

# 4 proven ways to sell 75%+ of your freelance writing

## MAGAZINES and NEWSPAPERS

1. Here is the two-item formula for selling nonfiction copy to **magazines** and **newspapers**: (a) You sell more than 75% of your freelance writing by writing *only* when you have better than a 50% chance of a sale, and (b) You have better than a 50% chance of a sale by either querying your prospective market, and writing *after* you receive a positive reply, or by writing to markets where you can simultaneously submit the same manuscript.

2. You can also increase your sales percentage and income by simultaneously selling **reprints** or **rewrites** of the published material—or **reprints of the rewrites**[\[Reprints, Rewrites, Reprints of Rewrites, and Resales\]](#).

3. **Fiction** is excluded from this 75% claim in magazines, newspapers, and books. Nonetheless, if points made on these pages seem appropriate to selling your fiction, try them, but know that the selling ratio in fiction is very low.

4. The most important tool for selling to magazines is the **query letter**. [\[25 Professional Query and Cover Letters\]](#) You do not query to newspapers (except to their magazines); you need **cover letters** to sell to them. If you are selling to big-house book publishers, at least a query letter is required. If you are niche publishing and pre-testing, you will need a sales letter, a small note, and a prepaid response mailer.

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Items in orange are explained in far greater detail in blogs from [blog.gordonburgett.com](http://blog.gordonburgett.com). Go to the blog and insert the highlighted word in the search box, upper right, title page. Often the search will bring up many blogs related to the topic or word you seek. For example, if you are looking for more information about “query letter” (a good thing to know about) and you type “query letter” in the box, it will probably bring up a five or ten full blogs, one after the other. Please use all of the information that applies.)

Items in magenta are the subject(s) of related products. The product title is in brackets after the reference. There is more information at [www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm](http://www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm).

For more assistance, see [www.gordonburgett.com](http://www.gordonburgett.com) and [glburgett@aol.com](mailto:glburgett@aol.com).

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## NEWSPAPERS

5. Usually the copy (and accompanying photos) sold to newspapers will be about travel [[How to Sell 75% of Your Travel Writing](#)], editorial commentary, food, reviews, and (very rarely) columns. That’s about all newspapers buy from freelancers. Mostly they buy travel.

6. You are more likely to sell to newspapers (particularly in travel) if your piece is short (600-1500 words; 1200 words is a good target) rather than long (to about 3000 words). The longer feature articles are usually written by the section editor, or one from another publication.

7. You can simultaneously submit the same material (copy and photos) to newspapers (unless they tell you no) if they are not “national” newspapers—like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Newsday*, where you submit

to them one at a time—or where the newspapers overlap in prime circulation (usually within 100 miles of each other), where you submit to *only one* newspaper at a time in the **circulation radius**.

8. Study others' in-print newspaper articles in your target selections and write (and punctuate) like the original writers did to get in print. Focus on the **topics** [[Finding Topics That Make Your Articles Indispensable](#)], conciseness, **quotes**, timeliness, length of paragraphs, and the **writing voice** of the articles. The voice means: first person, I; second person, you; third person, he/she/it. (You mostly write salable copy in third person.)

9. Send your newspaper copy, ready to use, to the respective section editor with a cover note/page that tells the unique features in the copy, its timeliness, your **credits** (in a phrase: "I've sold 600 newspaper travel pieces"—don't lie, say nothing if it's nothing or very modest), any exceptional photos, how to get back to you—email and phone, and that you are marketing simultaneously (no nationals; to you solely within a 100-mile radius). If you are sending to a national newspaper, submit to one at a time (until bought). To national newspapers (or those few that insist), you are selling **first rights** to them only.

10. If you have the respective section editor's newspaper email address, send your submission digitally—the **cover note/page, text, and sample photos** or link to a sample photo page. If you don't, snail mail your submission to that editor, and include an SASE (stamped, self-address envelope). If that editor replies by email, you then have their email address. Remember to write out the full address to the photo links.

11. Assuming your **salable photos** are .jpegs, in your cover note (a) offer to send them if they want to review them, but you can briefly describe one or two extraordinary shot(s) in the note, (b) include a b/w or color page with samples of the

best 6 or so with the note, or (c) post the best you have, very best first, on a cloud or website page where they can link and peruse. Let them pluck what they want to use and pay as the piece and art are published.

12. There is no firm **photo submission protocol**, so use the publication's guidelines—or common sense. (Sometimes the guidelines are listed in *Google*—or the editor will tell you if you ask.) Let the editors decide if they will use the shot(s) in b/w or color. With the camera, seek clarity, get bright colors, focus on key items you wrote about. Remember, in newspapers, particularly for shorter submissions, the text is what they buy. (They might buy photo-first if you have an original shot of Napoleon—or something like that, or older.)

13. Newspapers pay from about \$100-225 for short items, \$200-500 for longer pieces. They pay after the submission is published. For photos, it may range from \$35-150. But some may pay less for the items above and some of the larger newspapers will pay more. You have no bargaining power here but if you sell often to the same newspaper, the editor sometimes increases the pay as your value to them increases.

14. **Do you see how selling simultaneously to newspapers lifts you well above the 75%+ goal?** If you send a sharp article to six cities all distant from each other and four buy it (some with photos), you have sold the article 400%! It's hard to top that sales ratio. What a shame that the articles themselves don't pay much more...

## **MAGAZINES**

15. Magazines do pay more. You usually know their **pay range** (several hundred to a thousand dollars and up) and the **size articles** they seek because most of the magazines that you will

write for are found in the current-year *Writer's Market* (in print or online version). That and a ton more information is explained in *WM*, so you should have that source accessible where you write. Also, if you check *Writer's Digest Magazine* (in the library) it lists new markets every month—and updates current listings.

16. To get on the 75% magazine path find an idea you want to write about, then create a *feasibility study*. Think of the study as two boxes next to each other, both sharing the same idea. In one box you answer, “Is this topic feasible to write for X magazine?” In box two you answer “Is it feasible to sell an article about this topic?” If it’s a “yes” to both, you will write a query letter to the #1 market. (See “*How to Prepare and Market Magazine Articles That Sell.*”) [[Travel Writer's Guide, ebook edition](#)]

17. There is no need for a feasibility study for newspaper direct submissions because you will know if it’s feasible to write because you will, in fact, write it and send the prose to one or many markets simultaneously. And if it sells, that’s your answer to the second box.

