

How To Make Money Writing About The Supernatural offers tips, techniques, hints, and help to brainstorm, write, pitch, and sell articles and books about the supernatural and paranormal.

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# How To Make Money Writing About the Supernatural

*A publishing guide for explorers of the unknown*



By M. L. Swayne

## **Make Money Writing About The Supernatural**

*How to make a living writing about the dead, the odd, and the unexplained*

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# Introduction

*Your supernatural writing career awaits*

When I ask paranormal researchers, ghost hunters, mediums, psychics, and other folks interested in the supernatural why they spend their time and effort (along with weekends and late nights) attempting to experience the supernatural, they give me a couple of good reasons.

First of all, researching the unknown is fun. As any good horror film director will tell you, haunted houses and buildings might be drab on the outside, but they are actually pretty exciting. It's a great way to meet like-minded people and spend time together, too.

A second reason is broader. Explorers into the realm of the supernatural have often had a personal encounter with the unexplained and now want to arrive at a more definitive conclusion. The concept of death remains a mystery that these investigators want to understand. The death of a friend or loved one has often spurred researchers to discover what, if anything, lies beyond the misty border of death. Others need no convincing—these mediums have touched the other side.

Whether they do it for fun or love, or something in between, there are an increasing number of paranormal investigators, psychics, and ghost hunters across the country and the world. This passion is driving new innovations and new techniques. It's also requiring investigators to purchase and learn how to use complex equipment. With this equipment, they're collecting reams and reams of data. They're gathering photographic and video evidence, too.

This brings up perhaps the biggest complaint that paranormal investigators, as well as millions of people who love to study and discuss the paranormal, have: How can they turn their hobby into a full-time paying profession? Or, at the very least, they want to bring in some income to pay for that expensive equipment and travel.

Most investigators don't charge their clients for conducting investigation or for expenses.

Probably the best way to generate an income while fulfilling the deeper mission of investigating the supernatural is through writing and publishing material about your own opinions, investigations, and experiences, as well as researching and detailing paranormal activity in your town, your region, your state, and your country. (And even your world!)

Books on the supernatural—both fiction and non-fiction—continue to be the most dependable-selling volumes in the publishing industry today. And this trend shows no sign of stopping; in fact, many publishing experts say it's just starting.

According to recent statistics, fiction and non-fiction works about the paranormal, supernatural, occult and New Age are among the top performers.

[Ghost Hunting](#), by Jason Hawes and Grant Wilson, lead investigators for Sci-Fi's [Ghost Hunters](#) series, is a best-selling book that continually ranks among the top-selling titles on Amazon.com. The [Weird](#) series, which includes the *Weird U.S.* and state-by-state titles, while not exclusively a paranormal book, is another top-performer in the Supernatural category, as well as the Travel section, proving that paranormal non-fiction has widespread appeal.

Web traffic is also a bright spot for paranormal writers. Sites and portals about ghosts, haunted spots, and legend tripping are among the most frequented sites on the web. Paranormal and supernatural topics generate millions of searches each month on major search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft's Live. Not only does this show you the potential audience for your project, it offers a new market for your writing, as well as a new way of distribution.

As we'll see, the market for supernatural books, articles, and web sites is large and growing.

With this type of demand, agents and publishers are hungry for quality content about the supernatural.

But traditional publishing isn't the only method available to writers of the supernatural who want to move their stories into the marketplace. Writers now have a

technological marvel called "print on demand" publishing that can create instant access to some of the biggest stores and online sites.

### **Money and a Career?**

Now, for the important part: How much money can you expect to make from writing about the supernatural?

Based on my own experience and interviews with successful authors in the supernatural category, writers can make between a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars a month. And, if the right author finds the right idea and the right audience, there is no limit. None.

How far you go with your writing depends on your passion and your goals. You may want to turn your writing about the paranormal into a full-time job, which many investigators, researchers, and folks who are just interested in the supernatural have done.

You may just want some part-time income and that's very doable. There are magazines, journals, and websites that are looking for part-time and freelance writers. Online sources, like blogs and forums, have opened up even more ways to make your writing pay.

For investigators who want some income to pay for equipment and travel expenses that accrue as they conduct cases, writing can be an source of much-needed funds.

A select group will turn their writing efforts into a long-term and highly-profitable career, with residual income that builds through book royalties, speaking fees, and even movie and television deals. Success at this level is based on how you approach the subject and your dedication to the craft of writing and promotion. It depends on your persistence and passion. Your success is also subject to your marketing savvy and knowledge. There's always a little bit of luck involved, too.

