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How To Outgrow 'Write What You Know'

By Jenna Glatzer

Every writer has heard it time and again, and it's not without merit: "Write what you know."

When I began freelancing, I was just out of college, so what did I write about? College. I wrote profiles of collegiate entrepreneurs, I wrote editorials about college life... and after a while, I really wanted to move on and write about other things. But I didn't feel qualified.

Luckily, I didn't let that hold me back for too long.

"Write what you know" is a very good starting point. But that's all it is. It's a place for you to go to get your feet wet, and a place to come back to when the tide gets too high. But it's not a place to stay for very long.

A better piece of advice, in my opinion, is "Write what you WANT to know." One of the great perks of being a freelance writer is that you get paid to learn about things. So... what do you want to learn about?

If I had completely disregarded "Write what you know" and simply opened a page of the Writers Market at random, figuring I'd send a query to whichever market my finger happened to touch, my career would be very different today. I might have ended up writing about finances, miniature horses, and aerobics. And you know what? I would have hated it.

I have no experience with any of the above topics, and there's a good reason for that: I never really WANTED to have experience with them. Since I have no real passion for any of the topics, if I had to write articles about them, it would feel like work.

But did you ever stop to think about the things you always wanted to know, but never found out? Or all the interesting people you wanted to meet? Or the problems you've encountered that you wanted solved? Now those are article topics.

Try this exercise. Fill in the blanks with your answers.

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1. If time and money weren't factors, I'd love to take a course in _____.
2. I've always wanted to ask (person you know) _____ about _____.
3. I've always wanted to know how _____ works.
4. My life would improve if I could only _____.
5. When I have a sleepless night, it's usually because I'm worried about _____.
6. The worst injustice I can think of is _____.
7. When I was a kid, I was really passionate about _____.
8. I have always been embarrassed to admit that _____ really interests me.
9. In my life, I have overcome _____.
10. If I could volunteer for just one cause, it would be _____.
11. I wish I were better at _____.
12. I have always wondered why _____.

You may have lots of answers for each statement. That's great! Each answer is a possible article topic. Most of them won't be specific enough (or perhaps too specific) for an article, but they should give you lots of new starting points from which to brainstorm angles.

Think of freelance writing as your own opportunity to learn about all the things you ever wanted to know, and don't worry if you're not yet an "expert" in any of these areas! Among my favorite writing assignments have been topics in which I had no previous expertise:

—An article about a woman who started her own greeting card business for Woman's Own. Of course, I've never started my own greeting card business—but the topic certainly interested me, and I wanted a good excuse to learn more about it.

—An article about how "media overload" affects children's development for KidsGrowth.com. I'm not even a parent, let alone an expert in child psychology. But I've always wondered how increasing media immersion (TV, Internet, video games, radio, etc.) has affected people in MY generation.

—An article about book packagers for Writer's Digest. Okay, I had written for a book packager at that point—but just one, and I was eager to learn more about the industry and its players. It gave me the perfect excuse to contact book packagers and learn more about the market. And If not for this article, I would never have written Celine Dion's book... I sent my resume and samples to one of the packagers

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I interviewed, and an editor there wound up calling me years later with the assignment!

—Several articles about interesting inventions for Zooba.com. How much fun did I have learning about how Velcro, aspirin, and Post-It Notes were invented? This made for great dinner table conversation for weeks. My father always fancied himself a bit of a mad inventor, and I guess the gene spilled over to me. I devour these quirky stories of how the human mind approaches problem-solving creatively.

—Every disabilities-related article I've ever written. Was I an expert in this area when I began? No. I have a brother who has Down syndrome, so I had the benefit of some extra understanding, but I only became an "expert" by writing about this topic over and over. Each time, I learned something new that I really wanted to learn— new legislation for people with disabilities, profiles of amazing people with disabilities, issues of discrimination, etc.

When working to broaden your writing horizons, be sure to think about two things: your passions, and your curiosities. You don't need to write only about topics that mean "everything" to you; you can— and should— also write about the little things that bounce around your brain. Have you always wondered how the custom of kissing under the mistletoe evolved? Or how Mexican jumping beans jump?

Have you wondered what it feels like to go back to school in your 40s or 50s? Have you wondered if there's a way to stop all that junk mail and those telemarketing calls from darkening your doorstep?

Do some preliminary research, formulate a query letter, and... ta da! You get paid to find answers to these pressing questions, or learn more about your hobbies and passions.

Consider it a challenge. Keep learning. Use your writing as a vehicle to answer every question you never had time to answer before. There are lots of people out there who have wondered about those very same things, and you can help them!

You don't need to be an expert. You need to be a great researcher, and you need to be willing to ask questions. Lots of questions, sometimes. But that's one of the great things about writers— we're such curious creatures.

Write what you want to know, and soon enough, it'll be what you DO know.

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(pick up a FREE list of agents looking for

new writers!) and the author of 14 books, including **MAKE A REAL LIVING AS A FREELANCE WRITER**, which comes with a FREE Editors' Cheat Sheet. She's also Celine Dion's authorized biographer. Visit Jenna at

<http://www.jennaglatzer.com>

Saddle – Finding The Perfect Tack

By Sebastian Romero

The quality of equipment is important to any sport - but in horseriding, it is even more vital. The safety and comfort of both the rider and the horse depend upon the tackle, and most obviously, on the saddle. A saddle that is ill-fitting can lead to an un-satisfactory and possibly dangerous ride. It can also cause multiple health problems for the horse.

Unfortunately, many riding stables continue to use old saddles without keeping them in good enough condition. Whether you own a horse, or you or your child visit a stables regularly, it is much safer and more enjoyable to buy your own saddle.

However, buying this piece of equipment through a regular tack dealer or riding stables can be unaffordable, with prices getting into the thousands. The internet offers a wider range of alternatives, whatever you are willing to pay.

There are specialist dealers in customised saddles, or there are places where you can buy or sell high-quality used saddles. You are more likely to find one that is right for you with this amount of choice.

Which saddle you choose will depend on whether you are a beginner or experienced horse rider. For beginners, buying a very expensive product is not recommended. How you ride will change as you learn, and therefore the fit of your saddle may need to change as your riding style evolves. Furthermore, children outgrow saddles like they outgrow clothes, so a mid-price saddle is best for them.

Next you will need to decide between a close contact or an all-purpose saddle.

A close contact saddle has a flatter seat, and minimised knee-roll, so that the legs of the rider are closer to the horse. This benefits the connection between the two, but means that a rider must be very exact with his or her leg position. Therefore these saddles are better for a rider with skill and experience.

The alternative, an all-purpose model, has a larger area of seat and greater knee-rolls, and conventionally has suede at the saddle flap to help position the knee. This can limit the effectiveness of application of the leg, but this is actually what you need as a beginner. Whilst you are a learning, it is better to let the horse do the work, and increase your ability to control it later.

Before buying online, it can be helpful to visit a shop for the fitting. When trying a saddle you should sit at the lowest point of the saddle and let your legs dangle naturally. They should hang very, very slightly behind you, so you can maintain the best riding position.

If you have your own horse, you can also send his measurements to an online dealer, and they may be willing to fit the saddle specially to your requirements.

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A good fit and enjoyable ride is not the only benefit of a top-quality, customised saddle. Most riders wish to sell this piece of equipment when they have outgrown it, or circumstances have changed. It is

notoriously difficult to sell cheap tack - but the best saddles can sell for almost the amount you paid second hand!

Find more help at

<http://www.saddle-supply.info>

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Sebastian Romero works in the security industry and is a single father. Find more info

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