18. To answer box 1, see if and *where magazine articles appeared in print* about your topic. Find copies of those articles and study what they contain. (See “*How to Study a Printed Magazine Article.*”) [[Travel Writer's Guide, ebook edition](#)] You will likely need updated information, new quotes, or new examples to add to the information already in print. See if you have or can get access to that new information. If nothing has been in print, study the topic and list what readers would want to read about it. This should take several hours, not weeks or years. If you have a strong sense that if you queried an editor about that topic knowing what you can provide that he/she would say “yes, then move on to box 2.

19. “Who would buy an article about this topic?” is the focus of box 2. See the many categories of publications in the *WM*

table of contents and list those where your topic might appeal to its readers. Let's say there are six such categories; list all of them. Then go to the listed publications in each category and write down the magazine titles in that category where you think the reader's interest would be greatest. Let's say there are two magazines in each category, so you would end up with 12 possible magazines to query before you write.

20. Because you can only query one magazine at a time from your 12 possible candidates, you must **prioritize** the 12. Put the most likely first and the least likely last, and sort the rest in between. What criteria do you use to prioritize the list?

21. If you want to top a 75% sales plateau, then when the editors of those magazines pay for articles is the most important criterion. So put all of those that "**pay on acceptance**" (this information is in the **WM**) at the top of the list. Paid freelancers only query editors who pay on acceptance since that means if they accept your manuscript, you will be paid right away or within a month (when they churn that month's checks). The other editors "**pay on publication,**" which means your finished manuscript (and photos) will sit in that editor's "to use" pile until it fits, and then you will be paid after it sees print, which means another additional 60 days to get your reward. Even worse, those that pay on publication usually pay less, and a rare few forget to pay at all.

22. So once you know when your 12 possible markets pay, list the pay on acceptance publications on top (say six of them), with the remaining six that pay on publication on the bottom. Now ask the second question, "How much do they pay?" The highest payer of the first six candidates goes to the top of the list, the lowest payer is #6. (Don't worry about the last six on the list right now.)

23. There are two more criteria that could move your target

markets up or down. One asks, “What **percent of freelance material** do they buy?” The other, “**How many issues do they publish a year?**” Clearly, you’d rather be considered by an editor that uses 95% freelance copy than, say, 5%. The same with a magazine that comes out weekly rather than annually—it buys 52 times more copy! Resort the top six into their most desirable order—for you.

24. Now you are ready to query. You will write a **full-page letter** asking the editor of the top magazine on your prioritized list if she would be interested in an article about \_\_\_\_\_. (The query letter will make the topic jump with excitement and the editor jump with hope to get your writing genius on her pages.) If, in truth, the editor says “yes, let me see it,” that’s almost as good as putting the money in your bank because the “**go-ahead** (and write it)” is given seriously, with the expectation that you will provide ready-to-go copy that fits in the slot saved for you. But if the editor says “no,” however kindly, you will move to #2 on your list, read its write-up in the *WM*, and send its editor a query letter (often adjusted some to meet that new readership’s needs). You keep moving down the top six until you are out of “pay on acceptance” rejecters.

25. Why not just continue down the list of publication editors for this new article? It’s not worth the time for the risk involved. You will sell your reprints (or reprints of rewrites) to the bottom six. That’s what they often, sometimes only, buy. Better yet, you can sell reprints (or second rights) simultaneously as long as you tell the others that yours is a **second rights** sale.

26. A couple more points. Let’s say the first “acceptance” editor wants your article. Have you lost the buying potential of markets 2-6? No, just approach the topic from another slant or create another article idea from that topic, and query about that possible article. In other words, you can **rewrite that first topic** and query letter and start it down the

selling ladder to those “pay on acceptance” editors that are still uncontacted. And what if you do that all six times and all six editors buy their own unique articles? Bingo, you just sold the same stretched idea 600%, rather than 75%. (And you’re still not done because each of those six articles can be sold as reprints of the rewrites! Heavens, you may get rich with just five or six different, fecund ideas!

27. But we are getting the cart in front of the horses. All we have done is have a kindly editor say that he/she wants to see our article—on speculation, which means, no obligation. So we still have to write one or many excellent articles that the editor(s) must embrace, buy, and use. Still, a “go-ahead” from most editors means a sale as long as you provide (in the article) what you promised by the date agreed, and perhaps also with the promised photos.

28.. Which means enough late-night oil, interviews, facts found and verified, anecdotes generously inserted—whatever is needed to make the article hum in print. It also means close scrutiny of the target magazine to see what that editor wants on his/her pages before you write. Thus, if this query-led system is followed, **almost all magazine articles suggested and written will be sold** since you will not write them without a prior “go-ahead.” And with the reprint and rewrite fall-back sales, you should be **far ahead of your 75% goal.**

## BOOKS

29. It used to be that selling any percent of your freelance writing through book publishing was as likely as having your books come out of a cloud. Guess what? Now it’s simple to publish 100% of your freelance book writing—you can just do it yourself. And it can sit in a cloud to sell once it’s written

and prepped. Who knew?

30. Less than a decade back the chances of the Big 8 or 5 or whatever the number was of the big-house publishing firms picking up a random freelance book was like 1:1000. Even with agents or even with a solid writing reputation. Then you sent query letters with attachments.. You may as well have been sending pick-up laundry chits.

31. These days it's hard to figure any strong case for going first to the big houses (which simply aren't so big anymore nor are they so appealing). They pay poorly, it can take months or years for the book to appear, and their bookstore allure has faded as the bookstores themselves have disappeared. It's kind of upside down now. **Freelancers publish the book themselves** [[How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#)] and they earn a fast and decent return. Then if it smells of success the big houses will get in line to pay for the product—and often all the additional products that writer/publisher can create. So why would a freelancer go back to the earlier days when a big-house sale meant a meager royalty, poor sales, payment a couple of times a year, and no control?

32. If we are talking sheer percentages, you write a book that others want to buy; get it **proofread**; hire artwork and covers and some selling postcards; **get the book designed**; print some in-house stock to sell directly; save the final copy in .pdf, and send it to **Create Space** and **LSI** to get it **POD** printed and sold commercially through their giant selling machines, like **Amazon** and **Ingram**. In the meantime, you convert the original text into .epub, modify the covers a bit, and you create an ebook to sell yourself, at **Kindle**, Nook, Kobo, **Smashwords**, and elsewhere. And all the while you worm your way into the social media world to churn up some fan interest.

33. There are two ways to sell 75%+ in the regular book world now. The new open publishing world I described in 29-32. And

you can do it the old way too. You sell the book to the big houses or other publishers pretty much the old way: you send queries and packages and proposals, alone or agent-aided, and you don't write the final book until you are contract-protected, then you wait for the book to appear. **That's a 75%+ approach.** Hard to imagine 25% of the publishers wouldn't honor your contract.

