

## Work-for-Hire Writing: It All Starts with Reaching Out to Editors

Editors have plenty of work-for-hire children's books to assign. But before you can get those assignments for yourself, you have to reach out and let editors know you're ready to take on the projects! Here's how to craft your first contact—the outreach email.

**1<sup>st</sup> graph:** Introduce yourself! As in any job application cover letter, express your interest in work-for-hire projects. Personalize with your area(s) of interest\*, which should be topics the publisher covers. Let your voice come through—if you're excited about possibly working with them, go ahead and say it!

\*Many editors want to know what writers want to write about. If you're not sure or don't want to limit yourself, offer one or two ideas, and also explain that you're open to a wide variety of topics.

**2<sup>nd</sup> graph:** Explain how your background/experience qualifies you to write about the topics.\* Allow your passion for your work to come through. Be yourself, but keep it succinct. (It's fine to be straightforwardly professional, too.)

\*You don't need teaching experience or a degree in education to write work-for-hire children's books. Emphasize writing experience if that's your strength. If your experience with children comes as a parent or grandparent, present it as professional rather than personal. (More like, "I've worked with elementary school students for the past three years as a weekly volunteer," than, "I'm the homeroom parent for my son's class.")

**3<sup>rd</sup> graph:** Sign off politely, with your contact information included. If you truly love the publisher's products, you could include a brief, honest, positive comment.\*

\*As an alternative, you could put this in the first graph. But limit yourself to first or last graph for compliments and again, keep it brief. Otherwise you might sound insincere, even if you really mean it!

### Writing samples

Along with your outreach email, you'll want to include writing samples. Any writing that shows your talent and voice can make a great sample. It doesn't have to be published work—in fact, some editors prefer samples that haven't been professionally edited.

# **Work-for-Hire Writing: Get Published and Get Paid!**

Dreaming about becoming a children's book author? Work-for-hire writing is a great way to jump in! Even without publishing experience, if you're a talented and passionate writer, you can become a published children's book author with your very first assignment—and be paid for your work, too!

## **How Work-for-Hire Works**

Instead of writing a book, then searching for an agent (all on your own unpaid time), you get an assignment from an editor. The editor gives you guidelines about how the book should be structured, the word count, the reading level, etc. But there's plenty of room for creativity, too. For nonfiction, you do the research. For fiction, you make up the story. And editors want your voice to come through. It all starts with a contract that locks in your pay rate (a flat fee), deadlines, and the editor's plan to publish your book.

## **Get Those Assignments**

It's easier to break into work-for-hire writing than traditional publishing, but it still takes work. You need to be a detective and find the publishers who hire work-for-hire or freelance authors. Try Googling “educational publishers” and “school and library publishers.” Work your way through the SCBWI's PAL Publishers list. If there's information on a publisher's website about how to send in your resume, follow those directions carefully. If not, email to ask whether they hire work-for-hire authors. Find out who to contact with your outreach email.

## **Build Relationships**

From your very first contact with a publisher or editor, you're building a relationship. Editors are impressed with work-for-hire authors who demonstrate that they can follow directions. This is important when you get an assignment and need to follow guidelines. Don't be afraid to ask questions along the way, however, since that will help you stay on track. Keep the lines of communication open, especially if you know you won't be able to meet a deadline. No need to panic. Just communicate! A strong relationship can lead to more assignments. You might even feel comfortable offering your own book ideas to an editor.

## **You're an Author—Own It!**

As a published work-for-hire author, you can have the same fun as any traditionally published author: Throw a book party! Add the book to your resume and use it to get more work! Put it on social media! Promote yourself to the local paper!

And please, let me know if you pursue this and write a work-for-hire book. Contact me through my website—I'd love to hear about it!