bucketful of ideas, unless I want the bucket.

Many would-be writers keep looking for a "great idea" instead of making something great with an idea which they already have.

Ideas only become valuable when someone:

1. Uses them, and
2. Expresses them in a way that impacts the

people that read what the writer wrote about it.

I learned this lesson very early when I asked an experienced writer if she kept a file for the ideas which she might use later on.

She said, "I don't have to. I can only use one at a time and I can get more anytime."

Of course, I asked her where she found her ideas and she pointed to the newspaper.

She said, "Any newspaper can give me a lot of ideas for my stories. If I filed them all, I wouldn't have time for much else."

She wrote fiction and explained that many stories in the paper could be adapted and expanded to produce plots for future writing.

But, she also got inspiration from pictures in advertisements. She would look at a picture and ignore the text which accompanied it.

"I ask myself what those people might be doing if they were real people in some common situation not related to the product?"

"I might also read a news report and take some of the details and imagine a different outcome, possibly more dramatic or funnier."

"Of course, I make sure that my readers will focus on the characters and events in my story and not be able to link it to the original report. I just use

the picture or report as a starting point. I want to produce something which I can genuinely claim to be my original work.”

I take this idea a little further. I clip photos from advertisements and some other stories which I file and use as the basis for descriptions of some of the characters in my stories.

Sometimes, I will flick through my clip gallery and try to get a story idea by just studying a couple of random pictures.

Then, I try to put the characters which I develop from the anonymous pictures in a situation which will provide the basis of a story. I can freely change any aspect of the characters, even those details which originally caught my eye when I was scanning the gallery of pictures.

I also read a successful businessman had said that any daily newspaper probably had several ideas which could each be turned into a fortune by the right person.

The businessman said that he knew of people that read newspapers to find ideas which they could use to produce new products and processes or to improve current ones.

“They know that problems which many people share are the basis of many fortunes which are made by people that develop practical answers to them.”

You might not want to develop a new labor saving product but you might write an article about the problem highlighted in the report or use it as a factor in a story about two people, maybe like those in that advertisement for insurance on the opposite page.

The Internet is also a greater source of plots for fiction but it is the quality of the input from your own imagination and the way you express the story that will make it successful.

## Business Building Tips

### **Writing is a business.**

It is a means to provide for yourself and your family and possibly to improve the world around us at the same time.

These tips are some of those which I have found useful in building my business and my reputation. They are, I believe, responsible for some of the success which I have had and will have in the future.

**Ask everyone that you work for feedback.** When they let you know about anything you might be able to do better and especially about anything which disappointed them. Thank them for any feedback and take whatever steps you need to so that any disappointment they had is removed where possible.

This will help to produce loyal customers and good “word of mouth”. A regular customer is much more valuable over time than a series of one-shot projects which will also cost you more time and money to get.

And that “word of mouth” is the least expensive and most powerful form of advertising there is!

**Be aware of your legal rights and obligations.** Avoid involving lawyers except where they are essential (for those matters which can only be handled by someone with legal training.)

**It is important to avoid arguments, especially in public.** Everyone loses when they argue rather than negotiate. Even if you win, you may lose the benefits which maintaining that personal business relationship would have produced over time.

Even when you are right, try to negotiate so that no-one feels they “lost” an argument. Try to preserve the peace. If there was deliberate dishonesty, walk away.

**Always over-deliver.** Find ways to add value to what you supply to your customers. Often, this may be something which costs you nothing or very little but has significant value for your customer.

You may have a choice whether or not you accept a particular task but

always give every task which you accept your full attention.

**Always acknowledge other people’s contributions** to work that you are involved in.



## Resources

Use of any information from this list is at your sole risk.

Web sites change content and ownership without notice.

Hackers do take over sites or plant malicious software or links on them.

The publisher, author and distributors do not accept any responsibility for anyone’s use of this information.

### Market Directories

#### **WritersMarket.com**

<http://www.writersmarket.com/>

Long established printed guide for writers to markets and containing advice on all related topics. You can subscribe to the site by the month, for a yearly fee or combined with a printed version.

#### **The Writer Magazine**

<http://www.writermag.com/>

“On The Writer website you’ll find hundreds of articles and columns on the writing craft, plus information on thousands of markets, agents, contests and conferences. Be sure to check out our staff blog and forums.”

#### **The Australian Writer's Marketplace**

<http://www.awmonline.com.au/>

**AWMonline** is the online version of *The Australian Writer's Marketplace*.

The Australian Writer's Marketplace is a directory for writers. Our database has listings of all kinds that might be of interest to writers especially in Australia.

### Writers’ Groups

#### *United Kingdom*

#### **The National Association of Writers' Groups**

<http://www.nawg.co.uk/>

“NAWG is the fastest-growing national organisation for writers’ groups in the United Kingdom”.

*U.S.A.*

**Writers Guild of America, West**

[www.wga.org/](http://www.wga.org/)

“As the world leader in online screenplay registration, the WGAW represents writers in the motion picture, broadcast, cable and new media industries.”

*Australia*

**Australian Society of Authors**

[www.asauthors.org/](http://www.asauthors.org/)

“The Australian Society of Authors is the peak professional association for Australia's literary creators.”

**Fellowship of Australian Writers New South Wales Inc**

<http://www.fawns.org.au/>

“Australia's oldest writing organisation. We have over thirty regional branches across the state and an Isolated Writers’ Group.”

## Millie’s Wish for You



I’ve focused on the basics which will help you with whatever type of writing you do.

The only thing which you need to add to the qualities I’ve written about is persistence.

Very successful people from George Bernard Shaw to Thomas Alva Edison have proved that nothing can prevent the eventual and lasting success of someone that delivers what they promise and persists in their efforts, despite setbacks and disappointments.

I wish you more success than you can even imagine right now!

**Millie Harrison**

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