34. But here's the problem, even if you freelance and produce one book and you have another produced by an established publisher under contract (which is 75%+ twice), there's no guarantee that any of that will make enough money to keep you fed, much less famous and prospering. So despite the fact that you bat 100% selling the copy that you create, and you do it many times with paperback and digital versions, all sold by **six different publishers** (plus you), most of the self-published general market books don't make much money. They don't even do much to imprint a perception of your expertise. Stir in platform-building, branding, You-Tube, Facebook, and all the rest and can still be a big disappointment.

## **NICHE (BOOK) PUBLISHING**

### **and EMPIRE-BUILDING**

35. Let me share the **best way to sell 100% of your freelance book writing** and make reliable money **while you simultaneously build an empire** that will feed, clothe, and support you very well for a long time. It can be built around your book or books—or you may not have to write much copy at all. You might use others' expertise and writing, plus your editing, managing, and publishing skills, as the core of his **niche publishing**. [Niche Publishing: Publish Profitably Every Time]

36. It's not the writing or publishing, per se, that distinguish niche publishing. It's the existence of a **niche**, or tightly-linked group of people, that share common needs, interests, and lifestyle. For example, Chicago Cubs fans are a long-suffering niche. So are dentists, Norwegian ancestors in Wisconsin, and meat cutters. The niche often has a vocation, hobby, focus of interest, ethnic bond, social communality (like octogenarians or octogenarians in Tulsa), an ailment or cure (like prostate cancer survivors), or membership (in the Moose or in almost any thing or group.)

37. This might be easier to envision by using an example. To keep it simple, let's use ultramarathoners, and let's make that nationwide. And let me invent typical components of a niche and ascribe them to the poor sore-legged ultramarathoners (who share in common long-distance running, longer than a marathon, often 50-mile or 100-mile runs). They can be done by either sex and any age, though it's not likely they are teens or under or very rarely 65 or older.

38. What makes niche publishing profitable is that members of the niche and supporters about the niche topic can be easily contacted. Core ultras, let's say, are members of a national association (UOA, Ultramarathoners of America) and smaller associations in, say, 40 states (Minnesota UOA, etc.) The associations have a national convention, 18 have state conferences, and they informally gather at the dozen major races a year. They also have a national newsletter, office holders in the larger units, a **membership address list** (digital and standard direct mail) and a surprisingly large group of ultra aficionados and supporters who sell products and services (like special shoes, attire, diet and health additive programs, insurance, and much more. And as long as I am creating a model group, let's say there are 25,000 members and possibly 2,000 others who sell products and services to ultras, plus many thousands of marathoners who regularly show interest in expanding their own running challenge.

39. To show you what a niche published book might be like in this niched setting, let's say Bob has been an UOA member for 10 years—and, in vocation, he's a life-style nutritionist. Over the years he has created an ideal diet-supplement-training program that has been very enthusiastically used by a dozen of his local group members, plus it has become widely applied by marathoners in his region. Let's just call it the DST for Ultramarathoners (or DSTU).

40. Bob wants to write a book, sell it to ultras and marathoners nationwide (he calls it DSTM for marathoners), and he'd like to expand the book into **classes**, perhaps **podcast/video** components, a practice logbook and **workshops**, **speeches**, and **breakout sessions**. He would also like to **expand his product base** to include distance-running shoes, attire, special caps, and related diet and supplement components.

41. His **strategy** is to create the book first, and in its distribution (and early promotion) he will quickly expand into making his video/podcast programs and logbooks available. From his niche book he will roll out his **empire** to include speaking widely once the book is printed and promoted, and from speaking spread into workshops and classes. As he creates his buyer contact base (mostly through free subscriptions to a bi-monthly ultra newsletter) he will promote his product base. His long-range goal is to expand these activities into the DSTM group, for marathoners nationwide (even perhaps worldwide).

42. An aside here. Bob in our example can both be the expert writing the key book that helps practitioners meet important needs or solve frustrations and then build his own empire from the expertise recognition that his book brings him. Or if Bob wants to create his own empire doing the other activities we've mentioned, including publishing the book, he can hire an expert to write the book (that Bob might also edit and distribute) that his new ultramarathoning publishing and product company can grow from. Thus Bob wouldn't really be

using his running expertise—freeing any niche publisher to do the same about any topic. In fact, Bob could publish a string of ultra books using as many experts as members of his publishing family. How would the experts earn money? They would receive royalties (often 10% of the net received) plus they would get the speaking fees, and perhaps a special discount on their own books (or all the firm's ultra books) sold **back-of-the-room** at the programs. A last thought, he could run parallel publishing programs in the ultra and marathoning fields, allowing him to double or multiply his empire-building base while the experts create the core books.

43. But the most appealing element of a niche publishing book is that it can be **pre-tested** (the format, price, contents, author, and **purpose**) on a sample list to guarantee its financial viability before any part of it is written or major production expenses are incurred. [[How to Test Your Niche \(Publishing\) Market First](#)]

44. Bob sees that the size of the ultra market (its contactable members) is 25,000, and that the three other ultra books have cost \$19.95, \$24.95, and \$49. He decides to conduct a direct mail pre-test with 210 Nth-selection addresses from the ultra association mailing list. He figures that the entire pre-test might cost him a maximum of \$700.

45. For the pre-test he needs a clean-looking **one-page information sheet** (with a reduced book cover on it) that includes the book's title, subtitle, table of contents, a small photo to accompany Bob's bio, an fact box (with ISBN, format [cloth bound], and the estimated number of pages and cost), and selling content copy that explains the book's purpose and its benefits to readers/users. He also prepares a **one-third page greeting note** and a **return postcard** with two key questions, each followed by yes or no: would the card receiver be interested in purchasing a book about... and if so, would he pay \$ X for the book. In this case X would be three different prices: 70 packets would have \$19.95 on their info

sheet and on its mail-back postcard, 70 would say \$24.95, and 70 would say \$29.95). The postcards would be addressed back either to Bob or (better) the name of his new niche publishing firm (like Ultramarathon Publishers of America). Bob would also prepare a #10 envelope for each packet, stamp them, and adhere the direct mail address to the outside of the packet.

46. So Bob mails all 210 packets and in 20 days he has almost all of the replies he will receive. By day 20 he has received the following responses from each of the three price levels sent 70 recipients: 13, 10, and 7. So the potential buy income would be, respectively: \$92,768, \$81,196, and \$74,875. (The calculating example in the 10-buyer case would be  $10/70=14.3\% \times \$24.95 \times 25,000 = \$81,196$ ).

