

How to Write for the Christian Marketplace will show you how to write for Christian publications and where to find markets to sell what you've written. When we started writing in this field, we learned as we went along. Our instructions came from writing courses, attending writers' conferences, and practicing the craft.

How to Write for the Christian Marketplace

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I. GETTING STARTED

Getting It Down and Sending It Out

Have you ever read a book or a magazine article and said, “I could have written that?” Do you have a desire to help others by sharing your experiences? Maybe you have a knack for telling stories. If so, why not put those experiences and stories in writing? Let’s get started.

Tools You Will Need:

Typewriter or Computer w/printer

Good grade of paper (20 or 24 lb. Bond is recommended.)

#10 envelopes

9x12 manila envelopes

Bible, dictionary, and thesaurus

Market Guide

Getting Started

For some, the hardest part of writing is making the decision to get started. Interferences abound to keep you from sitting down at the keyboard and beginning to write. So set aside some time in which you will do nothing but write. It may be a good idea to write down the designated time on the calendar. In other words, make an appointment with your keyboard. You may not have large blocks of time to devote to the craft, but the important thing is using the time to write whether it be thirty minutes or an entire afternoon.

How Do I Begin?

One way to begin is by writing down your ideas for the article, poem, or story you wish to tell. Some writers make outlines, others simply write the story as if they were telling it to a friend. Still others make a list of points they wish to cover in the article and then begin to write about each point. Follow the way that works best for you. Many established writers query an editor with an idea before they ever write their article. (See Chapter 2 on query letters.) They sell before writing. This saves them valuable time. But if you’re a beginning writer, you may want to practice the craft of writing before you begin contacting an editor.

Rewriting/Revising

Once you've written your story, put it aside for a few days. Then go back and read the manuscript you've written. You may discover points you need to cover in more detail, misspelled words, or incomplete sentences. You will need to do some rewriting and revising, making sure your manuscript is clear and focused. Will the reader understand what you're trying to say? Who is the story written for? Does it speak to the audience for which it's intended? If the answer is no to any of these questions, rewrite your story until you can answer yes. Make sure you use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Editors want to see your best work.

Manuscript Format

Once you've finished writing your article or story, type your manuscript in the format shown in the sample. Remember these tips when typing your manuscript:

1. Use one-inch margins at the top, bottom and sides of your manuscript.
2. Double-space your manuscript except for the name and address information at the top. This area is single-spaced.
3. Type your manuscript in clean, black print.
4. Don't use fancy fonts on your manuscript. Times New Roman or Courier are both acceptable.
5. Use the name and address where you receive correspondence or you want your check mailed. Some editors don't require you to send your social security number on the manuscript, but if you don't, that will delay payment until they receive it. You may include a fax number or e-mail address if you have either.
6. Word count is the approximate number of words in your manuscript rounded off to the nearest 100. For example: if your manuscript contains 869 words, round off to 900 words for your count. Some writers round off to the nearest 50.
7. Your copyright notice will be typed as follows: (C)1999 Jane Doe, or use the copyright symbol if you're using a computer with one available.
8. Rights offered are the rights you are offering to sell to the editor for this

particular manuscript.

(See chapter 3 for more information on rights.)

Name
Address
City, State, Zip
Telephone #
Social Security #

Word Count
©1999 Your name
Rights offered

Sample Manuscript First Page

Title

by Your Name

Your story begins here.

On the second page and each consecutive page, type your last name and the title of the manuscript in the upper left corner. Type the page number in the upper right corner. Examples:

| | |
|--------------|----|
| Doe/Title | 2. |
| Or | |
| Doe Title | 2. |

Do I Need A Cover Letter?

Some editors prefer a cover letter with your manuscript, some do not. In your cover letter, introduce yourself, list any writing credits you may have and give a brief statement about your manuscript. If you have a degree or experience that qualifies you to write the article be sure to include that information also. Try to keep your cover letter to one page. Keep it brief and to the point.

Sending It Out

Once you've completed your manuscript, including rewriting and revising to make it as professional as possible, you're ready to submit it to a publication.

Some editors require a query letter before you submit the article to them. (See Chapter 2 on queries.) Others want to see a completed manuscript. You must study your market guide and the magazine guidelines to see which method the editor prefers. Writers' guidelines give additional information on what the magazine publishes, their goal or mission, payment information, and any other details specific to that particular publication. To obtain writers' guidelines, write to the magazine and request them before sending anything to that editor. It's also a good idea to study back issues of the magazine you want to submit to. In doing so, you will see if your article/story fits the magazine's profile. Be sure to follow the guidelines precisely. If the editor only wants 800 words, don't submit

1,200. If he requires a query letter, query before sending your work. By not following the guidelines as stated you will probably have your manuscript rejected and returned to you.

Simultaneous Submissions

Some publications will accept simultaneous submissions which means you may send your work to more than one market at a time. If you decide to follow this route, check the guidelines and market guide. Be sure that each market you are submitting to accepts simultaneous submissions. On the first page of your manuscript, below “rights offered,” type Simultaneous Submission. This lets the editor know you have submitted it to other places for consideration.

Multiple Submissions

Multiple submissions means the editor will look at more than one manuscript at the same time. If you want to send an editor two or more pieces of your work, be sure he accepts multiple submissions and that all work sent fits the publication’s format.

What Is the SASE?

When you’ve chosen your market, you’re ready to send a query letter or a manuscript. It’s important to choose the right size envelope for mailing your manuscript. If your manuscript is a short filler, poem, or a 2-3 page article, you may use a #10 business envelope to mail your work. Any more than this, you should use a 9x12-manila envelope and mail your work flat. Be sure to enclose your SASE with the manuscript. This is a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the editor’s reply. If you want your manuscript returned, be sure you enclose one the same size as your outer envelope. If you’re only interested in a reply, a #10 envelope is sufficient. If you fail to send the SASE, most editors will simply toss your work without reading it. Editors receive hundreds of manuscripts every week. They can’t afford to pay postage for responding to each one.

It’s your responsibility to see that you get a reply to your query or manuscript by including the SASE. Be sure you have correct postage on that reply envelope as well as the envelope you’re sending out. If you’re unsure of the postage, let postal employees weigh it for you.

It’s Gone, Now What?

Once you’ve mailed your manuscript or query, don’t sit by the mailbox waiting for a reply. It may be several weeks or even months before you hear from the editor. (Guidelines and market guides usually state an approximate response time.) Now is the time to start writing your next idea. Forget about that first manuscript and get busy on another story.

How to Write for the Christian Marketplace will show you how to write for Christian publications and where to find markets to sell what you've written. When we started writing in this field, we learned as we went along. Our instructions came from writing courses, attending writers' conferences, and practicing the craft.

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