I'm not sure I can make you more passionate about your work (I'll try, though); but, I believe if you have a solid foundation in writing, learn some tricks that will get your

work noticed, and find new ways to promote your projects in the supernatural market, you can improve the odds that your works will sell and increase the chance that you'll achieve your goals.

That's why I wrote this guide. It's a guide that specifically addresses the unique supernatural market.

Now, does this mean once you read this book, you should drop your current job and sweep everything off your kitchen table to prepare for the tons of royalty checks that are heading your way? No. Success in anything takes time and persistence. What I'm hoping this book accomplishes is that it will help you gain the knowledge necessary to lay the foundation for your success—however you define that term—in this industry. Success might be landing a few assignments that promote your work as a ghost hunter. It might earn you a part-time guest advice column. It may put you on the best-sellers list.

Like any profession, writing about the supernatural requires you to seize opportunities. In other words, you need some luck. But, luck is usually the point when hours of preparation meet a second of opportunity. You need to develop those skills that will help you seize that break that comes your way.

Lastly, I want to create some shortcuts in the process, so you experience fewer frustration than many authors find along this journey. In most cases, writers fail not because they don't have talent; writers fail because they become frustrated and quit.

### **Other Reasons For Writing...**

Making money is perhaps the most common reason writers cite for penning their books. Writing is the ultimate stay-at-home job, or even the ultimate travel-whenever-you-want job.

But authors say there are other advantages.

First, as an author of a book, you are establishing your authority and expertise. You're not only detailing your knowledge, you're passing on this knowledge to other people. Leveraging your book and achieving expert status can lead to speaking, lecturing, and teaching opportunities, as well.

The book you're writing helps you establish credibility and prove that expertise.

Let's face it: being recognized as an expert is kinda cool.

### **Self-expression**

Another important reason to embark on a writing career is to express yourself. Many people who have had supernatural encounters find these experiences so powerful that they must write about them. Writing can be therapeutic.

If this is the case, this guide can help you explore those feelings and put them down on paper.

### **Help People**

Assisting people is another reason for writing about the supernatural. Writers can help people enhance their lives, or solve problems. You might want to help people learn to become a medium, or you might want to help them fight demons.

Becoming a writer to pass on important information is one of the best motivations there is. But, if your writing doesn't reach its audience--or when it does, the copy confuses them--then your inspiration and passion are ill-served.

If it's your mission to help people, writing clearly and succinctly can deliver those messages on target.

### **On Becoming a Writer...**

Based on my chats with publishers, agents, and readers, I believe that the line that separates people who write about something from people who are actually professional writers is a fine line, indeed. Anyone with a pencil or a Microsoft Word program can write about something. Writers, on the other hand, are artists who are skilled at delivering messages and telling stories.

Writers have skills that go way beyond the mere creation of words on paper. Writers are experts in analyzing the needs of the reader, composing articles and books

that meet those needs, and even devising a little marketing and salesmanship strategies that help get the word out.

The good thing is that these skills can be taught. In some cases, teaching has nothing to do with it. You, the writer, just need to become aware of those skills and attitudes to awaken them.

The following material is based on my own experience writing the paranormal, and pitching paranormal book and video projects. But I wanted to get input from *really* successful authors, too. I interviewed successful writers, agents, and publishers of supernatural.

(While this is generally about paranormal non-fiction, I've included tips from paranormal fiction writers when appropriate.)

In this book, you'll learn the complete process of bringing your work-from the idea stage to the book shelves and shopping carts. You'll learn how to:

- Analyze the market for under-served niches and big market busters
- Brainstorm book concepts and article ideas
- Prepare to write
- Establish a writing practice (the foundation of a writing career)
- Beat back writer's block
- Query an agent or publisher
- Prepare a book package
- and more

As a bonus, I've included a list of publishers that are in the market for paranormal and supernatural genres. There's also a section on common writing mistakes and tips to make your writing come alive.

So, let's start developing that potential by taking the very first step, a step that's (sadly) often overlooked by would-be authors: studying the market.

## Chapter 1: The Current Market

If you think about it, the first stories were tales about the supernatural.

Before men and women could write, incredible tales of gods and heroes were shared around the fire and told as the people toiled in fields and stalked during hunts. Ghost stories were also big--the spirits of ancestors walked along with these early people.

It's no wonder that today, paranormal fiction and paranormal non-fiction tales are the most reliably successful books and entertainment content.

