

WRITE THAT FIRST DRAFT FIRST...THEN GET PUBLISHED!

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By Shery Ma Belle Arrieta

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Anne Lamott wasn't so subtle about what she thought of first drafts in her book, *Bird by Bird*. In fact, she started off by writing, "Now, practically even better news than that of short assignments is the idea of shitty first drafts. All good writers write them. This is how they end up with good second drafts and terrific third drafts."

I agree with her. First drafts are the roughest, and well, ugliest drafts. It's a common mistake of beginning writers, as well as seasoned ones, to expect themselves to produce shiny, perfect very polished and publishable first drafts. What these writers don't know is that these ugly and every-editor's-nightmare first drafts can provide them with the opportunity to explore every angle, every slant, and every idea for an article or a work.

WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING! Well, at least try to write all of them down. This is the stage where you don't let the memories of your English professors get in the way of writing. When you start with your first (or rough) draft, you have the prerogative to hurl those boring English and grammar rules out the window. Don't worry, you'll pick them up later.

STEW FOR A WHILE! After you get all your ideas down on paper, leave them. And I mean it! Don't even try touching them until a sufficient amount of time has lapsed. Give it a day or two. Let it stew on your desk. Go to your dentist, get a manicure, or write other stuff, but don't, for your muse's sake, get your hands on your first draft just yet!

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GET LETHAL WITH THAT RED MARKER! The next day is the time you can brandish your most lethal weapon – your red (or any color you prefer) marker. Take out your terrible (and you will realize that it is terrible!) first draft and start crossing out ideas and sentences you don't need.

ON TO A GOOD SECOND DRAFT! Remember the English and grammar rules you threw out the window the day before? Now's the time to pick them up. You need them now. Go over the remains of your first draft. You probably can't help wincing as you go along and start editing your work, joining fragments, making the verbs and the subjects agree with each other, correcting your spelling and

finding that sentence or paragraph to lead your article or story. Firm up your second draft. You will find that it's a lot leaner and better than your terrible first draft.

GO AHEAD, GO FOR THE KILL! With an already better and much-improved second draft, why stop when you can make it even better and more polished? Like what Lamott wrote, go over your third draft as if you're a dentist looking for cavities, flossing every tooth and treating bad breath. Your third draft hopefully is your final and best draft.

ASSIMILATE, ASSIMILATE! Lamott wrote, "The first draft is the child's draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later." Let your ideas flow the first time you sit down to write that article or story! It's only when you write those terrible first drafts will you be able to produce really, really great stories! Then you can get them published!

Shery Ma Belle Arrietamailto:publisher@ewritersplace.com Shery is the creator and author of the exciting new series of ebooks for writers, SEEDS: Ideas for the Everyday (Non-Fiction) Writer. You can download a FREE sampler at <http://ewritersplace.com/seeds.html>. The July SEEDS ebook contains 82 idea seeds, all based on historical events. Visit <http://www.thepublishedwriter.com/report1002.html>.

"Write An Article – Get Noticed!"

By Peg Bastin

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Last year someone suggested I write an article. Who me?

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What do I write about, I'm a 'newbie' for heaven's sake!
How do you write an article? Why should I write an article?

Let me try to answer these questions. There are lots of reasons to write an article:

1. Get your name and your business noticed
2. To help others
3. To teach others
4. To share experiences
5. Free advertising for your business

What do I write about? First, I write whatever thoughts come into my head on a sheet of paper. I make a list, then put it into some sort of order. Then I expand on each thought. Where do ideas come from? I don't know. When I try to think of a subject for an article – nothing happens! Just a bunch of unrelated thoughts – then all of a sudden an idea pops into my head and voila! the words come pouring forth faster than I can write them down! It's a fascinating experience!

Usually I wake up sometime during the night with ideas running through my head. I write them down as they come – in the dark – try reading THAT in the morning! It's no use trying to go to sleep, it won't let me alone. If I didn't write these thoughts down as they occur – they would be gone in the morning – lost forever. My best ideas seem to come after lights out! This article was no exception! So far, my articles have all come from my own experiences. I guess that's what I know best.

How do I write an article? Once I have my thoughts on paper, I organize them so the ideas flow naturally. Next, I type a rough draft in TextPad. I never submit the first draft, I rewrite, recheck, retype, spell check, then proofread a zillion times.

When it's finally the way I want it, I count the words.

I usually try to stay around 500 words and format to 60 characters per line. It's easier to get published if the article is not too long and is correctly formatted. Also, more people will read a shorter article than a

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much longer one.

After I'm satisfied with the final draft, I'll write a short cover letter to each editor, personalized with their name. I tell them the title, word count, and a short two to three sentence description of the article. I then copy and paste it into the email below the cover letter. I do NOT send it as an attachment. Attachments do not get opened due to all the viruses we have. I always send as plain text, never HTML format.

Next, I get my list of editors that I submit to and start submitting to them individually, according to their guidelines. Some editors prefer you to request to submit an article, and when I do, I tell them the title, word count and brief description of the article. Most will let you submit the article at once with "Article" in the subject line of the email. I usually receive an acknowledgement from the editors with a personal comment on my article, and the date they expect to publish it.

And that's all there is to it! I'm always surprised to see myself in print. I never thought of myself as a writer, (except email!) And now I've received several requests for weekly or monthly articles.

Guess I'd better get busy!

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