



PUBLISHING 101

I often get asked about next steps for getting published in children's books, and I thought it would be worth writing down my ideas in one spot. Many of these points cross over into publishing in all genres.

The first thing to know is that it is extremely competitive. I've found fellow writers/illustrators to be very supportive, but there are a LOT of us out there, so the first bit of advice I have is to be patient. When I was very new, a seasoned pro told me that the most important attribute of a writer is perseverance.

PERSEVERANCE, even more than talent,
will be the determining factor in your success.



Look at this as a marathon, not a sprint. There are many talented people out there who walked away when they heard one-too-many rejections. The people who remain are the ones who are not only talented but who have PERSEVERED. Don't lose heart—books get published every day, and if you learn your craft and polish your manuscript, prepare your submission with a perfectionist's zeal, and do your research, it can happen for you too!

Before all else, LOVE the process of creating. Love the writing process. Some manuscripts, no matter how much we've labored over them, will never make it onto a bookstore shelf. It happens!

When we love the process of creating, we shift our focus from what can seem like insurmountable odds and into one of creative joy. Stick with joy. It will make work feel like play, no matter the outcome!

PUBLISHING CHECKLIST

1. Join a professional organization that connects you with resources, instruction, and fellow authors. There are organizations that are open to writers of all genres, and genre-specific groups. Join as many as you need to feel connected. In the resource section at the end of this checklist, I have some organizations listed, but there are many, many more.

2. Polish your manuscript; there are many ways to do this.
 - Let it simmer. I always like to write or draw something and then put it to the back burner to “simmer.” When I look at it later with fresh eyes, I can see gaps that I am able to tighten. RESIST the urge to send something after just writing it. RESIST!!!! (Can you tell I speak from experience?)
 - Find a respected professional editor who specializes in your genre, AND who is familiar with the culture you will be publishing in. For example, if you are aiming for a market in Europe, hire a European editor. If you’re aiming for a North American publisher, get a North American editor. What works in one culture may not work in another.
 - With heightened cultural sensitivity, you may also want to make sure your manuscript is vetted by “sensitivity readers.” This can be VERY helpful if you are writing about characters who have a different skin colour than you do or are from a different cultural or marginalized group. One of the editorial websites listed in the resource section has a list of sensitivity readers.
 - Join a writers’ group IF you can find one that is supportive but also honest and knowledgeable. The group should ideally consist of some seasoned writers. If you’re all new, you’ll have a lot more work to do to make sure the feedback is useful and realistic.

3. Unless you are a professional illustrator, do not add illustrations to your manuscript. If a publisher wants your manuscript, they will pair it with an illustrator. They will often pair a debut author with a seasoned illustrator and vice versa. And while being an author/illustrator has its advantages, it also gives a publisher TWO reasons to reject your work! With how competitive everything has become, the quality of illustrations needs to be top-level.

4. Before submitting, check submission guidelines and *follow them to the letter*. You get one chance to make an impression. Agents and editors are so deluged with submissions that they are looking for reasons to reject a manuscript. Don’t give them one!

*Note: While there are exceptions to this, generally if you are trying to get an agent, hold off on submitting your manuscript to publishing houses, as your agent will want as many options to market your book as possible.

5. Print off your query/cover letter and proofread the hardcopy. It's amazing how typos jump out at you when they are printed. There's nothing more disheartening than pressing "SEND" and suddenly noticing a glaring typo (Yep. Done that one too). Check and recheck before sending. It goes without saying that your manuscript needs to be polished and edited, *100% typo-free*.
6. Learn how to write queries/cover letters and take the time to write a good one. Don't leave it as an afterthought. Use the "let it simmer" rule, or have an editor look it over. There are many online resources for writing queries in your genre.
7. Write a synopsis. Another fun thing. Many writers feel that writing the synopsis is harder than writing the book itself! The help I received from the editors I hired helped me so much. If you are writing it on your own, research how to write them for your genre.
8. Create a Twitter/Elevator pitch. Even if you don't use Twitter, creating a succinct pitch will be invaluable for your queries. An elevator pitch refers to the 30 seconds you would have if you were riding an elevator with a publisher. What would you say? How would you sell your book in 30 seconds?

In the next section, I have a small list of resources. There are SO MANY out there that writing them all down would be impossible, but hopefully these will get you going in the right direction.

Good luck on your amazing journey of creativity and writing! In my [Facebook group](#) I talk about these kinds of things as well as have conversations about how we can each live our truest life. Please join me!



RESOURCES

If you find information that is incorrect or you would like to add something, please let me know.

WRITERS' GROUPS:

The Authors Guild (For the U.S.)

<https://www.authorsguild.org/>

The Writers' Union of Canada (for all genres of writers—look for equivalent groups in your country)

<https://www.writersunion.ca/>

- Holds conferences, contests and has a periodic newsletter

SCBWI (The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators)

<https://www.scbwi.org/>

- Holds ongoing classes, contests, and posts newsletters, as well as a winter and summer conference. Has chapters around the globe.
- Annually publishes “The Book: Essential Guide to Publishing for Children”

CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers)

<https://www.canscaip.org>

- Holds ongoing classes, contests and newsletters, as well as a daylong workshop in the fall entitled “Packaging Your Imagination” that is perfect for newcomers as well as seasoned writers/illustrators for the children’s market. Has lists of publishers in Canada.