47. The most profitable rate would be \$19.95 which would bring in \$92,768. Thus, if the preparation of the book and the mailing of the full 25,000 packets cost 50% of the gross income (here, \$92,768) this book would result in a profit of \$46,384.

48. It would be a modest empire with a kitty of \$40,000 or so. But remember that Bob intends to expand into classes, videos, logbooks, workshops and speeches, ultra accoutrement, and diet and health additive programs. Plus a **free digital newsletter** to control his customer list and for bi-monthly promotion.

49. But what isn't visible here is a huge market sitting right below the ultras: the U.S. marathon market, where indeed his book might apply as is or rewritten, and the other items should also be salable. How big is the marathon market? There were 541,000 finishers in US marathons in 2013 (despite the terror attack at the Boston Marathon). And the average entry cost is \$75, but trending up to \$100. A determined niche publisher might tooth on the ultramarathoners to test the market and response, then quickly back into the marathon world—and keep both going if there are common themes.

50. That's it. **How you can sell 75%+ of your freelance writing.** At least three systems (or four, depending on how you count them) that will keep you off the no-income paths and close to where money can be earned and multiplied by wordsmithing. All of this stuff works—if you do!

My best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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## **Profits from reprints, rewrites, and reprints of rewrites**

As long as you have written a fetching **article** that an editor wants readers to read on his/her pages, why not sell the same blend as **reprints**, then mix the same magical facts, quotes, and anecdotes into a **rewrite** or two with different slants? You could even sell some **reprints of the rewrites** later on!

Lest that sound like a hapless hodgepodge of word play, it's precisely what professional writers have done for decades to squeeze much more honest pay out of ideas, facts, interviews, photos, lists, and historical slants, plus similar retellings elsewhere in the world.

I blush only slightly to admit that my reprints and rewrites kept me and my family alive (and the girls later in college) for many years until books and speaking came to the rescue!

Alas, what baffles writing novices is how it's done, where second-rights markets hide, how reprint-seeking editors are approached, and how copyright toes aren't stepped upon. So I've tried to mentally untie the strings in **30-page wee ebook**, now offered almost instantly by [Kindle](#) or [us](#) for the shameless sum of \$2.99. It's called [Reprints, Rewrites, Reprints of Rewrites, and Resales: Sell What You Write Again and Again \(and Again\)...](#)

Want some quick peeks under the printed sheets?

Think **newspaper** (or **magazine**) travel where almost any site almost anywhere has four or five different slants to be seen anew, or to be reborn in comparison with four other like places or three different epochs. "Downton Abbey" begs to be slanted a dozen ways (each an article or a spin-off), like fashion, class, downstairs/upstairs, pre- and post WWI... Or the Life of Lords in the 1100s; in the days of Shakespeare; in France, Russia, Sweden, or Spain (or any of them in comparison with Julian Fellowes' currently created TV society and castle)...

Or the **sidebars** accompanying any article above: specifics about how to actually visit any site suggested, the state of health and medicine then or there, the life of children at any point or place, or of women, or the lame, the gifted, the odd. Sidebar shards gathered like caste-offs from unused research, then re-grouped to fill readers' by-product curiosity and questions.

When are **query letters** needed (mostly for full articles), or how **cover notes** cover newspaper simultaneous submissions—see four samples in the ebook—or if/when you send sidebar copy, unannounced, with the expected text—when it's short and you can't bring yourself to throw it away!

When **reprints** are welcome (by "pay on publication" editors) and how their arrival is announced. Can you make changes in

the reused copy? When should you? Which **photos** can be sold (any not bought by the original buyer). How many more complications arise when you sell the **reprint of a rewrite**?

And the breadwinners, the shiny new **rewrites**, mostly restructured, words and ideas in new places, a different article sharing many common bricks (and sometimes a few quotations). But how much must they be rewritten? Or whether they are rewrites must be said at all. And those photos again—just remember that those sold are toxic to resell.

A final point, if reprints and rewrites seem akin to journalistic thievery. The best return in writing for money comes from **niche publishing**, which can be the baronial foundation of empire building, where just one set of words about one need or frustration met can indeed be very rich mortar. Most of that long-life paying mortar comes from reworking and reusing the same words and ideas again and again, the same we are discussing here, but in niching more than the same.

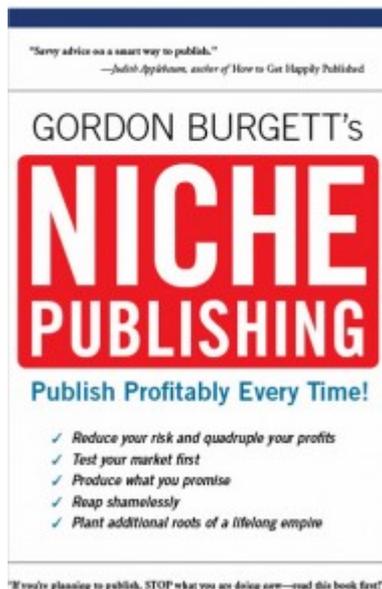
Best wishes unraveling!

Gordon Burgett

P.S. If “**Writing Travel Articles That Sell!**” is the kind of four-hour seminar you might need, and Santa Rosa, CA, is within driving distance, I will be offering the program from 1-5 p.m. on Saturday, February 7. Please check the details [here](#).

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# Want to read all your favorite blogger said about “X” topic?



Rarely, but always surprisingly, a reader of my blog asks me how they can read everything I've shared about a particular topic. (I bite my tongue not to ask, "Really? Why?")

Yet rather than grill them why, or suggest that they have far too much loose time on their hands, this is what I do, by way of an example:

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A few days back a fellow [BAIPA](#) (Bay Area Independent Publishers Assn) member asked me what I have in print about **niching** and **niche publishing**. Heavens, that's mother's milk—my primary niche!

So this morning I called up my current blog post, at Word Press, and **I typed the word niche in the SEARCH box** in the upper right corner of the post.

Up popped 17 related posts with that word (or derivations) in

its title. Replacing my current post was one from 10/10/14, with the rest in line, one by one, below the first. (After 10 posts I had to hit the *more* link to reach 17.) Two titles struck me as particularly pertinent to her interests as I quickly read down, so I told her about them. (Alas, she would have discovered them anyway.)

Then I added in my reply that I had a full book about the theme ([Niche Publishing: Publish Profitably Every Time!](#)), as well as several shorter ebooks and reports available at our [order form](#).

