

# Write to Publish in 90 Days

Module 8:

Advanced Publishing & Literary Agents



# Module 8

Ok everyone! At this point you may still be deciding on self publishing or traditional publishing so let me give you a bit more info on what it looks like to go with traditional publishing in terms of hiring an agent.

Why use an Agent?

It's often difficult for a writer to negotiate a contract with a traditional publisher. *New writers, in particular, have little experience and are afraid to ask for better terms of a contract.* They fear the publisher will lose interest if they're too insistent. An agent isn't so emotionally involved and so can afford to bargain more. Of course, the agent wants to make money, but he or she also doesn't want to make a bad deal.

In effect, agents take away a lot of the hassle of dealing with a publisher.

How to find an agent

One of the best ways to find agents who might be interested in your work is to search for literary agents' organizations such as The Association of Authors' Representatives, Inc., or the Society of Authors' Representatives. You can also find other lists of agencies online.

However:

Be especially aware of scams. **DO NOT** choose an agent or agency that wants you to hire them to rewrite your book. These people are scammers and want only to collect money from you without helping you at all. Also do not pay agents to find publishers; these people also are con artists. An agent makes money only from selling your work. Don't pay for anything, with one exception. Some agents ask for money for making copies and mailing out your work. That's legitimate, though not all agents do this.

How to contact agents and publishers?

*One of the three things you need to send to them is a query letter.*

Basically, the query letter asks: Are you interested in reading my proposal and sample chapters.

What you should consider when writing a query letter.

A query letter has several parts.

1. A lead that catches the editor's or agent's attention immediately.
2. A description of your book.
3. Why you chose this particular publisher.
4. The length of the book and when it will be available.
5. Your background and experience that qualify you to write your book.

Though this are the parts of a query letter, you can change the order of the different parts.

Length of a Query Letter

A query letter should be no more than a page or two at the most.

Publishers and editors often receive many, many letters a day. This means they have neither the time nor the patience to read a letter that rambles.

What style should you use in a query letter?

The letter should be friendly and informal.

*A bit of advice:*

Remember that a rejection letter from a publisher or agent is one person's opinion! And who's to say that person is right? There have been countless tales of books being rejected by one or many publishers and then going on to have great success. You need to believe in yourself. Oh, if you feel the publisher is correct but the book still has value, go ahead and rewrite it- self awareness is key 😊

Format

The query letter should be single-spaced. There should be a space between paragraphs—which should not be indented.

You can query most publishers or agents via regular mail or email. If you use email, omit the any letterhead, as well as the inside address.

Very important:

Stay informed about changes in personnel at any press to which you want to submit. It's important to address the person by name. Just think how you feel when you receive a letter that begins with "Dear Occupant." If you write to "Dear Editor" or "Dear Agent," you haven't done your homework. If you can't find editors' names online, call the publishing house and ask.

Explain why you're writing.

Tell the agent why you decided on him or her; tell the editor the same thing.

You also need to explain why you chose a particular publisher and how you feel your book fits in its publication list. It's probably because the press does book on business and entrepreneurship, those in the same category as your book. Of course, you should acquaint yourself with the type of work a publisher does.

You need a strong lead or opening to your letter, something that immediately grabs the editor or agent's attention. Don't make this longer than a few sentences or a single paragraph. For example:

U.S. theatre is unique! People from many cultures and backgrounds have made it what it is. Yet most books on theatre discuss only mainstream developments.

Or:

Roberta is a true story of child abuse—sexual, physical and emotional. When Roberta was fourteen, her father, whom she'd never previously met, kidnapped her and held her prisoner for eight months. During that time he got her hooked on drugs and alcohol. He also abused her repeatedly.

The first example is from a book titled *The Diversity of American Theatre*; the second is from a *Roberta: A Survivor*.

An important point:

Don't send out generic query letters. Gear your letter to each publisher you've chosen.

Describe your book.

Tell the publisher your idea and the approach you'll take. An example:

The book has two sections.

Part 1 deals with getting ideas for writing and is based on methods I developed and have been using for years, or those I adapted from acting exercises.

Part 2 is about avoiding common pitfalls in developing ideas. This section shows how to make the writing come alive through appropriate dialogue, interesting plots, believable characterization and a good sense of setting.

Part 3 is a "short course" in marketing. It gives examples of what to do and what not to do in placing a manuscript.

Include a short synopsis

This should be a one- or two-paragraph summary of the book.

Compare your book to other similar books.

For example:

Think of SUCCESSFUL DECISIONS as a meeting between Peter Drucker (*Innovation and Entrepreneurship*) and Scott Plous (*The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making*.)

List primary and secondary markets.

For your book you might list such primary markets as:

1. People interested in starting a business like yours.
2. People who enjoy reading about business successes.

A secondary market might be:

1. Business majors.
2. Adult education classes.

Tell how you plan to help promote the book.

1. Book signings
2. Interviews
3. Radio and TV shows
4. Giving speeches:

Explain what qualifies you to write the book.

1. Successful business experience
2. Years of experience in the area
3. Past publications

Don't brag.

Make what you say factual and objective. Don't say something like:

"My book vividly portrays..."

This sort of thing turns off an editor. Let your writing speak for itself. An agent or editor's reaction to something like this may be: "Oh, yeah? Well, you'd better prove that and right away." In other words, it prejudices an agent or editor.

Tip: You may want to send a query letter by itself, particularly if that's what a publisher or agent asks for. But you may combine it with other material, which is covered in Module 9.

Action Steps

1. Look up literary agencies online and try to determine at least five who might handle your sort of book.

Write them Below:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

2. Determine which person at the agency handles your type of book.

3. Write a query letter to at least two agents, gearing the letter to each of them

4. Now look up publishers online, or you may want to use sources like *Writer's* or *Guide to Literary Agents Market* (both published by Writer's Digest Books). A new list is published annually, so be sure to find the most recent. Be aware that because this material is updated only once a year, the information may be outdated. Check to be sure what you find is still current.

Write your top 5 options below:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

5. Find a list of likely publishers for your book. You can look online or use such resources as *Writers Market*, which also is published annually.

6. Determine who would be the best editor for the sort of book you're writing.

Write query letters to at least two editors.

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