Paranormal fiction is, without question, one of the strongest markets in the book industry today. The [Twilight vampire series](#), by Stephanie Meyers, has sold more than **40 million volumes**, according to **The Australian** magazine, and was turned into a successful movie series.

Paranormal non-fiction is considered separate from its fiction counterpart, but it's important to understand that the audiences are intertwined. Readers who buy vampire serials or ghost-hunting novels are also inclined to read about the "real" supernatural world. And those sales, for writers who have mastered writing paranormal non-fiction, are no less stunning.

James Van Praagh's "[Talking to Heaven](#)" and "[Ghosts Among Us](#)" have been on the New York Times non-fiction best seller list for months.

Brad Steiger is the author and coauthor of 154 books, most of them about the paranormal, which have sold more than 17 million copies.

Don't think that you have to knock out a best-seller, like Van Praagh or Steiger, though.

Some titles might not be immediate best sellers, but have a longer shelf-life and sales can extend over many years. The Independent Book Publishers Association wrote this about a collection of Outer Banks ghost stories published by John F. Blair:

"Back in 1966, John F. Blair, Publisher, released [Legends of the Outer Banks and Tar Heel Tidewater](#) by Charles H. Whedbee. Thirty-seven years later, Blair has sold more than **111,000 copies** of this collection of 18 ghost stories set along North Carolina's coast. Before his death, Whedbee went on to publish four additional ghost-story collections, which altogether have sold more than **205,000 copies.**"  
(<http://www.ibpa-online.org/articles/shownews.aspx?id=1973>)

[Haunted Baseball's](#) co-author, Dan Gordon, writes that his book, [Cape Encounters: Contemporary Cape Cod Ghost Stories](#), sold more than **10,000 copies in its first year** in print.

The size of the market is also seen in television and radio. According to (ironically enough) a group of skeptics called, CSIOP:

*"X Files used to draw between 17-25 million viewers. Coast to Coast AM, had an average of 8.75 million listeners tuning in per week and was ranked number four among American radio talk shows."*

Plenty of magazines, journals, blogs, and websites exist as a market for your shorter works, too.

### **Gnawing A Niche Or Mastering A Market**

A market with millions of active readers and millions more potential readers waiting for the right material is a tempting place to sell books.

If you already started your work of paranormal nonfiction, the following information can give you an idea of how big your market is and, if you decide to pursue a publisher or agent, it can help you start collecting market demand statistics that should be included in your pitch package.

If you haven't begun writing your book, this info will help you start to brainstorm your first volume.

The paranormal market is intriguing for many writers because it has niches and even niches within a niche. Writers tend to build their books around a market-mastering trend, or by carving out their own niche.

The nonfiction paranormal market is broken (generally) into niches like:

- UFOs
- Ghosts
- Demonology
- Monsters
- ESP and psychic phenomena
- Prophecy
- New Age

Within those broader niches, there are even more sub-categories and even niches with those sub-categories.

UFO books can be broken down into categories like incidents, abduction cases, and conspiracy stories. Ghost books can include books that cover various geographic regions. Tales of haunted houses and buildings in various countries and U.S. states have achieved sustained popularity. Several publishers have established lines of books on paranormal places. That niche is a proven winner for publishers.

Here are some samples:

- Lone Pine Publishing's Ghost Stories series
- Haunted Houses of California by Antionette May (Wide World Publishing)
- Stackpole Book's Haunted series.

Subject matter for ghost books can be geographically narrowed even more. Books that cover counties, regions, cities, and towns continue to be popular. These books not only reach the residents of the area, but appeal to tourists and visitors to those places, adding an entire new reading market to a title's success.

Here are a few examples:

- [Ghost Hunter's Guide to California's Wine Country](#) by Jeff Dwyer and [Haunted Southern California](#) by Charles A. Stansfield Jr.
- [Ghosts of Gettysburg](#) by Mark Nesbitt
- [Nantucket Ghosts](#) by Blue Balliett

This is just scratching the surface, though. You can move beyond this typical "haunted house" book by investigating other objects and specific building types. Off the top of my head:

- Haunted ships
- Haunted cemeteries
- Haunted bridges
- Haunted rivers
- Haunted schools
- Haunted libraries
- Haunted animals

Then, you can package the material in a volume with this new focus.

This tactic works with other genres, as well. Let's say you want to write about vampires. There are already titles on the shelves about that, but you might consider approaching them from another angle: urban vampires, psychic vampires, vampire defense, etc. The variations of your chosen subject are about as infinite as your imagination and the imagination of your reading audience.