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I suspect the process is probably the same for other bloggers and writers who, frankly, pride aside, should, like me, be writing rather than listing—that or counting and spending their invisible blog royalties! But how can you turn down a person wise enough to read your words?

I hope this helps if you are stuck by the affliction of need described. Or if you're a writer slightly terror-stricken when being asked the same question. **A helpful time-saver** for all involved.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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# Can you sell the same article to a magazine, newspaper, and

# blog?

(1) Can you sell the same article to a magazine and a newspaper?

(2) And can you use the same article or item in both print on paper and in the digital market, like blogs, at the same time?

The real question for both is “Should you...?”

With a big healthy dose of caution and common sense you probably could. But with a bit more common sense you probably wouldn't.

**#1 has a stronger protocol in place.** If you query a pay-on-acceptance magazine and they agree to publish the article, in print it's theirs, even if they only bought first rights. You can then create a different query, write a different article (you can use many of the same facts, with discretion, and maybe a few of the earlier quotes), and sell it again to another magazine. I'd make sure they aren't competitors or you'd likely lose both for future sales. Best if they hug different coasts. That's the rewrite system.

On the other hand, you can use the same copy from the first buyer, without a whit of change—and sell it as **second (or reprint) rights** to anybody who will buy it. In that case you copy the article once it's in print and send the copy to your other potential buyer(s) with a cover note that explains (a) “I sold first rights to XXX Magazine on Y date, (b) it appeared in print on Z date, as you can see by the copy enclosed, and (c) I am offering you second (or reprint) rights. Who would buy it? Those that buy second or reprint rights. It tells you who they are in the **Writer's Market**.

Incidentally, you can sell a **rewrite** of the original the same way too. And all **photos** that were sold on a one-time rights basis to the original magazines can be resold with the

reprint(s)—plus all those that remain unsold.

Then you can sell **reprints of the rewrites!** Does it ever end?

**#2 is more good business than a traditional, accepted procedure.** You can fairly well track a printed article if it's to a reclusive niche market; there may be no rights conflict. But digital sales somehow travel around the world like lightning and nobody will be pleased if the reader/viewer finds it popping up "free" just when the other paid for some exclusivity.

Instead, do what professionals do when they find a chewy fact bone. They cut it into pieces, focus on some distinct element in each segment, get particular quotes about each bonelet, then write the devil out of it so none of the articles or items look (much) like the others—then they sell each to a different market. The best of all worlds would be to also write each in a different language!

Think of baseball as a field you could play on. If you focus your writing solely on retelling Lou Gehrig's "goodbye" speech, heavens. Even if you're a magic-word genius, where do you go to sell it the fourth time?

But you could play your whole life following, say, the National League teams and players and the World Series from 1876 to now. You could even start with the Cubs (then the White Stockings) winning the very first pennant that first year, beating the Louisville Dark Blues in six games...

There's a lot more about rights, reprints, rewrites, and resales in about five of my **blogs at this site**. Just put those words in the search box near the blog title. Also see my [Travel Writers Guide](#), which is a few books short of being O.P. The [ebook](#) lives on, though, and lots of the bound versions hide in libraries.

Patience. You still have to write and sell that first article.

By that time you will be so rich and brilliant these reuse answers will just ooze out of you!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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## How to make editors vomit...

I'll tell you how in a second. A more important question is, "If you're trying to put your kids through college by churning out magazine articles, and hoping to sell a couple of reprints from every original piece that you got in print, why in the world would you even put "editor" and "vomit" in the same hemisphere?

But that's exactly what I did. Worse yet, that editor used me and the heinous article idea for years to show new writers what not to do if they wanted to make a penny by appearing on his pages!

This must have been 40 years ago (surely before you were born). Even then I was the world's worst sailor because I got seasick in bathtubs.

So you can imagine my delight when I read about a new medicine about to be released that stopped motion sickness dead in its tracks—if the secondary effects didn't kill you first.

In those days I wrote about anything that interested me, then I matched it to publications likewise pervasively affected. I figured there must be a zillion flatlanders with my affliction, so I smelled a windfall in sales from a zesty article about the newest motion sickness medications, fattened with anything I could find about how effective earlier

“potions” already on sale were.

Then the Internet was probably used for fishing. The first research you did was in the library, where I sniffed around for several hours, first to see who else had beaten me to the idea and was already in print. If there weren't too many of them and they had usable facts, that was a blessing. It was a time-honored tradition to build (or borrow) from your competitions' printed material.

Nothing in print! I could hear the cash register clanging. So I took to the telephone to find “experts,” some self-declared, who were on the front line of action to get the needed quotes and cutting-edge, state-of-the-art facts that editors so loved (as long as you paid the dime, yes dime, to do the phoning.)

Most of us who worked magazines, with newspaper spinoffs, took the same path: a good magazine sale, two or three magazine spin-offs with different slants, some newspaper simultaneous submissions, maybe even a book if the topic was electric. (Most weren't, and books took forever to write. Anyway, spending months wading through seasickness was a no-go for me.)

Somewhere I had gathered enough checkable truths and found several related ideas for by-product shorts or follow-up pieces. The linchpin in this big-money-making scheme was an electric one-page query letter that made the editor virtually beg me to have it to her in three days (that never happened). But if she said, “Let me see it,” that was tantamount to a sale, and usually the first firm step to several offshoot pick-ups. (I could call my daughters and tell them to buy their textbooks.)

So I wrote up a dandy, hot-in-the-hands one-page query and sent it to the first editor of the six or so on my marketing list. I spent time on that list. Who were most interested in preventing motion sickness? In-flight magazine editors. The

biggest lines paid the most. Off went the gilded query...

Usually it would take a week or two for the reply. (There was no rush because the stamps were only three cents.) But this reply had wings. He couldn't wait. I could almost feel the big bucks in my hands! He was probably holding up the next issue so he could slip it in.

I can almost remember reading his reply word for word: "Is this a joke? An article about motion sickness in an in-flight magazine? It almost makes me vomit just thinking about it. Rest assured that if any of our passengers got past the first paragraph the pilot would hear a chorus of retching clear up to the cockpit." And that was it. No thank you, no best wishes. I guess it was a no. He didn't even suggest that I send it to his competition!

There was a point there but it took several shocked days for me to start laughing!

When you draw up your marketing list you have to think: why would the editor of those publications want to share your spine-tingling prose and gripping revelations with their readers?

So if there's even the faintest whiff of nausea in the air, you'd best just save your 3-cent (or 49-cent) stamp!