Other Writing Groups:

Search for groups in your genre; there are groups for mystery writers, romance writers, etc...

Join up with local writers’ groups; for example, a great one in my area is WCDR (The Writers’ Community of Durham Region) <https://www.wcdr.info/>.

OTHER RESOURCES:

The Kweli Journal -- for BIPOC-Black, Indigenous, People of Colour-writers

<https://www.kwelijournal.org/> -- From their website: ...nurtures emerging BIPOC writers that “sing the truth.” With a quarterly online literary journal, year-long writer fellowships, multi-session workshops, writing retreats, individualized editing, an annual writers' conference, and international festival, Kweli invests in the artistic and professional growth of emerging authors, nationally and internationally.”

12x12 -- Picture Book Challenge (a group for picture book writers & illustrators)

<https://www.12x12challenge.com/>

Picture Book Summit – A daylong online “summit” featuring the world’s most accomplished children’s book authors and illustrators. They also have a podcast, and more resources at their website

<https://picturebooksummit.com/>

Writing Blueprints -- step by step “blueprints” that decode writing and publishing children’s literature; includes a manuscript submission course (their courses are amazing!)

<https://writingblueprints.com/>

Good Story Company – editorial services, webinars, and resources for writers

<https://www.goodstorycompany.com/>

Writer’s Digest -- they have articles and resources on pretty much everything to do with writing

<https://www.writersdigest.com/>

Children’s Book Insider – monthly newsletter for children’s book writers/illustrators with “above the slushpile” submission opportunities

<https://cbiclubhouse.com/clubhouse/>

Publishers Marketplace – Track deals, sales, reviews, agents, editors, and publishing news

<https://www.publishersmarketplace.com/>

WEBSITES THAT LIST AGENTS:

Literary Rambles -- lists children's literature agents and features author and agent interviews

<http://www.literaryrambles.com/>

Manuscript Wish List -- has the "wish list" of agents and editors across genres

<https://www.manuscriptwishlist.com/>

Query Tracker -- a database for finding agents and tracking queries

<https://querytracker.net/>

Query Cat -- a relatively new agent database across genres and countries; has lots of photos of cute cats to keep you calm as you navigate the troubled waters of querying

<https://www.querycat.co/>

REEDSY -- a resource for self-publishers, but also lists literary agents (the link to the list is below)

<https://blog.reedsy.com/literary-agents/>

EDITORS:

Marianne Ward -- She edited my YA book, *The Great & the Small*, for submission. She is awesome!

<https://marianneward.ca/>

Move to the Write -- book design, editing and production. The editor, Elli Sipila, is the former publisher of Common Deer Press which published my YA book, *The Great & the Small*. Elli is fantastic to work with.

<http://www.movetothewrite.com/>

Angelella Editorial - has several editors who work across genres (I worked with Diane Telgen on my recent picture book who was helpful and insightful). They also have sensitivity readers.

<https://www.angelellaeditorial.com>

Harold Underdown – The Purple Crayon – a ton of resources for children’s book writers as well as editing services

<https://www.underdown.org>

Reedsy – I haven’t worked with Reedsy, but it looks like they help prep a book for self-publishing, and have editors, ghost writers, and probably more.

<https://reedsy.com/>

A FEW SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES:

Twitter #PitMad (a daylong online “pitch” to agents and editors; there are many genre-specific twitter pitch days. You can search “twitter pitch” and find out when they occur

#PBPitch – a twitter pitch for picture books only

<http://www.pbpitch.com/>

- Also has a list of agents representing picture books on their website

Kidlit 411 on Facebook – All about what is going on in children’s literature.

Jane Friedman’s blog – tons of guest bloggers who write about everything to do with the writing life

www.janefriedman.com

SELF-PUBLISHING:

A quick word of caution with self-publishing: the market is flooded with self-published books that were released without proper editing or illustrating or design. *Don’t take shortcuts in the process of producing a beautiful book.* Invest in editors, in a design team, and in excellent print quality so that your book can stand up against the traditionally published books.

FriesenPress

<https://publish.friesenpress.com/>

- I have used FriesenPress for two of my books when the original publishers closed. Their print quality is excellent. They have editorial and layout services, and different publishing packages you can choose from. They aren't the cheapest, but in this case, you get what you pay for.
- Coupon Code for 10% off your first project: FPA31692RP

Ingram Spark

<https://www.ingramspark.com>

- Small publishers often use Ingram Spark and the quality seems to be excellent.

A few other companies that self-publish are Lulu, Amazon and Xlibris, but as I haven't used them, I can't attest to their quality. There are MANY companies out there, so research the one that fits with what you want.

CONTESTS FOR UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS:

Most contests are for published books. If you find more for unpublished manuscripts, please tell me and I will add it in. Sometimes the prize can be publication, so these are worth entering if you can find them!

Page Turner Book Awards

<https://pageturnerawards.com/>

PNWA (Pacific Northwest Writers Association)

<https://www.pnwa.org/>

SCBWI and CANSCAIP also hold contests for unpublished manuscripts.

Good luck!!!

