

101 Surefire Ways to Stay Friends with Your Co-Author!

**The Collaborator Rules: 101 Surefire Ways to Stay Friends with Your Co-Author!**

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# The Collaborator Rules

101 Surefire Ways to Stay  
Friends with Your Co-Author!

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**Safflower Press, Inc.**  
**New York, NY**

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The Collaborator Rules

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Safflower Press, Inc.

<http://www.sallyshields.com>

ISBN: 978-1-4327-4571-4

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Writing is a lonely and difficult business. When you're all alone with a computer in the middle of the night and you can't decide if your character should get married or throw herself under a double-decker bus, it would be nice to have someone to ask. When you're pretty sure that what you've just written is either the worst rubbish any mind ever conceived or a stroke of Shakespearian genius, you might feel the need for a second opinion. When you know exactly how the screenplay starts and how it ends but you're missing that teensy part called "the middle," the thought may well cross your mind that what you need is—a collaborator!

Lots of writers work with collaborators. From screenwriting comedy teams to textbook authors, writing is not always best done alone, wallowing in self-pity. And so, many innocent, doe-eyed writers enter into collaboration, without thoroughly considering the consequences of this monumental decision. If your writing is important to you, you must make sure that the collaboration is right for you. And yet, for writers considering collaboration, or already working within that tricky relationship, there has been no recipe for success. There has been no guide that explains everything you should know about collaboration, and more. Until now.

Although the primary focus of this guide is on collaborations between writers, most of the information can also be applied to other types of collaborations and partnerships.

This handbook is designed to take you from your initial desire for a collaborator all the way through every pitfall and every success. The rules for collaboration turn out to be very similar to the basic design for good relationships. That's why this book is set up with a guiding metaphor. Think of yourself as single—or perhaps you're already there. (Perhaps you wish you were, but that's a different story.) This manual takes the bachelor or bachelorette—the solo writer—and leads you from dating (meeting collaborators), to the wedding (who else is invited?), through the honeymoon phase, (working together well), to the sometimes-inevitable divorce (uh-oh).

And it all starts with... *desire*.

PART 1:  
Desire Stirs



Rule#1: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Realize That Writing is Lonely (That's why God invented coffee shops)**

Have you ever had that empty, hollow feeling of working away on a project no one else understands, or shares? Most writers have. Human beings are social creatures. Unless you're a hermit, you like both hearing and talking about your work. It would be lovely to be told that your writing is good, or even that it's interesting. Heck, you'd settle for a chat about the pros and cons of rodent ownership. But there are other ways to solve this problem. You could talk to the walls. Get a dog. Or, better yet, you could get out more. Make a rule for yourself that you will spend at least an hour every day away from your writing, in the company of people. Take a walk in the park, but check the weather first. This is a step many writers forget. Alternatively, go to a coffee shop. Get a latté, and sip it slowly—it's too hot anyway.

Rule#2: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Make Sure You're Prepared Emotionally**

Before you head into the Land of Collaboration, ask yourself, "Are you sure you're ready for this?" If you're in the middle of a messy divorce, now is not the time to seek out yet another stressful relationship. If you've just fallen head over heels, you don't have the available brain cells to devote to a new collaborator. It is a prerequisite of successful collaboration that you and your collaborator need to be in relatively stable life situations. You should not be on your way to a safari in Kenya, nor moving out of an apartment and constantly changing addresses, and definitely not on your way to the Big House on a two-year bid for embezzling from the 7-11.

Rule#3: \_\_\_\_\_

## Clarify Your Big Idea

Whatever kind of writing you do, whatever size or scope of project you're working on, you need to know what the Big Idea is. Seeking a collaborator when you haven't refined your Big Idea is like shopping for the perfect high-definition TV when you haven't paid the electric bill. If you want to work with someone else, you'll have to be able express your Big Idea clearly and succinctly. "I'm working on a book about music" isn't nearly as helpful as, "I've written the first three chapters of a book about the breakup of the Beatles from Yoko's Ono's artistic point of view. Ultimately, it will be approximately sixteen chapters. The audience is Beatles fans in the U.S." Of course, for that concept you'd need Beatles fans who like Yoko Ono's artistic point of view, and that may not be the biggest demographic...

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