P.S. But I did sell it to two general-interest magazines and one newspaper. I don't think the anti-*mareo* medicine worked either. I kept my eye out for it, for obvious reasons, but it seemed to have faded, as did my million-dollar windfall from anti-seasickness articles.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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# Humor: How and how much can you use in freelance articles?

Sometimes (actually, often) absolutely none. No joke: even provoking a smile by a touch of word play will release you to the path of penury. The editor won't buy it, and she probably won't look at future queries from you either!

Why? Because either the topic (death, disaster, rape, and so on) won't allow it or because somebody sometime decided that that publication will be not be a carrier of mirth, probably forever.

Don't avoid those publications if your writing means eating. Send serious queries and non-risible copy and spend their payment (probably not much of a laughing matter either). Don't try to change their mind, as it is. Stay away or get in line.

Focus your funny-pen on the rest. I sold way more than 1,700 freelance pieces to almost any kind of rag that was sold on paper. I didn't count but maybe 30 total were all humor, the "funny piece" that, under 1,000 words, could quickly fill an extra page when ads fell short. (I can't remember ever querying any of those. What would I say? "Do you want to read something really funny?" At best, the editor would say, "Send it to me. I'll decide if it's funny." So I just sent it, with a cover note.)

That left about 1,000 articles that loosely fell into the "humorous" category, some just barely, some so witty they made me laugh all day and thrice on Sundays.

**“Humorous” means that there was humor sprinkled judiciously (maybe riotously) throughout the article.** (You couldn’t just pack four tall tales of jest into the lead, then lumber through a Sahara of text for the rest of the piece.) You wrote humorous copy into the query letter too so they knew what to expect. And the humor was at the same level and the same kind throughout. (Noisy slapstick or thigh-slapping jokes usually don’t work, but they never do when squeezed between painful puns. Pick your poison, then dilute it and sprinkle evenly.)

If humor was obvious, the editor would expect a title with some humor, plus a lead and conclusion gently containing the same ingredient.

**You have to remember that the humor is the seasoning,** like mazzarella cheese scattered on top of spaghetti—or is it pizza? The editor is buying a subject (sometimes with a specific angle or slant), and the humor, if added, is to make the telling better and lighter.

If the editor wanted 1200 words about nose hairs, or the fading of seminaries, or how to have fun in Finland, any mirth I cared to inject into my telling about that topic was extra. It almost always came out of the topic or referred to it. Not side-slapping bon mots dropped in like aliens at a wedding.

**Also, the humor didn’t have to incite raucous guffaws every time (or ever).** It had to bring a smile to the more intelligent readers. Four or five smiles might be enough. They were easiest to get with clever word play, or witty quotes, or the juxtapositioning of two unlike things. But there had to be enough of them, regularly, so the reader (and editor) didn’t think they were accidental miscues that the editor didn’t notice.

Every time I wrote a humorous piece (which was every time when the topics were funny) was a gamble that the flat-faced expository devotees (my rivals) were afraid to try. Simply,

not all editors think what you write is funny (even if you can include a dozen testimonials to its guaranteed hilarity). The risk was less if the topic itself was well covered and interesting (which has to be your minimum standard anyway). Some editors might reject the humor, but most would edit it (pluck it out), let you know, and use it anyway.

Why would I write and send humor at the risk of certain starvation? Because most of the editors wanted it, sought a “funny piece” every month, and once I had proven that I could do it, it got me many more query “go-aheads,” and sales. It also made reprints much easier to sell. Even rewrites, queried elsewhere, later, were easier to adapt and sell—and reprints from them too. (That was important because then I earned more from reprints and rewrites.)

I haven’t told you how to write with humor here because it’s so much related to the topic that I can’t figure how to do it in a blog. But I don’t have to. Find any “funny” article in a magazine or newspaper (they are still the best freelance markets) and study and study it. Circle anything funny (or meant to be) and see why it’s funny, where it is in the article, and how complementary they are in tone. Study the lead and conclusion, plus the title. Since that article is in print, it’s a successful model to build from. Try it yourself again and again and you’ll catch on. See you in print, my funny friend.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. I explain the full process in a much earlier book which is still (sometimes) on Kindle’s used book list: **How to Sell 75% of Your Freelance Writing**. Most of the process is also explained in the [Travel Writer’s Guide](#), plus how to make good money writing and selling travel articles. Humor helps there too.

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# 8 ways where or why seminars are usually given (#3 of 15)

This is a very short blog because I will discuss in much greater depth the ways that we **identify (and create and present) seminars** in later sections of this 15-blog series, which itself is an updating of a workbook that accompanies my *How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar* CD series that will be available in a couple of months.

## IDENTIFYING SPONSORS

### PUBLIC SEMINARS

1. Self-sponsored
2. Self-sponsored, but aligned with other group or organization for mutual benefit
3. Academic
4. Recreational
5. Business

### PRIVATE (CLOSED) SEMINARS

6. Professional Association
7. Trade Association
8. Business
  - a. in-house presentations
  - b. licensed/customized presentations

Seminars aren't talks, which among professional speakers mean free presentations (or, sometimes, given for a very modest—really token—honorarium).

Therefore, since the frequent or professional seminar-giver must be paid, how that money is gathered is strongly related to the categories of sponsorship above. For example, a fee is

generally charged the participants to attend an academic or school-sponsored seminar (like for Community Education), and a certain percentage of the fees collected often go to the speaker. But in a business program, where the business directly reaps the profits (or prestige), the business pays the speaker and the participants are invited to attend free. By extension, how the speaker is asked to speak to schools or for businesses is also very different.

Each kind of seminar is structured differently enough to have unique assembly halls, longer or shorter hours, ways to attract possible attendees, how BOR (back-of-the-room) products sales are handled (if at all), and different purposes. That's why we label them and herd them into different corals.

I'll continue in greater detail in blog #4 in about a week.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Communication Unlimited / P.O. Box 845 / Novato, CA 94947 / (800) 563-1454. For further information, see [www.gordonburgett.com](http://www.gordonburgett.com).

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## **How can I syndicate my article or my writing?**

**Syndication** is the goal of many of my writing/publishing seminar attendees, so let me share what I know about it so you can pursue it farther on your own, if you are then still interested.

What they mean is usually one of two things: (1) having a syndication (very few still exist) or a newspaper chain take an article (or today perhaps a blog) and sell it (as is) to many other publications "in their chain," or (2) a syndicate would set up the process where the writer prepares a series of articles (or blogs) so they will appear each month usually as a special column. The syndication finds and signs the buyers, sells your gems, and pays you a percentage. The more times it appears, the more money you make.

