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Four FREE Tools Help Aspiring Writers

By Cheryl Paquin

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CleverKeys — This is a nifty little program you can download from <http://www.cleverkeys.com>. It integrates with most software such as browsers or word processors. When you're writing or come across an unfamiliar word, just highlight the word, hit control L and CleverKeys will take you straight to the dictionary meaning at dictionary.com. You can change the default from dictionary.com to thesaurus.com if you're interested in looking up an alternative word while you're writing. Again, just highlight it, hit Control L and the word listing in thesaurus.com pops up in your default browser.

If your computer is connected to the Internet most of the time, using CleverKeys instead of looking up the dictionary or thesaurus, saves A LOT of time. The download is only 800 KB, and installs easily.

GrammarCheck — is a free weekly newsletter with hints and examples to improve your grammar and writing skills. Each week a different subject is covered, such as Indefinite Pronouns, Gendered Vocabulary, Sentence Structure and Commas. Everyday usage of grammar is given in right and wrong examples. It's fun and a great refresher course. You can sign up for the newsletter at GrammarCheck. If you have a grammar question you can email the GrammarCheck people, or submit the question on the Web site form. There are also archives of topics previously covered.

GrammarCheck (<http://grammarcheck.com>) takes a light-hearted approach to the subject, and is very user-friendly. It only takes a few minutes a week to brush up on those grammar skills.

JournalistExpress — This is a relatively new site and just about an essential reference desk for non-fiction newshounds. After registering, you can customize your page with links to your specific interest areas.

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JournalistExpress has the tools to finding just about any information a journalist would ever need, all in one place. It's a also a great place to come up with story ideas. There's even a section called "Slow News Day", with links to what's new on the Internet.

Journalist Express is at <http://journalistexpress.com> — don't miss this site, it's great. The owners of this site are also working on WiredJournalist where you can send news links and tips to your wireless phone.

Writer's Digest Book Club — Although not technically totally free, the Writer's Digest Book Club currently has a special offer, where you can join

by buying one book for \$11.99 and receive two others free. Joining the club is one way to build up your own instructional library. I signed up a few months ago, and bought a grammar book, a guide to freelance writing and the Writer's Market 2000 for about \$17 (included shipping). No aspiring writer should be without the Writer's Market guide — not only does it have information on thousands of markets to sell your writing, it also has interesting articles, explaining the ins and outs of contracts, rights and publishing. This book itself sells for around \$27.99. If you join the book club, you are under no obligation to buy a certain amount each year. Information about the club and a list of books can be found at: <http://www.writersdigest.com/wdbc/index.htm> (You always receive a free gift for joining).

The Writer's Digest Web site at <http://www.writersdigest.com>, has links to Hot Markets and competitions for writers. There is lots of good information at this site, which is additional to the Writer's Digest magazine.

That's it — just some great, free resources for writers. Check them out!

C.S. Paquin is a nationally published writer in both the business and humormarkets. Cheryl has a Master Of Arts in Journalism and has been writingfreelance for over five years. She contributes regularly to regionalpublications in Minnesota. She is the owner and editor of www.WritersLounge.com, a site for creative nonfiction and essay writers. Enter the 'I Wannabe Erma' Essay Contest at www.WritersLounge.com/competition.html. <mailto:editor@writerslounge.com>

Freelance Writing Markets, Poetry Markets – Highly Paid –v– Unpaid

By Consulting Editors, AskProfessors.com

Amazing as it may sound, there is a real shortage of good writers and poets. Try telling that to the thousands of writers and poets who get daily rejection slips.

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As far as they are concerned, writing is virtually impossible to break into no matter how hard they seem to try.

There may be a number of reasons why they don't succeed:

Their writing is not up to standard – as far as the particular publishers or editors are concerned;

They don't bother polishing their writing before submission;

They knock on the wrong doors – sending materials on a random basis;

They have failed to do basic research;

The list goes on.

1000s of publishers

There are of course thousands of publishers, especially online, who are willing to publish your work without payment. Such publishers can't or won't pay writers or poets.

Professional writers on the other hand command handsome fees. They make a good living out of writing.

Anyone can become a professional writer. You just need the determination to succeed. If you don't have a natural gift, you can learn to write well. This can be by self-study, online, or at a college or school near you.

High quality professional writers demand anything from \$1000 to \$5000 per project – and the best earn substantially more. A project may involve just one page or a few poems.

Why do most aspiring writers and aspiring poets fail?

In a recent survey conducted on behalf of

it became apparent that

most writers and poets were not willing to invest time or effort in training or acquiring the necessary skills.

The survey revealed that most writers and poets were happy to plod along by trial and error rather than investing in a decent course. They accordingly fail to reap the rewards that are there for the taking.

They remain amateur writers and poets whilst their professional colleagues cream off the best paid writing markets.

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The survey compared writers and poets to other professions. Lawyers, Accountants, Doctors, etc., are all highly paid. They all undergo training before the rewards are forthcoming. Yet, most writers and poets believe that the riches will come to them without spending \$1 on training or developing skills.

One per cent. of writers or poets may get lucky. They may have been "born writers or poets" – they succeed without any training. The rest slog away – hoping that one day they may make some money from writing.

The good news

The good news is that there are 1000s of paid writing markets that are waiting to be exploited. There are more assignments than writers or poets.

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