### **Covering Old (Haunted) Ground**

Now, there may already be a title that covers the area you're exploring, or the topic you're considering. Since there are already similar titles on the market, does this mean you should shelve your topic?

Not at all. To begin with, more and more publishers want to enter the supernatural writing space and if you have new stories and/or new takes on old stories, your material is just as valuable.

Also, your work will approach the topic from new, fresh angles. You can:

- Find new material and new stories
- Interview new witnesses
- Uncover fresh research on current stories
- Take a fresh angle
- Package your stories differently
- Add photographs
- Find a niche within the category

You can even decide to sell the volume at a different price point.

There are other factors that will welcome your volume to the bookshelves. I'm not sure how to put this politely and it may be a little grim statistic, but people are dying all the time. People are also claiming to see ghostly presences all the time, too. Chances are pretty good that ghost stories will continue to be told and new ones will be created. Keep an eye out for fresh stories or witness accounts to update your book and make it stand out from the rest of the market.

The other possibility is that your book is just higher quality. Your research will be more detailed and your writing will be better. (I mean, you're reading this guide, right?)

Encounter stories are popular. These are books that document personal encounters with the supernatural. The most common example of this genre is a person who has lived (or, for the truly nutty, is still living) in a haunted house and has written about those encounters. Another example is an investigative look at a particular haunting or haunted site.

Some of the best-selling supernatural books are actually these types of first-hand stories. [Amityville Horror](#), which sold millions of copies and became a blockbuster movie, basically defined the genre. But there are others. One example is the book, [The Uninvited: The True Story of the Union Screaming House](#) by Stephan LaChance, The Uninvited is a detailed account of LaChance's own run-in with the supernatural.

During their career, ghost hunters, paranormal investigators, psychics, and mediums encounter dozens of experiences like the ones LaChance wrote about. Members of ghost hunting groups should always be on the look out for these compelling

stories--or a collection of compelling stories--in their investigations that may make good book material.

Here's another possibility: keep notes on each investigation and then write reports about them. You can easily and cheaply publish and promote them through print-on-demand outlets.

### **Psychic And New Age Market**

Books written by mediums and psychics are always in high demand. In fact, books by famous mediums have been known to sell *millions* of volumes.

**Sylvia Browne**, author of [Visits from the Afterlife](#), is helped by her national television appearances to sell millions of books. She's begun to branch out beyond the typical "psychic" books to include volumes on philosophy and religion.

If you have mediumistic power or psychic abilities, the market is extremely open to your works. (Of course, you probably knew that already.) Your book could offer tips for people who want to develop their own psychic powers or you can reveal your predictions of the future. You can also explore and document some of your own personal experiences, like communicating with ghosts or helping people connect with the spirits of loved ones who have passed away.

Several other mediums have landed their books on the best-seller lists:

Mary Ann Winkowski wrote [When Ghosts Speak](#), a best-selling book and continues to sell well.

[Hello Heaven](#), by Bill Guggenheim, is primarily about people who have connected with loved ones beyond the grave.

[Ghosts Among Us](#) , by James Van Praagh, a medium who says he is able to see ghosts that other folks can only see occasionally.

### **Other Paranormal Markets**

If writing about ghosts and haunted houses (or haunted boats) isn't your thing and you have limited ability to see the future, the paranormal and supernatural world offers plenty of other subjects that you can turn into books and even videos that can find a ready-and-willing market.

As I mentioned earlier, you could explore other topics in the world of supernatural literature that rest outside of the more mainstream genres of haunted houses and psychic powers. These topics might include:

- UFOs and aliens
- Cryptozoology
- Vampires
- Myths and Legends
- Miracles
- Skeptical analysis

Just as authors who write about ghosts or psychic experiences find their own niches, writers of the above supernatural topics should choose more specific categories to better define their book's unique selling proposition. Here's an example: a writer who studies UFOs may decide to write a book about a specific alien landing or alien abductions. For Bigfoot experts, an author might only detail Native American Bigfoot legends. Other cryptozoologists may create a book series about Bigfoot by writing volumes that explore sightings on a state-by-state basis. If there are enough reports of hairy beasts (that aren't just members of the local hippie community), they might write a book about encounters in a certain town.

### **Lots of Options**

So, as you can see, there are a lot of ways to approach your book project and freelance articles. The market is broad and it's deep.

Now, we'll take the next step: brainstorming your book.

Even if you already have a subject in mind or have the book project underway, it's still a good thing to take this step. Approaching your idea from a wide variety of angles will help you hone in on the book's unique selling proposition (USP)--or what will make it special and stand out in the racks and racks of books.

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