A great idea but very, very hard to arrange. **The usual barriers:** (1) there are very few syndicates; check Google; (2) there are fewer newspapers, with less print space, (3) magazines are far less interested as well, (4) editors will only seriously consider a writer with lots of items in print, (5) being famous helps a lot, (6) a popular book helps that much more, and (7) how do they (the syndicate "selling" you or the editor buying your output) know you can produce top-quality material more than once, particularly month after month?

**You want to try it anyway?** Great! Find a syndicate, see the kinds of publications they serve, zero in on a topic or theme the readers of those publications care a lot about, and write six columns (or articles or blogs) to send to the syndicate or editor you think will hire you. Include a query letter explaining your quest, plus a full resume that contains some references. (More anon.) Since short is always better than long, make the six samples 400-600 or so words long, each separate and prepped in ready-to-use copy form. If you have a book in print, send a free copy too.

Don't ask if they will pay you in your first submission! (If they pay freelancers, they will pay you.) You can send it to as many editors as you wish. Most will reply, in time. If any say "yes," follow those up with whatever the editor wants to read or hear. In the meantime, keep writing and selling the regular way.

I suppose the gist of **winning query letters here** would include: you like their publication because..., you'd like to share some very interesting information with their readers because..., you have (or can write) many items or articles that they may wish to syndicate (samples enclosed) because..., and they should include you on their pages because... In short, how your syndicated pieces will (mightily) help the readers and the magazine. Then take it from there.

Have I ever done this? Yes, but the travel editors of a couple dozen newspapers scattered across the country probably didn't know. They received a newspaper article from me in the regular way: fully written, with a cover note attached that gave the highlights of the article and told of the availability of photos. If they wanted to see the pix, I mailed a proof sheet of b/w's, they picked out what they wanted, and I sent the negatives. (That was the process before the Web and digital cameras.)

How was that syndicated? If the editor liked (and used) the article, he'd usually write back and ask if his newspaper could syndicate it. (Example: the *Chicago Daily-News* and the Field Syndicate.) I wrote the editor back, told him I was honored to be asked but I was mini-syndicating it myself and it was likely that there would be rights difficulties if it got syndicated again where I was already submitting. I never lost a sale.

Did that work? Yes. I usually sold two to four articles to a regular 13-18 targets, but twice I sold 9 of 13 and once I submitted to about 100 and I think I sold more than 30—I know it was past 20 but I was too busy to keep track. (**If you want to see this article/photo process in detail**, see my book [The Travel Writer's Guide](#).)

Getting back to the question of how you get syndicated, I think there are only **a few ways that up your odds**: (1) see the editor of your **local newspaper** and discuss writing a regular

or weekly column (the best of which can be syndicated [as reprints] elsewhere later), (2) focus very tightly on a **niche topic**, probably write “the” book about it, and stay visible so some editor in the field asks you to write regularly for his/her publication, when you might suggest a column or syndication, or (3) **become some kind of celebrity** so it would be a “feather” in some editor’s bonnet to have your name regularly on their pages.

Not very encouraging, I know. Of all the above, if you can get some editor to ask you to do it, bingo. Or have some syndication “court” you so you/they can earn from your notoriety. (But please **don’t get notorious by bumping off lowly blog writers.**)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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## **How to share the heart of your book 35 ways in Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn each!**

Sometimes you write a book or some copy that lends itself to being edited into <140-character snippets that could (and should) be widely shared and used. So that's what I did, prodded by an article about social media. It worked great, despite the fact that I'm not very social and I know even less about its media. On the other hand, when I write something, I love to extract a mile of yardage out of its 50 inches of prose. If somebody else benefits, that's a grand way to start 2014. So let me share a process that I put to the test

yesterday afternoon, one day into this New Year. If the process interests you too, try it. It begins with my book [How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#), and a go-ahead from a short query, to write a brief blog for BookBaby. That first appeared on December 13, and it was just rerun as the featured blog in the current BookBaby blog. It's titled "**How to Write Your Book's First Draft Like a Professional.**" But I think of it as seven steps to use to write a first draft by using the professional tricks and shortcuts that zip veterans and newcomers through the three-draft writing process in about a third of the time. It explains how to put the needed steps in the right order and forget the rest, like spelling, punctuation, and hot research until you have a mound of prose in draft #1 from which you can then edit and craft a dandy novel or nonfiction winner. (See a copy of that blog [here](#).)

I had read an article (I have no idea where) that said you should carve out the best ideas and fit them into 140-character gems to use simultaneously in Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and others, with a link back to the starter book or your website so the curious will be drawn into your devious web. I'm an old newspaper guy, very old, and that sounded like fun.

So let me explain the process so you can do the same. I should add that I use [HootSuite.com](#) to send the same cuttings to many social networks simultaneously. HootSuite is almost free and a huge timesaver once you figure out its workings.

I combed the front half of **How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days** where I explain in simple terms how to write a book like a professional. That's where I drew the seven steps for BookBaby. Then I took those steps and extracted 35 key elements that a book writer would benefit from knowing (and doing).

The mystery article I mentioned suggested setting up a

schedule for each snippet to appear about three times (maybe I invented three as the limit so I don't drive both of my friends mad) in the chosen social web outlets. I decided to separate the three postings of each Tweet about 20 days apart, one in the US morning, one in the afternoon, and one while we sleep but the farthest world cavorts, like 3 a.m. here. And I figured that I would keep this going until I expired or the snippets did. (You can see these Tweets at their respective magic dates and times below.)

First I looked at the seven steps and pulled out the main points that each suggested, trying to keep them under 200 or so characters. Then I took each and I rewrote it so the message and the coded link (see HootSuite for a link shrinker) would fit in the 140-character limit. Finally, I called up the scheduler and told it which was to go on what day (only one a day) and at what time. So it works, I hope, while I play, I hope.

What follows are the first 10 and the days they will appear, each followed by the same link taking the curious to the BookBaby blog site. (I will use my own [landing page](#) for my book on about half of the items in this series.)

The first release appeared yesterday at 1:30 on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The item following number 1. was my original prose and, by chance, it was only 108 characters long (including white spaces). I had to clean up the punctuation a bit, and I saw an opportunity to add a very important point, that you can almost never have too much dialog in a book, particularly in a novel. What I actually posted follows the word "used." Below that I listed the date and time when it will be posted. (It goes to all three services simultaneously.) The OK means that they were in fact scheduled as listed.

If you look through the ten samples, you will see that each is at least tightened up, and that most are slightly (some

remarkably) rewritten to say the most in the least amount of space.

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1. When editing your book be ruthless. Get rid of most adjectives, ly words, dribble, most clichés.

[ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

Used. When editing your book, be ruthless. Get rid of most adjectives, ly words, dribble, most clichés. Add dialog.

[ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/3, 1:30 pm; 1/23, 12:25 am; 2/13, 10:15 am OK

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2. The most important of seven tips for getting your book in print (while you breathe) is to write your first draft as quickly as possible. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

Used. The most important tip of 7 to get your book in print (while you breathe), write your first draft as quickly as possible. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/4, 11:15 am; 1/24, 4:25 pm; 2/14, 1:15 am OK

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3. Writers in print know that many, maybe most, of their first words will never see light—nor should they. The first draft must be patched together, mercilessly edited, then lovingly shined.

Used: Veteran book writers know that lots of their words in draft #1 won't see print. So they write fast first, then edit later. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/5, 12:10 pm; 1/25, 4:30 pm; 2/15, 2:20 am OK

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4. If it takes you more than about 10 words to tell what your

book is about, something has to go.

Used. If it takes you more than about 10 words to tell what your new book is about, prune something before you start. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/6, 1:10 pm; 1/26, 6:30 pm; 2/16, 3:20 am OK

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5. Published veteran writers gather pounds of first draft words so there will be enough gold in the final edit to deserve publication. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

Used. Published writers use pounds of first draft words so there will be enough gold in the final edit to deserve publication. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/7, 2:15 pm; 1/27, 7: pm; 2/17, 4:20 am OK

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6. Tape your book's purpose statement to your monitor, find the current chapter title and info, and just start typing where you quit yesterday. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

Used. Read your book's purpose statement, reread the chapter title and notes, and just start typing where you quit yesterday. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/8, 2:30 pm; 1/28, 7:30 pm; 2/18, 5:20 am OK

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7. New book writers are offended that anybody, even themselves, would dare change a word of what they have created—or chiseled—in their first draft. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

Used. New book writers are profoundly offended that they, preferably, should rewrite most of their sweat-dripping first draft. [ow.ly/sdQfK](http://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/9, 2:30 pm; 1/29, 7:30 pm; 2/19, 5:20 am OK

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8. “The dawn sun crept up Mount Tall and peaked at Inhambupe.” Or is it Wee Mountain? Or the palm oasis? Write “over {what?}” and research it later, if it’s still important. [ow.ly/sdQfK](https://ow.ly/sdQfK)

Used. “The dawn sun crept up and over Mount \_\_\_\_ “ Who cares in draft #1? Fill the blank in draft #2, if it’s still important. [ow.ly/sdQfK](https://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/10, 2:30 pm; 1/30, 7:30 pm; 2/20, 5:20 am OK

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9. Don’t edit anything in your book’s first draft. Just get stuff down and keep going. You’ll rewrite 50% of the first draft or throw it away. Edit the third draft. [ow.ly/sdQfK](https://ow.ly/sdQfK)

Used. Edit nothing in your first draft except ain’t. You’ll rewrite most of the book later. Write in draft 1, add in 2, edit in 3. [ow.ly/sdQfK](https://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/11, 2:30 pm; 1/31, 7:30 pm; 2/20, 5:20 am OK

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10. What makes most book writers boring is that their best friends and ideas are living in the first draft. You are a distraction when they are writing. [ow.ly/sdQfK](https://ow.ly/sdQfK)

Used. Most book writers at work have their best friends and ideas still alive in the first draft. Just feed them and go away. [ow.ly/sdQfK](https://ow.ly/sdQfK)

POSTED: 1/12, 2:30 pm; 2/1, 7:30 pm; 2/21, 5:20 am OK

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That’s it. The extracting and writing, for me, is the fun. But the posting and the rest is tedious. I will post all 35 this way as a test to see if anything happens from the additional exposure. In the meantime I will use a lot of the extractions in other promotional means. It’s good to have a trove of

measured copy when you try to sell ideas and a book.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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## **Copyright? Using others' words or artwork in your book.**

To avoid the whole issue just read or hear what others say and retell it in your words. That would be the text of your book.

But there can be wee pitffalls. If you are quoting them directly, you must tell the reader who they are, and usually the context of the statement. Others often know more than you do about your topic. As long as you use their information fairly and accurately, write away. It's your book.

If it's just text and it's dated (say 100 years plus), don't worry. It's good to inject a bit of Lincoln or Pedro II to add some heft and authority! Or if it's from public figures and was said publicly, even yesterday, you can almost always use it, too. Particularly if it appeared in a government-issued publication, which is almost never copyright protected, and thus anything from it is yours to "borrow."

Just plain facts are the bricks of your book building. Copyright only protects the words in the order in which they are used. It might say in copyrighted print "The Mayans at their peak never saw horses. Horses had long since disappeared in the Americas, and their descendants only reappeared when the first Spaniards reached the Mayan Empire, or what remained

of it.” (To see if the book, in this case, is copyrighted, look for the symbol on the *volta face* page, the page almost always following the opening title page.) You can use any fact from those two sentences any way you wish, but you can’t use the words in that order because how the words are used together is the artistic creation that the copyright protects. You can quote it (as I have done) but you then must indicate where it came from.

Or you can paraphrase it. Thank God. For example, you might say that Arthur McLouse, pre-historian of the Americas, contends that Mayans never saw or knew of horses before the Spaniards arrived in the Yucatan. You needn’t use his name or the reference either. You can just say that Mayans never saw or knew of horses before the Spaniards arrived.

But if you are going to pluck the actual words out of copyrighted or privately-owned sources, you will may have to get permission to quote that material. It isn’t clear if it’s necessary if you only use a limited amount of text, but getting permission is almost certain if you use images, photos, graphs, charts, software, and other artwork from a copyrighted source.

Also, titles and interviews you personally conduct need no copyright release, but poetry, music, lyrics, and personal letters definitely do.

What doesn’t need someone else’s copyright or permission to write about are ideas, even if the idea came from something you read about in another’s book. So you could write a book (or even part of a book) about the Mayans and horses, or anything you wish.

Mind you, I’m not a literary attorney so if doubt lingers you may want to get legitimate legal advice.

If you request that permission to use a copyrighted element, how might a “Permission to Quote” letter look? See

[www.gordonburgett.com/permissiontoquoteletter.htm](http://www.gordonburgett.com/permissiontoquoteletter.htm) for an example that we have used for decades.

Writing the book itself is the most important thing, and copyrighting it yourself is the next step once it's in print. (Get TX forms from the Library of Congress. Do it digitally; see Google for the sources.) I talk a lot more about this in [\*\*How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days.\*\*](#)

I hope that helps.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett