

# POWER UP YOUR WRITING CAREER

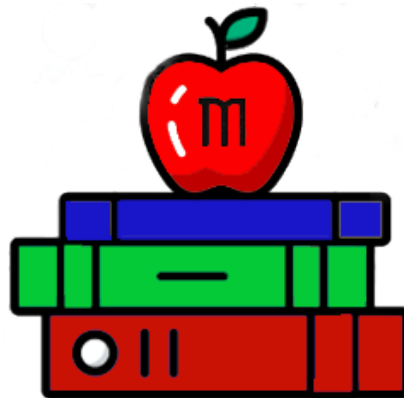
## 1001 Brilliant Ideas for Any Writer to Steal

Maryan Pelland

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# **POWER UP YOUR WRITING CAREER**

**1001 Brilliant Ideas for Any Writer to Steal**

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— Maryan Pelland

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# **POWER UP YOUR WRITING CAREER**

## **1001 Brilliant Ideas for Any Writer to Steal**

### **How to Use 1001 Brilliant Ideas**

I guarantee you will never have writers' block again if you keep this book handy. I am confident you will sell more of your writing. POWER UP YOUR WRITING CAREER is a fantastic tool for overcoming writers' block at any point in your writing career. Loaded with more than one thousand writing topics, it will accelerate your creativity and help you discover more opportunities to sell your writing, online or in print.

At the beginning of each chapter, you'll find tips and a bit of writer mentoring born of my challenges and headaches over a two-decade writing career. Though I studied journalism in college, what I learned had little to do with the real world of writing, as is true of most college tracks. I've made every mistake in the book, sometimes more than once, and now you have the opportunity to sail through two decades of experience.

To jump-start your writing, scan the chapter headings and pick out one or two topics that most appeal to you. This represents your comfort level, and you'll be right at home in those areas. Browse the list of prompts according to your comfort level. Don't grab a pencil or plunk yourself down in front of your keyboard. Just breathe slowly and read some prompts, noticing your own reaction to them.

Then, go through them again and highlight the ones that really resonate within. You'll refer back to those highlights later, but for now, pick up that pen or power up your keyboard and write something. Anything. Put it aside and look at it tomorrow.

As you work through POWER UP YOUR WRITING CAREER—1001 Brilliant Ideas for Any Writer to Steal, you'll notice two classes of prompts repeated.

LIST—This is a topic that suits itself well to a list-type article. We'll look more closely at those, but for now, know that you'll write an opening paragraph, a list of interesting points explained, and then a closing paragraph. It's highly marketable writing when done well and polished.

FREE WRITE—These little exercises have a double-edged name. FREE because you'll never offer them for sale, and FREE because they give you the freedom to just brainstorm and enjoy the process. Use a pen, pencil, or keyboard (if you want to use a rock and chisel, it's ok with me). Consider the FREE WRITE prompt, set a timer for 20 minutes, and just start writing. Write words, phrases, or gibberish, but don't stop until the timer rings. This is a sure-fire way to hatch new ideas. Once you've relaxed into your comfort zone, expand your thinking and choose a topic you would never imagine yourself writing on. Work through the chapter for fun, picking out ideas that either make you want to write or spark some new idea in your mind.

The secret to success lies partly in having interesting things to write about whenever you need them, but success comes mostly from discipline. Set a time to write every day. It works best to do it at the same time each day and for at least an hour. If you're serious about selling your writing and making a living as a writer, you can almost certainly afford more than an hour.

Write your articles, stories, memoirs, short pieces, poems, book chapters, or whatever all the way through on a single pass. Don't edit yourself as you write, you'll lose momentum. Set the work aside till the end of the day, or overnight, and then read it again. That second reading is the time to begin your editing and create a second draft.

Repeat the process until you feel you have your best work written down. Don't hurry. Haste will actually hold you back.

Once you've done your best, read the writing aloud to yourself or to someone who will just listen without throwing in their two cents worth. Now do your final draft and work on submitting the material for sale. This is an absolute truth: If you have not read your entire piece all the way through, it CANNOT be your best work!

Use this book as your personal textbook in your self-driven writing course. Discipline yourself to write daily. Set goals to produce sellable writing each week. Explore markets and learn which ones your writing fits best. Pitch someone every single week. Don't give up, and be sure you learn from your mistakes. If you follow this plan, you will never have writers' block again, and I feel confident you will discover new ways to sell your writing. Best of luck in beginning or advancing your writing career. If I can be of further help, reach out to me through the contact information that follows the last chapter or email me at [mkpelland@gmail.com](mailto:mkpelland@gmail.com).

—mkp

## Chapter 1

### Family Experiences and Memories

From birth to death, the connections we form with our families forever shape us. Parents, siblings, grandparents, even cousins often have a major impact on how we perceive life. Browse the magazine section at the library, or read through an edition of *Writer's Market* and see the proliferation of publications related to family life. It's fertile ground for a writer with a warm, engaging voice. It's perfect for the scribe who can talk about this very human topic with love, humor, pathos, or drama without being maudlin or sappy. Memoirs sell, and there are good reasons for that.

Reading through these family and memory prompts should spark ideas for feature and service articles. They might send you on a journey to writing a great book or script. If you aspire to work in copywriting, you can find the germ of outstanding marketing copy here. Don't forget to pull out a few photos of your life and times as you consider these prompts. Such images can throw your imagination into overdrive. Write from the heart and speak, in living color, of what you love or don't love, now or in the past, about your family life.

Where's the market for this kind of writing? Publishers are always on the lookout for outstanding memoir books. That doesn't mean personal musings about your Aunt Clara, unless Aunt Clara has universal appeal, was involved in World War II espionage, or was a madam in a small Midwestern town. A saleable memoir has to have the same drama as a great novel, but it has to be true—at least based on substantial truth.

Write with your own engaging style. Mix facts with feelings, reactions, and opinions. Create an irresistible sense of time and place. There is enormous freedom here to enwrap your factual story with the color and music of your best prose. Once you've accomplished that, and embellished the prose with fresh, natural dialog, it's time for you

to submit short pieces to magazines like [Bustle](#) and book proposals to houses that publish memoirs.

### Who's buying memoirs?

That depends entirely on time and place. Publishing whims change with the wind, and book agents or acquisition editors buy what they think will be popular in a year or two—the time it takes for them to get a book to the shelves. Digital publishers are more immediate. If you want to know what's trending, here are some electronic newsletters you can follow:

- [State of Digital Publishing Newsletter](#)
- [Digital Publishing Newsletter](#)
- [Digiday](#)
- [Children's Books Insider](#)

Never forget that we're in the age of independent publishing and electronic book distribution. Write your write, polish it to a fine shine, and study up on how you might be able to send your writings out into the world without selling them to a traditional agent or publisher.

### Now, here are your family prompts:

1. Recall your grandmother's unconditional love for you.
2. How did Grandpa teach you about life?
3. Consider the first memory you have of your dad or mom, or both—Free write about it.
4. Who was the Santa Claus in your life? Try writing a poem or an essay, sticking meticulously to the rules of either form.
5. Write humorously or tragically about the part of your psyche that got twisted by sibling rivalry.
6. The 1980s—living at your house. The clothes, the hairdos, the TV programs, the music, and a real taste of the culture.

7. Why was Aunt Myrtle (you fill in the right aunt's name, of course) the wackiest person you ever knew?
8. Describe the most prevalent smell or scent in your family life.
9. Redesign the church services that played a big part in your upbringing. How could they have been different to satisfy your needs?
10. Write about being an only child, even if you weren't. Why might you have wanted to be?
11. Pets. What was the best pet you ever had, and how did you two spend time together? Write a memoir about that pet's life with you, maybe from his point of view.
12. Think about high school. Go back in time and do a first-person description of teen dances and how they feel to a teen. Electric slide? Hully gully? Macarena? Walk Like an Egyptian?
13. Write as much as you can remember about five of your most memorable Christmases. Writing down the good stuff is good, but think about the not-so-good stuff, too.
14. Think National Lampoon Vacation—how did your family behave when vacation time rolled around? Were you all the same as usual or vastly different? Try writing just 500 words, very tightly edited. Can you do it?
15. Paint with figurative language. Use metaphors, similes, color, and narrative. How did your most auspicious family vacation change your thinking about something?
16. Do a free-write about toys you had to share. Who? What? Where? When? Why?
17. How did you feel about doing chores? Just the thing to teach you responsibility? A terrible way to curtail your social life?
18. What was it like to have working parents?
19. Read the first chapter or two of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Now paint the picture of what scared you and your siblings in your neighborhood.
20. Create a list of your family's top ten books. [Research how to write a list article](#), follow all the rules, and don't forget an opening and closing paragraph.
21. Write a poem. Was your childhood a good time?



22. As a young adult in your 20s, how did your family figure into your life? Think about your personal tragedies, breaking into the work force, loneliness, rebellion.
23. "The day I left my nuclear family for good," write from your heart.
24. "How my own adult family began," your marriage, the births of your first children, bonding with your gay or lesbian partner, adopting, deciding to remain single, and choosing your family or significant others. Feelings. Feelings. Feelings.
25. Being without a family—why it's ok with you or why it's not working out.
26. Working in the family business—write a list article about the do's and don'ts for success. Think about successful business and about working in successful harmony with your relatives. Can it be done?
27. Consider how you are different from your parents. Elaborate on which differences are helpful and which cause you to stumble.
28. Why is religion an integral part of family health—or IS it?
29. Write an article of 600 words. How to survive a dysfunctional family. Tighten it up.
30. Weekends, summer, sun, the beach, leisure time, and your family.
31. Poem: What it means to be a son, a daughter, a mother, or a father. Try to tie it into a holiday.
32. Gifting—twenty gifts one should never give to family members
33. Why or how did your mother make you strong and independent?
34. Why or how did your father make you the person you are today?
35. If you are the strangest person in your family, why is that a good thing or a bad thing? If you aren't, how did you become so normal?
36. The snowiest day, and the hottest, coldest, wettest days of your childhood, and why you remember them
37. Carefully detail a tragedy you endured as a child, a teen, a young adult. Poignant but not maudlin. Don't hammer the point; gently offer to share.
38. Free write - "Technology has changed families because..."
39. The biggest mistakes you made with your children
40. The biggest successes you've had with your children

41. What is the most joyful part of parenting your children?
42. Why is parenting the most amusing thing you have ever done? Can a parent be light-hearted and still be effective?
43. Kids say the dardest things.
44. Why did you choose not to have children?
45. Why did you choose to have children?
46. Children and pets: why they're a good mix, or why should we avoid that combo like the plague?
47. What things-that-go-bump-in-the-night populated your childhood?
48. What are your greatest fears as a parent, and how do you manage them without traumatizing your children?
49. Where is your God in your family? No preaching. No prosthelytizing. Just share, from your heart, how your family God works.
50. The carnival—remember. How were carnivals, fairs, and amusement parks part of your family's pleasure? Was there a strange happening connected to one of them? This one is a good place to think fiction, too.
51. Food—does your family eat to live or live to eat? And then what happens?
52. Would you have wanted to have more or fewer siblings, and why do you think so?
53. How has death impacted your family?
54. Why is life more difficult and scarier for your children than it was for you?
55. Talk about how much more your children know about their world than you did about yours.
56. Is there a physical condition that has affected your family? Detail it. Who, what, where, when, and how does it fit into life?
57. Free write - "My family is not perfect."
58. Why are boys easier to raise than girls? Think of your childhood or your children's growing up. Feel free to flip the question.
59. You are, or will be, an awesome grandparent because?
60. Weddings—why are they your favorite social events?
61. Weddings—why do they suck?
62. What's the first thing you think of when you consider family holidays?

63. Did your family have family meetings? Write one in living color.
64. Three generations living together—snippets of conversations overheard
65. Write about having braces on your teeth. This is a perfect place for humor. Don't forget the retainer.
66. First love—what is the funniest or most embarrassing moment with your first love?
67. Why did you marry your childhood sweetheart? Well, then, why didn't you?
68. Why was divorce the best thing that ever happened to you?
69. Gay or lesbian point-of-view: Coming out to the family
70. Living without TV
71. Free write: "If I had it to do again."
72. Poetry: "Walking to school with my sister (brother)"
73. Twins—being a twin, having twins, wanting twins, twins and telepathy. Ever know twins who swapped identities to mess with people's minds? What happened then?
74. Old Woman in the Shoe Syndrome—why too many siblings cause all kinds of personal problems.
75. Your cousins and you and how you drove the family nuts
76. Burying the family pet—it worked as a topic for Stephen King, didn't it?
77. You just found your, or a sibling's, adult child you never knew. How would that go?
78. Finding your biological parents—or your child's biological parent—with or without Oprah's help.
79. Meeting your biological parents—or your child's biological parent
80. The human genome—why do you believe your biggest challenges in life are all genetic, and what's to be done about that?
81. Coming home to a family reunion at 30 years of age— 40? 50? 60?
82. The 1960s—bells, beads, strange smoke, and hippies
83. Interview your sister—what were her biggest challenges in being your sister?  
Write passionately and honestly, without judgment, about her thoughts and feelings.

84. Interview your brother. How did you shape his life?
85. Interview your grandmother, grandfather, great-aunt Minnie, or great-uncle Joe.  
What were their teenage years like?
86. How did cooking figure into your growing up?
87. What traditional skills have you taught your children? Knitting? Painting?  
Carpentry? House cleaning? Hunting? Why?
88. What have your children taught you that you wouldn't have known without them?
89. Teachers are.... For better or for worse, we all have teachers. Write about your attitudes toward teachers or about your most indelible experience.
90. How does/did your family pediatrician drive you nuts?
91. What kinds of rules should govern taking a toddler into public places? How tolerant do other people need to be?
92. Snakes, bugs, frogs, and little boys (girls?)
93. If you could have a family do-over, what would it be? Now flesh that idea out and make it heartfelt.
94. If you had not had children, what would you have done instead?
95. If you had had children, how would that have felt for you? How would your life have changed?
96. How did wars affect your family?
97. How can a family prepare for when Daddy (Mommy) goes to war, and how can they weather that period of time?
98. Free write - Feeling depressed and alone in the middle of a family
99. What memory of your grandparents makes you just burst into laughter?
100. How could you tell your children their grandparent died without traumatizing the kids?
101. Poem - "Sunday mornings at my house"
102. How does it feel to be the elder generation now? Write from your point-of-view or do an interview with your family elder(s)? If you do nothing else from this book, write this one!

103. You, your parents, grandparents, and children: Describe the music mix tape in your family.
104. What five best family recipes are guaranteed to get everyone to the dinner table?
105. What was your best year in school? Develop that thought.
106. Ok, what was your worst year in school?
107. What were the special talents each of your siblings had? Were you proud? Jealous? How did your parents respond to special skills?
108. As a child, where was the most incredible place you ever went for the summer?
109. How did gardening fit into your family's life? This could be a green, sustainable living piece, a nostalgic piece about the soothing aspect of digging in dirt, or a writing about what a pain yard work is, right?
110. How did your parents' career choices impact your family?
111. Write everything you remember about the worst boyfriend/girlfriend you ever dragged home.
112. What happened the day your mother announced she was pregnant?
113. What was the day like when you told your own kids you were having another baby?
114. Bringing baby home—ten things a new mother absolutely MUST know
115. What must a woman do in order to be the perfect grandmother? Pick any point-of-view and go with it. Write as a new mother, as a kid, as a daughter-in-law, or whatever.
116. Expand that last thought process—what makes the perfect mother-in-law (or daughter-in-law)?
117. What can friends, relatives, spouses, or others do to make a new mother totally blissful? Write from the new mother's POV.
118. In-laws—the scourge of the earth and how you fixed that
119. Your husband's best friend...
120. If an affair happens in a marriage, how does the other spouse survive it? How can the relationship heal?

121. How does a bubbly, personable, cute, sexy, extroverted person remain faithful through thick and thin?
122. What's it like to grow up fat?
123. Write about the experience of welcoming your first grandchild into the world. Start with the "we're pregnant" announcement and write all the way through the birth and your first meeting, or start at the birth and write the first year of life.
124. Write a character sketch of the geek in your family.
125. Free write - "My brother and I got into big trouble."
126. As a child or as an adult, were you ever nosy enough to spy on your neighbors? What were they up to? And then what happened?
127. Write about what your mother and father never knew as you were growing up.
128. Write about what your kids are totally sure you don't know.
129. Poem - "Sitting by the fire with my soulmate"
130. The 1970s—how did politics and your family connect? Choose any political era.
131. One day, you went to the zoo, and the animals were so like your family.
132. How did alcohol affect your family's life? What did you do about that, or because of it?
133. Write about the time(s) you went to work with your parent(s). Flip that and think about your kids going to work with you.
134. Does a weekly allowance make kids more responsible or create a feeling of entitlement? Write the in-favor-of or not-so-good POV.
135. Nostalgia: "Hey, when I was a kid, we would never have gotten away with..."
136. Rolling back the family budget—what stays and what goes?
137. Fifteen ways to tighten the belt when times are tough
138. How to manage family expenses
139. Chores—what did they teach you? Slave labor is alive and well? You have to pull your weight? Or something else?
140. Twenty things you will never do that your parent did
141. Top twenty things you hope your children don't say, do, or become
142. What is your single greatest wish for your child?

143. Who loved you the most? How did that look and feel? How did you know?  
How did that love impact your life?
144. How did/does sibling rivalry manifest in your childhood family or in your own children's lives?
145. Going away to college—ten things everyone should know
146. What do you wish you had known about your closest sibling when you were growing up?
147. Write a thank-you letter to (fill in the blank) for (fill in the blank).
148. Free write - "Family things that make me cry."
149. Pick a Mother's Day and put it in the context of what you were doing at the time.
150. The 1960s watching Viet Nam on television in your living room
151. Mom, where do babies come from?
152. If dad told you once, he told you a thousand times...
153. List: Thirty ways to get attention in a big family
154. You were the oldest of several sibs—what do you wish you hadn't had to take on?
155. You were the baby of the family—write about being spoiled.
156. Punishments. The good. The bad. The really annoying.
157. What's it like to watch your grandchildren become.
158. Ten ways to preserve your family history
159. How television changed our lives
160. The 1950s—your family's first television—seeing your world in black and white
161. Write a quiz - "The 1940s to the 21st Century: What's Cooking for Dinner?"
162. Write about your discovery that your parents had a sex life.
163. Describe your experiments with raising dogs, cats, guppies, guinea pigs, hamsters, or other vermin in your room.
164. List - "Fifteen things I learned from living with my husband."
165. Free write—family loyalty and fidelity
166. Poem - "Standing at the alter as a bride"

167. What can every bride learn from your early days as a wife?
168. How did the past shape your today family's emotional health?
169. Medical records—what does a parent need to tell his/her children about medical history?
170. What's it like to adopt a child?
171. What's it like to foster children that aren't your own?
172. The 1950s—poodle skirts, 45 rpm records, Elvis, and you
173. How come you never thought you would end up this way?
174. Today, you looked in the mirror and saw your mother looking back.
175. The 1990s—turning the century at your house (Y2K?)
176. The 21st Century—how did all that alter your family?
177. What is it like to be an only child?
178. What caused you to wish you were an only child?
179. Write on living vicariously through your children.
180. How does a child's bedroom influence or impact life and state of mind?
181. "Just wait till you have kids of your own!"
182. Grandparenting—the best things to do with your grandkids
183. Empty nesting—the joyful and not-so-joyful moments
184. Write about when your kids left home—and then came back. (Again and again?)
185. Setting boundaries
186. List—Twenty things you wish you had told your mother (or your children)
187. Do a list article on how to find peaceful moments in hectic family times.
188. "I'm in the BATHROOM!"
189. What was the worst breakup in your family?
190. Describe the biggest lie you ever told your mother or father and its consequences.
191. Write humorously about the girlfriend or boyfriend your parents couldn't tolerate but had to.
192. Looking back—playing in the sandbox with your brother (sister)
193. What was your best birthday party? Why?



194. What was it like going to church with your grandma, grandpa, mom, or dad?  
Smells, sights, sounds, people, feelings
195. What was the material thing you wanted most in your growing up years that you never got? Describe every detail of that disappointment.
196. What was the thing you wanted most that you did get, but found out it wasn't worth having? What did you learn?
197. What was the best sparkling moment of your childhood?
198. How were you spoiled as a child?
199. How do you spoil your children? Now? In the past? How is that working for you?
200. Why do you think you were never spoiled or catered to?
201. Parents' favorite child—is there such a thing? How does that feel for the child, the siblings, the parent?
202. Describe the most paranormal happening of your childhood. Did you have a ghost? Was the neighbor a suspected witch? Was there a close encounter?

## Chapter 2

### Coming of Age

Think about the volume of writing on our planet. About four million books were published in 2024 (about half were self-published). Do you realize how often coming-of-age figures into the themes, stories, and plots of books, movies, articles, or even music?

- The *Twilight* series
- Harry Potter books
- *American Graffiti*
- *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*
- *Eragon*
- *Clueless*

- *Bad Boys*
- *The Joy Luck Club*
- *Yesterday* (The Beatles)
- *My Next 30 Years* (Tim McGraw)

It's no accident that coming of age, as a theme, resonates across the world. Why? Because we all have had to face that passage. No one is born smart, and no one gets out of this life alive. Coming of age represents our ability to transition from fumbling child, learning our role and figuring out how society works, to established productive adult. These prompts encourage you to consider how you feel about human rights of passage and about how the world measures up to your expectations. I choose coming of age because you can really run with it. Here's a chance to be exceptionally creative. Add humor. Be sarcastic. Play it straight. It works best if you form your writing to begin at your experience and then encompass a universal thought or a broad idea for the reader to take away. Look beyond the end of your nose!

## Quick and easy pieces—writing list articles

A few words about list articles. They are abundantly easy to sell if you know how to write an effective query. Nearly every magazine uses them—they're as popular as those short how-to articles and always will be.

Jump in with a bright introductory paragraph (also known as graf). Decide who your audience is, and tell your readers why you wrote the list just for them. What will they take away from the reading? Compose the list, using snappy openers and detailing with clear explanations. Tie it up neatly with a short closing graf and your readers, and the editors out there will come back for more. If you've never written a list piece, read a few in your favorite mags.

Write an effective title that mentions a specific number of list items—like *Ten Quick Ways to Do Whatever*. Capture the reader's attention and tell them what's on the list: *Keeping Teens Safe on the Internet—Thirteen No Fail Strategies*. Don't go for clever or

cute; hand them the goods right across the table. When you submit a list article, attach a list of your sources for fact checkers to use. If you took the items from personal expertise, state that and include proof of said expertise. Finally, describe suggested artwork for the piece—like a photo of a worried parent or a teen at a computer.

## Or write a quiz

The quick quiz is a perennial reader favorite, and editors love them too. Readers all think they're in the know, and proving it by acing a quiz is immensely satisfying. If the reader can't ace the quiz, at least she has a good time working through it and sharing it.

Quizzes, like all articles, follow conventions. The introductory paragraph has fewer than seventy-five words. Now, list questions in multiple-choice format. Write one clear, specific answer for each and mix it up with three to four incorrect choices. It's ok to make the selection challenging, but don't make your reader consult Wikipedia. Be reasonable.

Ten questions is a comfortable goal. Caution here—do your research and be certain of your facts. If you flub an answer, you will never hear from that editor again, and you'll receive fan mail that can make you switch from writing to office cleaning. After the questions, write a closing paragraph like the opener. Tie them together.

Next, write the answer key. You might include a grading scale that categorizes your readers into levels of expertise. For example, if your quiz is about movie trivia, the key might say one or two correct answers means the reader doesn't get out enough. Ten correct answers mean the reader should explore places other than the inside of a theater. See?

Finish your submission with a footnote to the editor listing your sources. When you submit quizzes, don't send a query. Submit the entire quiz with a cover letter outlining your platform and describing your expertise. You're submitting on spec, meaning they'll let you know if they want to buy that quiz.

Now, here are your coming-of-age prompts:

1. What's your first sexual memory? Detail it. Make it G-rated, but crystal clear—or make it any rating you're comfortable with. Keep a specific audience in mind as you write.
2. Complete this in 300 words: In my teens, the worst thing I ever did was...
3. "I knew I was an adult when..."
4. What was your first job? How did you get the job? How did it all work out?
5. What was your positively worst early job?
6. Who was, or at which job did you have your most terrible boss? What did you learn?
7. Your best boss and what you learned
8. Write about what it was like to learn to have your own sense of style.
9. Do you remember the process—the ins and outs of dreaming your first home or apartment into reality?
10. What was important about moving out of mom and/or dad's place?
11. Write descriptively about your first place of residence and its physical qualities. Enlist all your senses. Make it come alive.
12. How and why was your first year away from home successful?
13. Switch that up. How and why was the first year away from home a dismal failure?
14. What should young people know about setting up housekeeping?
15. How to rearrange your lifestyle and your home when you go from being part of a couple to being single again
16. Twenty tips for combining two people's households into one
17. Describe effective ways to make friends with the opposite sex.
18. Learning to feed yourself—not as a kid, as a young adult
19. How you learned to manage money, or how you survived never learning to manage money effectively.
20. Think of your most important, larger-than-life hero. Describe him or her as an inexperienced young adult.

21. What would you never, ever do again that you did as a young adult?
22. Write about your sex life, the early years.
23. Ten tips for remaining a virgin when all around you are giving it up
24. Sneaking out—how did you do it? You didn't? The how did your best friend do it and did you envy that person's courage?
25. What happened the first time you cut class in high school or college?
26. Ten things teens need to know to survive in today's social world
27. How did God or the absence of God figure into to your young adult years?
28. How does today's young adult culture deal with alcohol? Talk about the negatives, positives, or neutrals.
29. Write about recreational drug use—what you know now and what you didn't know then.
30. Write about your first vacation on your own.
31. Write about everything surrounding your first, last, or only experience with law breaking.
32. Marrying young—how did that impact your growth as a person?
33. How did you form your own sense of values? What matters? What doesn't?
34. How tough is it to break away from your parents? Is that a positive thing? Were they supportive? How guilty did you feel?
35. Apartment living—oh dear lord, those neighbors!
36. Free write - taking the train to work or other commuter challenges.
37. What do you need a do-over for, and how would that work out? Be as specific and descriptive as you can.
38. List - top eleven ways to find a job that doesn't suck.
39. Quiz - You know your friends are mooches when...
40. Get real into writing a piece about your first wheels.
41. You got fired!? What the heck happened? Pick one aspect or right generally about rejection in the workplace.
42. Breaking up is so very hard to do.
43. Free write - your friends are way different from you.

44. Diversity—describe the healthiest, most effective ways to feel comfortable dealing with the differences between people.
45. What do you know about alternative lifestyles? How do those ideas impact you?
46. What do you hear if you're listening to the soundtrack of your life? Is it music? Just noise? Children laughing? Tell the whole story and make it come alive for your reading audience.
47. In a perfect world, where, when, and with whom is/was the perfect date? Think in terms of global truths anyone can identify with.
48. Popping the question. What was it like when you decided to marry, to partner, or to shack up?
49. What did you learn in the first two months of college? This writing isn't about books. It's about introspection.
50. List sixteen things parents do not want to know about their college kids.
51. Free write - "I knew I needed my parents to buzz off when..."
52. Twenty ways to leave your lover—how's your sense of humor?
53. For women only—asking a man out on a date
54. Cinderblocks and boards—how to furnish an apartment for practically nothing and have memorable fun doing it
55. What was your biggest goof-up when you were twenty?
56. What was your process for choosing your career or job, or did it choose you?
57. If you could hook up with your first love again, what would that be like? Yes, you can do the dreamy version, but you could also do the version that looks at how awkward and uncomfortable it could turn out to be. This could morph into a great short story or even a novel.
58. What happens when and after you decide to drop out of college? High school?
59. How does the average guy or girl make it living on unemployment?
60. Did you ever cheat on a partner, and how did that work out? Consider the data AND the feelings all around!
61. Write about the best and worst aspects of spending time by yourself as a young adult.

62. What was the epiphany that helped you discover your creative nature? How did it change your path?
63. Running wild as an almost-adult
64. Always a bridesmaid, or a groomsman—how did it feel when all your friends were tying the knot and it was not in the cards for you right then?
65. What made you decide to stay single? What would change your mind?
66. How did you figure out you wanted to be a parent?
67. Did you make a conscious decision to marry or partner with someone? How much thought do most people put into that decision?
68. What has been your experience with reading the books of the world?
69. How good of a friend have you been? Where did you learn those skills? Do you model after someone in particular?
70. Free write - spring break woooooot!
71. Who is the sexiest person you ever personally knew, what made them so desirable, and what is that person like right now? Express clearly and thoroughly why that person is or is not part of your life.
72. Write 1000 words on your direct experience with learning to cook. How many emergency calls were involved? Did you actually poison anyone?
73. Oh, the parties you threw...
74. Write a completely tantalizing and engaging descriptive piece about the perfect woman for you.
75. Write a completely tantalizing and engaging descriptive piece about the perfect man for you.
76. Now consider "best friends forever." Can that happen? What kinds of criteria have to be met?
77. After you left home, did you decide to go home to Mother? Well, tell all! Again, how'd that work for you? How about for Mom?
78. List—the ten scariest things about becoming an adult.
79. List—the scariest things about stepping back and allowing your child to become an adult with their own rules and values.

80. How can a grandparent help a child become a successful adult without stepping on anyone's boundaries?
81. Proms—why should we avoid them like the plague?
82. Proms—why should we move heaven and earth to make sure we don't miss our prom?
83. How did mean girls/mean boys change your life, your outlook, or your boxing skills?
84. If you had never (fill in the blank), everything would be better now.
85. Your life is so much better now because you were allowed to (fill in the blanks) when you were in your formative years.
86. In what ways did your parents have blinders on when you were growing up?
87. Your first job ever. Who, what, where, when, and WHY?
88. What were your finest experiences with babysitting or pet sitting?
89. What was the funniest thing you ever did when your parents were not paying close enough attention?
90. What happened when your best friend forever began to look very, very hot to you?
91. How did moving from place to place affect you?
92. How did staying in one home through all of your coming-of-age years affect you?
93. What was it like to be a military brat? What was the good side? How did it suck?
94. When you were a latchkey kid, what were your fears and concerns? What part of that experience felt good? How did you grow from that?
95. How did street gangs and their very existence figure into your life? Write about where you lived and how those factions were visible. What were your direct experiences with gangs or their activities?
96. What movies helped form your attitudes or change your outlook? How or why?
97. The arts—how did they figure into your coming of age? What music, art, or theater talent do you have? What was your level of interest, or did you just make fun of people who pursued such things? Brainstorm it and create a memoir-type writing around this topic.



98. Was/is television a vast wasteland or incredible window to the world for you?  
Explore whether TV should be changed or limited for young people.
99. Which are the TV programs you'll never forget, and why did they make such an impression?
100. When did you first figure out that sex is everywhere, and what did you do about that?
101. Quiz - top ten music groups your peers loved. Think about band names, songs to die for, lyrics that terrified parents, how the bands came to be, and band members. Write a quiz article if you are so inclined.
102. Your body type—what effect did it have on your coming of age?
103. You are sitting home alone on a Saturday night (at any age). What's that experience like for you?
104. What's it like when you choose to hang with the girls (guys) instead of dating?
105. What advice would you give anyone who asked if they should remain virgins until they find their life partner?
106. Free-write: Being promiscuous—you or someone you knew
107. Do some in-depth writing about how Valentine's Day evolved in your life from a childhood age to the tender young adult times when it grew more important. Write from your heart and tell the truth about how you react to that day now.
108. List—13 things about Valentine's Day. Write a gift list, a things you refuse to do list, or terribly romantic things. I've sold all of those at one time or another to different publications.
109. D-i-v-o-r-c-e. How does that feel? How does it happen? How does it work out?
110. Homework—doing it right or scamming the system
111. What are the highs and lows, the perks, and problems surrounding being a top student? (or employee?)
112. What is the life of a poor student really like?
113. Where does life take you if you quit school at sixteen?
114. What's it like to not graduate when you're a high school or college senior?  
What feelings surround settling for, or better yet, striving for, a GED?
115. High school or college sports—the good, the bad, and the ugly

116. Sex, drugs, rock and roll
117. Blackening your lungs for pleasure. Smoking weed. Smoking tobacco.
118. What are eleven best things to do with your time when you cut school? Add five can't- be-busted excuses for cutting.
119. List—top ten excuses for any unacceptable behavior.
120. Describe what it was like to learn that your parents do not have divine intelligence.
121. Planning for college or for a career—how did that feel? What was the process? Did you know what you wanted? What about leaving everyone behind?
122. What did you learn in school that really blew your mind?
123. Who was the funniest person in your high school, and what was his or her life like? Talk about emulating them, avoiding them, or just enjoying them.
124. Who was the saddest person in your school, what made them so, and what did you do about it?
125. Write about truth and lying. How did you learn the consequences of each?
126. Free write—consequences I have known
127. What was the worst weather event in your youth, and how did you get through it?
128. Consider peer pressure. Write about your take on it. Use personal anecdotes.
129. When and how did you determine you simply weren't a kid anymore and could no longer fake it?
130. Why were you vastly different from your friends, and how did you keep them from discovering the real you?
131. What did you think you knew about diverse lifestyles? How right were you? How have you changed your perspectives?
132. Body changes—how did hormones do you in?
133. What was the bravest thing you ever did in your youth?
134. Movie stars, sports stars, and rock stars—who was your first crush and how nuts did you get about all that? How do you still secretly honor that crush? A hidden poster? Still swooning over the movies or music?
135. List—top ten underground books every teen simply must read.

136. Zits you have known and not loved, plus other really creepy things that happen to adolescents. This could be an advice-type writing about how to survive those things.
137. Write about the class bully, what that was like for you, and how kids can protect themselves. How did you?
138. How did teen magazines fit into your life—what did they show you? Is their picture of the world positive or negative? How did you figure that out?
139. Why did you read dirty books? Which ones?
140. What childhood habit lasted the longest for you, and why couldn't you give it up?
141. Runaways. Did you know any? Were you one? How did it go?
142. What were the circumstances the first time death figured into life for you?
143. What scared you more than anything? Hone that down to whatever works for your writing.
144. Cults—could they have lured you in if they had tried? Why?
145. What did you know or think, or think you knew about teen pregnancy?
146. Free write—on self-esteem
147. Social issues—were nuclear war and fallout your boogie man? Global warming? Pollution? Racial equality? Explore your particular bugaboo.
148. What makes one a grownup?
149. What do you think of your nation's voting age? Right on? Needs to be raised? Lowered?
150. And what about the drinking age? (See the prompt just before this one.)
151. Divas and princesses—what was it like to be one, know one, date one, or hate one?
152. Top jocks—See the prompt just before this one.
153. Fashion plate—why you were the entrée (or the leftovers) when it came to style?
154. Living in the dorms—boarding school or college. Write about how they were set up, the rules, and experiences.
155. Consider *Sex Education 101* and how you experienced those classes.

156. Write a day in the life of a high school student.
157. Detail a day in the life of a college student.
158. Getting engaged. Describe that whole day and all the feelings. Did he surprise you? Did she say yes or no?
159. What is teen angst, and how does one, or did you, cope with it?
160. Write about dealing with the loss of a friend—not necessarily through death, maybe a move, or a change of schools.
161. Relive the biggest fight you ever had with a best friend.
162. Collecting and obsessing—what things could you simply never part with and had enough of them to fill a small warehouse? Why did you keep so many? How seriously could you be described as a hoarder?
163. Write about *The Brady Bunch*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Partridge Family*, *Little House on the Prairie*, or any other idyllic family setting—is that all BS?
164. Who was your mentor as you grew up, and what did they tell you?
165. Write about how to spend the best Saturday of your life.
166. Consider winter sports; why did you love them or detest them?
167. Your wedding day—describe every detail about the first time or about the best time.
168. Did your trusted friend ever scam you, cheat you, betray you? What happened? What did you do then?
169. Was your sweet sixteenth birthday a standout, or did it fade into oblivion? How should it have been? Why wasn't it like that?
170. How did your eighteenth birthday figure into your feelings about yourself and your life? What kind of lasting impression did it make? What about your twenty-first?
171. What did you do whenever you felt left out of the action and not part of the crowd? How much did it bother you? How often were you aware of such a feeling?
172. Describe the best birthday celebration you ever had. Who was there? What were the gifts? A surprise? How did you celebrate?
173. Write whatever you want to about double dating.

174. List—ten best dates a teen can hope for: the place, the activity, the person.
175. Free write—"Rainy days and Mondays always bring me down."
176. Money and bank accounts—what were your earliest experiences with financial stability or instability?
177. What was the most difficult expectation you had to live up to, and how did it work out?
178. At the beach or anywhere special where you could all just be, well, kids; remember it in detail.
179. The movie that opened your eyes.
180. Crafting a life of your own. How did your values and beliefs match your role models', and how did they differ? How can young people begin to trust their own beliefs?
181. If you live to be a hundred, what will you never emulate that was characteristic of one of your role models?
182. How did you first become politically aware or active? Are you thinking the same way now?
183. How the world has changed since you were a youth. If you are a youth, what do you expect to see change in the future? (I won an academic writing award for a looking-forward piece like that.)
184. Dancing cheek-to-cheek or any other way. Couldn't have lived without it? Didn't want anything to do with it? What dances rocked your world? Which were incredibly stupid?
185. Free write - "We didn't start the fires..."
186. List—five books teachers and parents couldn't force you to read and why you will never read them. Oh, and how you got out of reading them.
187. *The Adventures of Rocky the Flying Squirrel* and *Power Rangers* impacted entire generations. What's your relationship with cartoons? How do they fit into our perceptions of ourselves?
188. Describe an all-out adventure you had as an adolescent, teen, or young adult.
189. Write about the moment you decided you had to quit kidding around and be an adult—no going back.

190. What did you dislike about yourself back then but embrace now, and how did you get there?
191. Consider your best skill or talent and write about your feelings around it way back when. How and why did you nurture that talent, or did you?
192. Write on how cars are the center of teen life and why that's good or bad.
193. "My parents handed me everything I wanted."
194. What happened the first time you moved in with a significant other of your own choosing?
195. Write about someone you plan never to speak to again and how that all happened.
196. Who, that you met in your youth will be in your life forever? How important are long-term commitments or relationships?
197. Taking up with old friends. Hadn't seen Sue or Jim for ages. We reconnected, and it's like time stood still. Or not. Can you successfully turn back life's clock?
198. "We don't need no education."
199. "School's out for summer..."
200. What is the real truth about homeschooling?

## Chapter 3

### Working for a Living

#### **Sell your writing—how to make a killer submission**

Human beings, most of us, spend about half our living days working. The only thing we do more than work may be sleep, but that's doubtful in a lot of cases. If your goal is to sell your writing, then understanding the workplace, how people work, why people work, and how they feel about it, will serve you righteously.

As you go through these work-related prompts, think about them from two points-of-view. Put yourself right into the situation, write first person. Then, revisit some of the prompts and write as an advisor or mentor. Think about what you know, where you've been. You may write just for yourself, but you might enjoy trying to market the writing. Nearly every publication buys articles about work, with a spin toward their editorial bent.

What's the best way to sell an article? Target your markets, polish your work, and follow up diligently. Decide what magazine you want to write for. Can you make your style mesh with theirs, your voice blend smoothly? Select a couple of target publications and get the submissions editor's name and contact information from the masthead. Online publications usually have a contact page. Make a quick phone call to the publisher to verify that the information is up-to-date.

Go to the library or jump online and browse several issues of your target. Read up on how to construct an outstanding query letter. You might find Master Class [\*How to Write for Magazines\*](#) helpful. Submit your queries and follow them up. Rejections will come, but make sure you don't always read them as negative replies. Sometimes, what the editor has to say is really positive, even if she doesn't buy your piece this time. For example, the editor might say, "We recently ran a similar piece, but you're welcome to submit again."

That doesn't mean you failed. It means sit right down and knock out a new killer query for that magazine. They liked something about your voice, and persistence will land a sale.

### **Now on to the working-world prompts:**

1. What did your first job teach you that can be applied to all jobs at any time?
2. Explore the ins and outs of your best and worst jobs.
3. Co-workers I have known and loved. Or not.
4. Love and sex on the job—let the participants beware.
5. What was the worst thing you ever did to a boss?

6. Simon Legree—is he the world's worst boss, or did you work for someone more outrageous?
7. What constitutes the most wonderful, most effective type of boss possible?
8. What was your finest performance? BS-ing your way into a job.
9. Free write—clock watching
10. Why is blue your favorite collar color? The satisfactions, the skills, the pride, tell all...
11. Stealing paperclips—white collar crimes you've observed or committed, and that includes software piracy.
12. Escaping the cubicle, what would you or did you do when the nine to five seemed to become about seven hours too long?
13. Working for yourself—why that boss is a real SOB but the struggle is (or is not) worth it.
14. List—nine ways to get the job you really want.
15. Continuing education—you love your job so much you can't sit in a rut; you gotta be your personal best. How do you do that?
16. Should there be equal pay for equal work, and what exactly does that mean?
17. Define, determine, and describe a perfect work environment.
18. Networking—how does that work? Can anyone do it? Is it a crock or the best strategy ever?
19. Commuting is not a four-letter word.
20. How can you keep to your principals when all around you are goofing off?
21. Describe a work day—from the water cooler's perspective.
22. Bakery goods in the workplace—the plumping of America and how to beat it.
23. Why are most meetings a total waste of everything?
24. How do you encourage workers to produce well and be happy?
25. What's the best career advice you've ever received?
26. Talk about anger management at work.
27. Dressing for success—what to do about your tattoos, piercings, perfume, and other annoying embellishments.



28. Think about surfing the 'net at work and write about how to get away with personal surfing or about why it's a no-no.
29. The boss is a liar—what does an employee do now? You caught the lie. You know it's a lie. How do you handle that? Did that ever happen to you?
30. Why are you worth far more than they will ever pay you? How do you live with that? Are there other compensations besides money?
31. Write about what your boss doesn't know and you aren't about to tell her.
32. How tough is it to work for a woman? Are there strategies and tricks to getting along? Is it really better to work for a woman?
33. How tough is it to work for a man? Are there strategies and tricks to getting along? Is it really better to work for a man?
34. What about working for a kid half your age? How do you keep your cool, form a successful relationship, and move ahead?
35. Working for an old fart can be irritating if he/she hasn't kept pace with the times. Write about how funny this can be or about how serious it can be without solid strategies.
36. Free write—"Take this job and..."
37. Describe why you will never retire.
38. How to succeed in business
39. Create a word sketch of the office clown from any perspective that appeals to you.
40. Take the reader to an office party—visit the best and the worst aspects of that tradition.
41. If you controlled the budget, why would things be different?
42. List—fifteen no-fail ways to reach the top without pissing anyone off.
43. What if you don't want to get ahead? Eight perfect plans for just getting by.
44. What are the problems and pitfalls of being best friends at work? Any advice?
45. Are there ways to get along with people on your team who don't have a clue? How contagious is dumbness? Is it curable?
46. Describe the lunchroom refrigerator and the office culture surrounding it.
47. Quiz—what career suits your personality? Play this straight or tongue-in-cheek.
48. Take a look at the 21st century workplace. What's happened to it?

49. How can a normal worker possibly understand the techno-guru? Write about jargon and about faking technical knowledge.
50. Complaint department: Get to Helen Waite. Write about how to effectively get a gripe off your chest when no one wants to hear you griping.
51. What do you do when you don't get a raise and you absolutely deserve it?
52. Perks. the other side of compensation.
53. List—top ten excuses for being late.
54. How would it read if you wrote your job description based strictly on how your day REALLY goes?
55. Unions - what's that all about, anyway? Should unions be a thing of the past?
56. Why should employers care about workers' needs and wants?
57. Who gets the big bonuses in an economic crunch? How should that system be restructured to make the dollars help keep the company moving forward?
58. Write about survival skills for people working on commission.
59. Create a story about the email you never meant to send.
60. Write the ten commandments of cell phone etiquette at work.
61. What secret are you keeping at work? How come it's still a secret? And where's that all going to end up?
62. When you blew the whistle, how did it work out?
63. Write about ways workers can use creativity in repetitive jobs.
64. Free write—if I were queen (king)...
65. What's it like to go back to college when you're over 30? What do people need to know?
66. "If I had any sense, I would have been a..."
67. New business cultures allow all kinds of weird stuff at work, like pets. Take a stand on something of that sort and support your position.
68. Perfume in the workplace. What's that God-awful smell, and how do you make it go away?
69. Idiots you have known and loved in the workplace
70. Five o'clock—quitting time. What was the worst social event you ever experienced with co-workers?

71. How is a military career different from a civilian career? What strategies do you need that civilians don't even know about?
72. Consider the pros and cons of music, the arts, writing, and other jobs parents warn their children not to pursue. Where are the entry-level jobs, and how can a noobie get a leg up?
73. What to do when you think the best man for the job is a woman but the company ain't havin' any.
74. Describe how you made peace when chaos reigned among co-workers.
75. Did you ever have an unforgettable experience after getting suckered into sitting on or running a committee? Maybe think about rules of behavior.
76. Outsourcing—the temps are taking over and they think they own the place.
77. List—Fifteen outstanding ways to waste time and not get caught
78. Think back to the last time you volunteered to help and it backfired; or succeeded.
79. List—ten careers that didn't exist ten years ago.
80. List—ten careers that won't exist in ten years.
81. How and why you can make working from home the perfect, most productive way to go.
82. How would you set up the perfect home office?
83. Lots of people really want to work from home. How do you sell the boss on trusting that telecommuting is an excellent idea?
84. What are the best ways to avoid eating the junk food that's ubiquitous to every workplace?
85. Write about ways to make brown bagging fun, simple, inexpensive, and delicious.
86. Write about the culture of carpooling and vanpooling and the crazy conversations you might hear.
87. Liquid lunch—what happens during the afternoon when the boss tipples too much at lunch?
88. Consider why employees should or shouldn't be permitted to decorate their workspace. What could be the best and worst outcomes?
89. Describe the dress codes you wish were in force at your day job.

90. Is management the place for you? How would you do a better job of ruling the empire?
91. The rumor mill. How did it affect you at its best or worst?
92. Free write—"if I won the lottery"
93. How do you read status symbols at work? From exec washroom keys to special coffee mugs, what are the clues to employee caste systems?
94. Describe the feelings surrounding acquiring an office with windows/a corner office. Why is that so damn cool?
95. Explore all the variations you can think of that would be viable ways to allow unconventional work schedules. Who might benefit? Does it help or hurt the company's goals?
96. Write about why you're dead sure those telecommuters just don't produce and practically get away with murder.
97. Why do you think telecommuting is the golden egg of the 21st century?
98. Describe the relationships and benefits related to you, technology, and doing your job.
99. Reflect on this statement: Discrimination is never going to go away.
100. Are workplace daycare centers a treasure or a detriment to productivity?  
What should employers consider about them?
101. On business writing and the functionally illiterate, or why you hate memos and office email.
102. This memo supersedes all previous memos.
103. How to succeed in business without really trying
104. List—Twelve ways to survive being on the road with your job.
105. Never tell your co-worker a secret because...
106. Ever have sensitivity training? How did you react, and what was that like for you?
107. Write about your experiences as a temp.
108. Consider this statement: My boss is an idiot.
109. What was your most memorable experience with employee complaints?

110. Quiz—write a true or false quiz around the idea of acceptable personal conduct in the workplace.
111. Support the idea that being on time is essential to success, or support the flip side.
112. Describe the fine art of taking and handling an effective phone message.  
Could be funny.
113. Write proper conduct and attitudes toward the copy machine, the coffee machine, the refrigerator, or the washroom. Use anecdotes about abuses you've known.
114. How does one recognize a superwoman at work?
115. Recall the first time you got fired.
116. immortalize five types of office personalities—try Superwoman, Macho Man, Susie Help Everybody, and so on.
117. How to perpetuate office gossip without ever being suspected or blamed
118. On putting everything in writing—dos and don'ts. Serious or tongue-in-cheek.
119. List—15 steps to finding a job before you quit the one you have.
120. Free write—the time clock.
121. When there's a bully or tyrant in the workplace, how can workers stay out of the line of fire?
122. Give advice about handling sexual harassment, sexual discrimination, and sexual misconduct.
123. Define positive reinforcement and give lots of examples of how a boss can win over his staff and get far more work done without ever ticking anyone off.
124. Explain what makes the best salesperson who ever lived.
125. Explain how someone can gain the boss's respect without any grandstanding or boot-licking.
126. Why should you be an evangelist for the company you work with?
127. Entrepreneur 101. Why did you decide to go it on your own, and how's that working?
128. Entrepreneur 201. If you've been your own boss for ten years, write what worked and what didn't. If you haven't been, ask someone who has.

129. Humor on the job. How is laughter the best medicine—or is it?
130. Write all about the most unusual job you ever had or ever coveted.
131. Think about a job you loved beyond reason. They paid you less than a dockworker in Tangier, but you couldn't bring yourself to leave. How did that all come about?
132. How do you express yourself creatively through your job?
133. As a working mom with two, five, or twenty-seven kids, how do you keep all the plates spinning.
134. What creative tricks help manage your preschooler when you work from home?
135. No one really understands what it's like to be a teacher. Why is it not all fun and games?
136. Explore what college really costs and whether or not it will mean a great career and a big paycheck for every student.
137. Pretend your job is a book. Write a formal review.
138. Write a performance review for your boss.
139. Write a performance review of your own overall performance, even the things you do when no one is looking.
140. What's it like to be an overachiever? How do you become one?
141. What's it like to be an underachiever? How do you get there?
142. What would you do if a co-worker had a really bad personal habit on the job?
143. From what you've seen, tell the whole truth about personal phone calls, texts, emails, and surfing.
144. Write a short story about getting fired.
145. How would you tell someone they were going to lose their job? Be the boss, the friend, the uninterested co-worker, or the nemesis.
146. How do you think career-coaches fit into the real world? When might you consider hiring one? How would you find one?
147. Perfect world. No obstacles. Dream job.
148. Free write—the person in the cubicle across from you

149. Think of a favorite co-worker and create a complete personal life for him or her.
150. Go deep into the mind and soul of the young woman with too much makeup, big hair, and an attitude. What is she like?
151. How to ask for a raise and get it
152. Write a poem that captures the entire flavor of your present career.
153. If your boss were an animal—a real live animal—what would he/she be? How would you react? Why would they be that animal?
154. The boss was droning on, and you just...slipped into sleep. Then what happened?
155. Describe the weekend business retreat in gory detail.
156. 101 things to do with a paperclip
157. What do you know about your company that no one else does? How do you know? What will you do with that info?
158. Why is the "corporate communication" department a joke?
159. Free write—working nine to five.
160. Describe customer service from either point of view—the server, or the customer.
161. Write about why you love your work so much that you can't imagine a day without it.
162. List—fourteen best lunches you ever put in a brown bag.
163. What do you see when you are people-watching in the cafeteria?
164. Why are people fifty-five and older great employees?
165. How to make friends and influence people
166. What can you do when they just use your ideas and you never get the credit?
167. How to call in sick when you aren't
168. How do you prepare to make a speech to the entire department?
169. Take a help-wanted ad and describe what the jargon, like "must be flexible and inventive," really means. This is about humor, you know.

170. Pick one type and relate it to your own experience: The drill sergeant, the whiner, the polished pro, the slick sales pro, the watchdog, the whistle-blower, the mouse, the comedian, Mr. or Ms. Perfect.
171. What happened last time you asked for a raise or promotion?
172. What was your most mortifying career moment?
173. If you had to change careers, what would you do next? How did you decide that? What are the best choices right now?
174. How would your present occupation translate into a retirement career?
175. List—top three pieces of career advice for young people starting out.
176. What would you suggest established corporate types do to jolt their careers into higher gears?
177. Why is the best man for the job a woman?
178. Why is it okay to put men ahead of women in the workplace?
179. Describe the glass ceiling and how it has affected your working life.
180. Free write—romance on the job
181. Write about why you would never want to be a supervisor or why you would never want to be a worker bee.
182. What's the creative outlet in your job? Why do you care about your creativity?
183. Write about how networking is done, your way.
184. Talk about three stereotypical personality types in your field or industry. How often do you see these types, and how do they affect business?
185. Brown bagging vs eating out, or vice versa.
186. What are ten best employee benefits ever invented?
187. How should maternity leave work for moms and for dads?
188. Freelancing or consulting—what do you wish you had known long ago?
189. Defend the concept of taking mental health days.
190. Spend an hour writing two or three kinds of business letters. Try a complaint. Try an accounts receivable reminder. You definitely want to try writing a marketing letter that sounds real, sincere, engaging, and will inspire a prospect to do something about reaching out to your company. Polish each to perfection. Hang on to them; as your business grows, you'll need them.



## Chapter 4

### Technology

#### **The technology of publishing: or, How to get your work out there**

Some of us are intimidated by technology. Some of us love it and can't get enough. Most of us fall in the middle of the road, appreciating the finer points of living in a technical world but not immersed in it. There is no doubt, though, that technology is a lushly ripe topic for writers. From nostalgia about huge mainframe computers and punch cards to writings about computers no bigger than a pack of cigarettes or quantum computing, there's plenty of techno stuff to write about.

Younger writers, you have probably worked with and lived with technology in every aspect of your life, from houses that get smarter every year to television innovations to computing for dollars. Pan the gold in those fields. Write everything you know about technology, and begin here with some thoughtful prompts.

If you're longing to write a book for publication, this is great fodder. Here's where you can mull over green living. Think in terms of how-tos for every day technology. You might want to write a book about how to use cellular technology or wind technology. Perhaps you're the person to write a book about using technology to save money—think about replacing costly pay TV services with a modern antenna or jumping off the cell phone merry-go-round and using voice over internet protocols.

Once you have your idea, write your book. Never has a writer had so many options for getting her thoughts out in front of an audience. There's self-publishing-to-print format, self-publishing electronically, traditional publishing houses, blogging a full-length book in installments, and lots more options. Some writers have even published their book to *X* or *Medium.com*, 140 characters at a time.

For those who want to learn about different ways to publish, consider these resources:

- [\*Smashwords\*](#)
- Dan Poynter's [\*ParaPublishing\*](#)
- [\*KDP Publishing\*](#)

And on to technological prompts:

1. How have they, or how will ebooks change the way you read?
2. What's the coolest gadget you found this month, and how does it work? What did it cost? Is it worth a second look?
3. Is print publishing going to die? When? And then what?
4. List—your top ten favorite mobile phone or tablet apps.
5. What's the future of tablet computing, and how far into it have you already gotten?
6. Explain cloud computing and take a look at several ways everyday people can use it to keep their personal and work data safe and convenient.
7. Tell the story of using modern windmills (turbines) for private residential power.
8. Look into all the ways you could get off the power grid if you want to.
9. Why iPhone is no longer the only smart smartphone choice. What's running close behind?
10. What's the best legal way to collect or access digital music?
11. What's DMR and where is it headed?
12. CDs are so "early 21st century," what's the latest in storing digital music and video?
13. Write about getting digital photos off the computer and putting them back into your real world. Check out the digital frames that sync with other people's frames.
14. Make a list of twenty safe and amazing websites for kids and families.
15. Explore how baby boomers and technology are fast becoming best friends.
16. What are the best ways for late adopters to start learning computers and all that surrounds them?

17. How can you use the Internet to improve home life or the quality of life for an older person?
18. Where is social networking and media headed? If it's becoming obsolete, why is that?
19. How does *Discord* work?
20. Is Facebook worth your time, and what can it do for you? How safe is it?
21. Free write—Technology is sucking up my oxygen.
22. List—twelve best places to read about everyday technology
23. Blogging. If it's not over yet, what's the buzz? How worthwhile is it, and what can it do for us average folks?
24. How can a small business owner sign on to the technological revolution?
25. Why should children have some toys that just don't need batteries? Which toys?
26. Write a primer on how to stay safe when you use the internet.
27. Catalog all the ways the internet can be dangerous to your family, your money, your health, and your sanity.
28. Say everything you've always wanted to about internet dating.
29. What are ten good reasons to stay away from internet dating, or can you explain why staying away is just nonsense?
30. Consider the ups and downs of online gambling. How much do you know about it?
31. Besides Amazon and every big bank in the world, who is making money online, and how are they doing it?
32. List—Eight awesome ways to make money with your computer or your technical know-how
33. How is it possible to safely dispose of old computer stuff?
34. What's better, PC or Mac? Says who? Is there much difference anymore? Are there alternatives?
35. What the heck is Ubuntu?
36. Write about why online auctions are dead or not dead.
37. Explore bamboo bedsheets and the art of living green through the latest technologies.

38. What's the latest in kitchen technology?
39. What's going to happen to radio and TV as you know it?
40. Who is the hottest upcoming geek in America (or pick any country) and why?
41. Have women kept up with technology in everyday life and in the workplace?
42. What are the latest advances in birthing technology?
43. Can we really expect to live past 112 years old? What medical advances make it so?
44. List—top manmade disasters of the past 200 years
45. Why gaming is not just for kids and why science says we might all benefit from it
46. Explore how gaming affects kids and decide if it's a good or bad thing.
47. Look into the top six internet browsers and decide which is the best, the safest, the most fun.
48. How can you use video/digital teleconferencing for business or to keep your family close together?
49. How has Zoom finally come of age?
50. Write your best explanation of Snopes.
51. Why is everyone jumping onboard with speech-to-text software and how are they using it?
52. List—ten computer applications or programs no household should be without.
53. Free write—pens, pencils, keyboards, and monitors
54. What do you need to know and own so you can make great digital photos?
55. Where can you get free or nearly free TV, music, movies online, legally?
56. Take a stand on texting. Think courtesy. Consider safety. How does it impact others?
57. Good reasons for today's children and teens to carry cell phones.
58. In what ways are we way too connected? What can we do about that?
59. Are there good reasons to refuse to own a cell phone?
60. Confess why you dumped your landline—and maybe why you wish you could go back to it.
61. Write all about the hottest home theater trend.
62. Where can we get great free stuff online?

63. Write about hip grandparents teaching tech to their grandkids.
64. Explore all the good and bad of mandatory laptops in the classroom.
65. Laptops vs desktop computers: where do you stand and why?
66. Why did game cartridge decks seem to be the fastest flash in the pan in many decades? Where did they go? What replaced them?
67. Write about the latest in home printers.
68. Demonstrate how easy and fun digital scrapbooking can be.
69. What are the pros and cons of having email penpals?
70. Where are the best free online courses from major universities?
71. How much of our education has gone online, and will that trend replace traditional learning methods?
72. Speaking of Facebook...lawyers are using it as evidence in many divorce cases. What else can happen on social media? Consider school, job, family.
73. Explain Netflix and what its future might be for consumers.
74. Explain how to use *What's App*.
75. Explore three "content farms" online and review them for fellow writers.
76. Study the technological gadget you bought most recently, then go review it at Amazon. Review something like that each week for a month.
77. Start a blog about gadgets for your favorite audience (mine is [Woman with a Pen](#)) and write one post each day for three weeks.
78. Collect the tech reviews you wrote for the prompts above. Write a query to three consumer tech websites, include the clips you just created, and ask them if you can review a particular gadget for them. You may have to buy the gadget, but soon, with a few more clips, you will be able to ask manufacturers for samples to review.
79. Detail how to build a blog and what it might be used for.
80. Write about web hosting for beginners.
81. How you can create an incredible website in a weekend with Wordpress or Ghost for free.
82. Talk about writing and marketing apps for phones and other devices.
83. List—100 things to consider about social media

84. How did digital marketing jump over telemarketing to become the most annoying process on this planet?
85. Ten steps to reconnecting with school-day friends on the web
86. Why and how are people acting out their family dramas on the web? What have you seen?
87. How do divorce and the internet connect?
88. What are technobullies, and how can we avoid them?
89. What is the most important technology of the 21st century, and why do you think so?
90. Ten quick steps to editing digital photos. Tip: When you write a steps-to or how-to piece, make it very clear and uncomplicated so that a novice could do it. Make it thorough enough that a more experienced person would not mind following your instructions.
91. Reverting to antenna TV, why do you get a better picture, better sound, and a way cheaper price?
92. What is the U.S. government doing with the old broadcast frequencies?
93. Explore internet radio and sites like Pandora.
94. What can be done about spam—the non-food varieties?
95. How are people using LinkedIn to build today's business networks and relationships?
96. Freewriting—help! techno overload!
97. Essay—the worst technological disaster you ever witnessed
98. How new technology is helping criminals and expanding crime opportunities
99. Explore any aspect of safe computing.
100. Explain how quantum computing may change our entire society.
101. What are the top ten tech jobs coming in the next five years?
102. What are the hottest tech jobs right now? What college degrees will get you right in the door?
103. How do you keep pace with technology in your career field?
104. What are electronic health records? Who's using them? What will they do for the average consumer?

105. Talk about three digital inventors.
106. What do you know about technology and the military?
107. Describe an ocean garbage patch and write about all the ramifications.
108. Is there synthetic life after real death or before real death? Does it exist at all yet, and in what way?
109. Everything anyone wants to know about the progress of artificial intelligence in the 21st century
110. Write about technology and staying younger longer.
111. What were the worst gadgets this year?
112. Explain your take on the dumbest use of technology to date.
113. How does one copyright or patent a creation?
114. How did you break away from a world of too much technology?
115. How much computer is too much computer?
116. Explain online forums and write about how to use them, build them, ignore them.
117. What do you know about engineered food?
118. Ok, what do you know about engineered humans?
119. How will genetic studies save this planet?
120. 4G, 3G, next G—what does it all mean? Who should go ahead and live without it? Who absolutely must adopt it?
121. Why did 3D TV fail, and was it just another way to part you from your money?
122. What are the latest advances in solar energy, and why are so few people using it?
123. List—top eleven most important techno geeks of all time
124. Write about the current trends in young inventor contests or science fairs for school kids. What has changed?
125. How do schools encourage/discourage inventive thinking?
126. Bionic medicine—what surprises are lurking there right now?
127. Write about Hollywood celebrities and their techno inventions, like Kevin Costner's oil spill cleanup.
128. If we can put people in space, why can't we...

129. Techno humor—funniest geek jokes
130. What's new in pet medicine and technology?
131. Figure out what all the buzz is about stem cells for ailing pets.
132. Why might a college degree not be the best idea for future jobs?
133. How green automobiles may save the world. Or why is that just a drop in the bucket?
134. How might computer hackers affect your car, your phone, your reader, or your home in the near future?
135. Who is selling U.S. computer junk to third-world countries, and why are they doing that?
136. What is the future of those old communication satellites floating in space?
137. List—ten things you need to know before you go totally wireless.
138. What do we need to know to make the most of electronic readers? Kindle, Nook, iPad
139. Why Apple will not rule the world
140. How the 1930s and 1940s paved the way for today's consumer electronics.
141. Detail the best places to shop for electronics.
142. How can parents keep children centered in a too-technical world?
143. How and why is your privacy disappearing? Write what you know about personal information available publicly.
144. What can Nintendo, Play Station, and other games do for baby boomers?
145. How is the world of art changing as technology changes?
146. What the heck does it mean to jailbreak your cell phone, and why do you do it?
147. What is the latest on new internet law?
148. Explain in under 1,000 words how to use the WWW for job hunting.
149. How, why, and when will Google rule the world?
150. Universal free broadband, is it coming? Will everyone go online for free in the near future, and how will that happen?
151. Smart cars—all about the coming technology
152. Smart houses will help seniors live at home longer, but how?



153. What's new in eye surgeries for cataracts or other conditions?
154. Why are medical robotics important, and how can we make sure insurance companies will cover them?
155. Free write—love and pixels
156. List—fifteen ways to conserve energy at home
157. List—fourteen ways to conserve energy in the workplace
158. Why is telecommuting the wave of the future? Or is it?
159. How does online gaming actually impact world economies?
160. Where are the housekeeping robots? Do we need them or want them?
161. How can you replace almost all your paper files with digital files? What software? How easy is it?
162. Make the case for FAX machines being obsolete.
163. Can digital self-publishing make just anyone a best-selling author? Why or why not, and what are the pitfalls?
164. How did Amazon.com begin in a garage and rise to megapower?
165. Who are the top five women in technology?
166. What is the digital genome?
167. How do you make YouTube your best tool?
168. Why would you rather subscribe to an electronic newspaper than a print version?
169. The future of watching movies at home. Will Netflix rule, or is something else on the way?
170. Go make a video experience on your mobile and do a review of what you discovered.
171. How can you find your best friend from 6th grade online?
172. Write all about do-it-yourself divorce, wills, and other legal tricks online.
173. Free write—think about plain old technologies and why you like them better, just go with your thoughts.
174. List—why these twenty toys will never be replaced by electronic or high-tech gadgets.
175. Shopping online: The good, the bad, and the dangerous.

176. Why smart phones may or may not be the smartest thing to buy.
177. What's the next great technological thing?
178. Think about entrepreneurial technology and write about how to exploit it.
179. Travel technology—digital identification for pets and possessions, hotels and technology, air travel tech.
180. Security—how will airports of now and the future use new tech to keep people safer?
181. Write about techno stuff about to have a significant anniversary. For example, PacMan turned thirty a while back.
182. Trace the evolution of electronic game systems from Pong to virtual reality.
183. BlueTooth cellular accessories can be great tools, but it would be funny to explore the rudeness of connectivity freaks who live in their Bluetooth worlds.
184. New building materials that will forever change how we build homes.
185. Medical technology—why your doctor should be using laptops in every examining room.
186. Look into modular bathrooms, on-demand water heaters, bathrooms that monitor your activities and adjust to them. Now write about the bathroom of the future.
187. What about high-tech cheating in schools and in business? think AI!
188. Research Silicon Valley and write about how it came about, what it is, where it is, what its future looks like, and how it's different from other tech centers.
189. What is the latest technology for gardening, from plant foods to composting?
190. Where are the best-paying high-tech jobs and the best high-tech schools?
191. List—best online gaming sites, especially free ones. You can do this by age, by type, by cost.
192. Look at the massive immersion games like Roblox or Fortnite and write about why or why not that's a good place for kids, unsupervised.
193. How can we supervise children's technical lives?
194. What was the coolest new technology in your grandmother's day?
195. What will your children think is commonplace in their futures that we don't even have yet?

196. List—half a dozen things in everyday life that came from NASA technologies.

## Chapter 5

### Pets

#### **Promoting your writing: Nine no-fail ways to market yourself**

Sell your writing. To some, that sounds like the impossible dream. To others, it's a way of life—not necessarily an easy way, but a rewarding way. Promoting and marketing your book project is essential to success, no matter how well-known or helpful your publisher is. That's especially true if you elect to self-publish or to e-publish. Fran Silverman, author of *Talk Radio Wants You*, is a successful New York-based author and talk show host. Fran has several book projects under her belt and is a publicist for more than 100 veteran authors and writers. She whispered her marketing secrets to me.

Here are Fran's secret ways to successfully market and sell your writing:

- Create a website for your book. Have a supply of business cards handy. Add your book site URL to stationary, email signatures, and any place else you can put it.
- Go on the radio or a podcast. It's a great place to be "seen," whether you write fiction or non-fiction. Target the conversation to aspects of your book that will interest local listeners.
- Know your subject inside and out, be an expert; and believe you know it better than anyone. It's a must to be conversant in writing or verbally on your topic.
- Speaking about your book in person, on the radio, or via podcast is a perfect way to interest people and personalize your marketing message. That can mean instant sales.
- Collect addresses from any person who expresses any interest in you or in your writing. Never let a contact go unrecorded. Create a database and market consistently to those people—they already told you they're interested. Fran has collected a database of more than 350 fans who became paying subscribers to her products. She has another database of hundreds of talk radio hosts and podcasters, and who knows what she can do with that?

- Package your marketing ideas and promote those ideas. Newsletters, coaching, consultations. Those may become revenue streams as your book takes off.
- Commit to your business network and keep building it. There is no number that represents too many potential buyers. Advantage current technology like *X*, *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, *Substack*, and your blog. You *do* have a blog?
- Follow what your competition is doing. Subscribe to their newsletters. Model their good ideas, discard their bad, or improve upon them.
- Never pass up an opportunity to talk about your writing, online or off.

## **Writing about pets**

If you decide to write about pets, you've chosen one of the hottest, most evergreen topics, one that is ever-in-demand. There is always an audience for stories, books, and articles about pets. Almost 70% of American households include at least one pet, and those pet owners fork out an astonishing \$50 billion each year caring for and caring about their animals.

When you decide to write marketable articles about pets, include a lot of heart and soul. Heroic pets are never out of fashion. Adorable pets draw huge audiences. Make sure your facts are correct, and seek out qualified experts to interview. Most animal professionals are quite willing to talk about their favorite topic.

[\*Freedom with Writing\*](#) online has a terrific list of pet publications to get you started. Now, browse the list of pet prompts and see what you can do.

1. How do you choose the right pet? What constitutes the wrong pet?
2. With all the breeds and boutique mixes, how do you choose the right dog?
3. Teaching children about pet ownership: Mom is not the pet whisperer!
4. Write about pet safety in summer.
5. Now, write about pet safety in winter.

6. When traveling with your pet, how have you found pet-friendly hotels and campgrounds? What are good ways to smuggle a pet into other places, and is that worth it?
7. Why should every dog and dog family experience obedience training? Where do you find classes?
8. Write a quiz based on dog or cat lore. Think about first pet dog, favorite breeds, famous dog/cat logos, etc.
9. How in the world does someone keep pet birds happy and healthy?
10. How can you adapt your home for an enjoyable pet experience, like child-proofing?
11. Why should you never buy a child a baby duck, bunny, chick, or any other pet at the holidays?
12. What's the most effective way to choose a vet? Why do you need to know a good one?
13. Write about stem cell therapy for pets. Do the research or interview a local high-tech vet. Fascinating.
14. Let's do a clever piece about dressing your pet, not necessarily for success.
15. List—top fifteen latest pet products (for your favorite type of pet)
16. Why are fish the perfect pets?
17. Write on digital pets, including aquarium screen savers, virtual puppies, video game pets, robotic pets.
18. Free write—the best pets in your life
19. Dog (or cat) humor: How does your pet control your life?
20. What do experts say about the right diet for your cat or dog? Is it all hogwash, or should we care?
21. People are using dogs and cats to help with vision and hearing problems, but what other applications might there be for service pets?
22. Explore the rules and laws about service pets—responsibilities of both the pet owner and others in contact with the service animal. Must businesses allow service animals in their place of business? What penalties, if any, are there for not allowing them?

23. Exotic pets—what are the latest trends? What are people keeping now that iguanas are old news? How do celebrities change the pet-buying public?
24. Consider insects as pets: Ant farms, scorpions, praying mantises. There's a great opportunity for humor here.
25. Do an expository essay about pets that are against the law.
26. What do you do when your child's pet dies? Is that a teaching moment?
27. List—ten best ways to remove pet stains and odors.
28. What about fleas, ticks, and other annoyances? What are the greenest, healthiest ways to control them?
29. Teach your dog not to bark without reason. Use ten quick steps.
30. Visiting the vet—good conduct and good manners (for animals and humans) in the vet's office
31. How do you find a great groomer, and what should you expect for your money?
32. What should pets cost? Survey prices in various locations or strictly in your location.
33. Explore the cost of owning an animal from its babyhood to end of life.
34. Think pet owner ethics. What happens when we grow tired of a pet, or the pet gets old and challenging to care for?
35. Consider what are the best pet toys then narrow this to a particular type of animal and write in-depth about those items. Maybe it's yarn for kittens and old socks for dogs, or maybe not.
36. What challenges are inherent in bringing a new human baby into a home that has pets? What do the experts say about safety?
37. Write about germs and diseases and sanitizing pet areas. Which germs and diseases pass from humans to pets? We get swine flu; do pets get people flu?
38. What diseases can people and pets share, and what do you do about it?
39. How do people decide what to name their pets? This makes a great tongue-in-cheek person-on-the-street interview piece.
40. How do you choose a collar and leash? What's in, what's hot?
41. Write about urban and suburban people owning or co-op owning horses.
42. How can you tell if the stable you choose is treating your horse well?

43. Pick an animal and find out if that type is used in pet therapy for people.  
Interview an expert or two. Very sellable story.
44. Why are tiny, toy animal breeds a big risk?
45. How do you evaluate a dog breeder? Talk about how to recognize a responsible breeder or an irresponsible one.
46. Write about the pros and cons of breeding your animals.
47. How do you teach children and pets to get along safely?
48. Write about gourmet cooking or buying gourmet food for pets. Look at it as a pet owner resource and also as an entrepreneurial opportunity.
49. List—a dozen household dangers pet owners may overlook
50. Free write—you are an animal.
51. What's the real skinny about alpacas, llamas, and goats—raising, breeding, and selling them for a living?
52. Why don't farm animals, including pigs, make good city pets?
53. Write about keeping carrier pigeons as a serious hobby for this day and age.
54. Write tips for working out with your dog to keep you both fit and healthy.
55. What should you do when you can't keep your dog, cat, or other pet? Maybe you lost your job and can't afford the pet. What are safe, humane ways to part company?
56. What does everyone need to know about adopting from animal shelters?
57. Do an expose about pet stores. Think about their suppliers; are they using puppy mills? Do they keep the animals healthy? Are they humane?
58. Ten steps to bathing your dog without drowning yourself. Feel free to substitute cats, iguanas, pot-bellied pigs, or any other animal.
59. Let's talk about everyday pet etiquette.
60. Write rules for safe swimming and boating with your dog. (Leave the cats at home.)
61. How do you bond with a feline, or at least how do you make them tolerate you?  
How can you teach your cat to love you?
62. List—pet owner manners; how to have a pet and still get along with your neighbors

63. Photo essay—pets that look like their owners
64. Pet containers and crates: Explore why dogs and cats like their crates and prefer them to free roaming sometimes.
65. Write about pet grooming and include daily, weekly, and monthly tasks for healthy skin and coat.
66. What are ten things you need to know about caring for dogs' eyes and ears?
67. What are the best ways to introduce a new pet into a pet household?
68. Describe the first ten days of living with an adopted pet.
69. Explain why orphan dogs and cats make the best pets—or why they may be your worst night mare.
70. What are the ways we can determine if we're a cat person or a dog person?
71. What are the tricks for keeping cats and dogs in the same household?
72. Write about the pet—yours or someone else's—that you most disliked in your life.
73. How do you know when you have too many animals?
74. Why might small pets and senior citizens be a good mix?
75. Write a short manual for setting up your first ten-gallon aquarium.
76. Dog aggression—how to define it, deal with it, live with it, and know when you need help
77. What is food aggression, and what do you do about it?
78. Why shouldn't pets be treated like people?
79. Write a story about separation anxiety in a pet and how the situation got fixed.
80. How does music play into resolving pets' anxiety?
81. Write a memoir all about your favorite pet.
82. Write ten steps for teaching your dog how to talk. Yes, it can be done. What would you want him to say?
83. Detail the process of getting chosen to appear on David Letterman's stupid pet tricks segment.
84. Write about the pros and cons of keeping a rabbit as a pet. How good of an idea is this?
85. Quiz. Do you know what pet would suit your child?
86. List—twelve unusual small pets children can maintain in their own room.



87. Consider why turtles may not be good house pets.
88. Should you become a veterinarian? What's the future of that field?
89. Pros and cons of hiring a pony or having another animal event for a child's party
90. Do a piece about pet cosmetics.
91. Write about pet weddings and about pets being in human wedding parties. I kid you not.
92. Do an article or a book on how to be a successful pet photographer.
93. Write a look at taking great pet photos.
94. How do you teach your budgie to talk for real?
95. What do you know about hand-training a bird?
96. What is the quickest path to teaching your dog to sit every time you tell him to?
97. Write about how to start a pet sitting business.
98. Write tips for choosing the right pet sitter.
99. What are nine pet businesses you can start with a modest investment?
100. Quiz—animals in rock and roll. Think about band names, song titles, lyrics, and performers tied in to pets.
101. Celebrity pets. Find out what celebrities have unusual pets. This works for local celebrities and is a good interview opportunity.
102. Remember the most obnoxious dog/cat/parrot you ever met.
103. Explore the concept and field of pet psychiatry.
104. Look at psychic animals, health-sensitive animals that find diseases in people, or ghost animals.
105. Tell other writers why they might want to write about pets; pet articles are evergreen, ever-popular, and very marketable, but what does that mean?
106. Write an essay about how your pet has to the quality of your life.
107. Putting your pet to sleep: How to make the experience the least traumatic
108. What should you learn at your pet's annual physical exam? What might it cost?
109. What can scientists find in pet hair and dander? Talk about allergies to pets. What pets are hypoallergenic?
110. How do you survive in a pet-oriented world when you have allergies?

111. How can you find pet parks? What are typical rules? What about etiquette?
112. List—fifty all-time greatest animal movies
113. What can you do when Aunt Gertrude's Great Dane wants to sit in your lap?
114. Knick knack paddy whack, should you give your dog a bone? Why?
115. How do you figure a dog's age in people years and what does all that mean?  
What about cats?
116. Cat lore—myths, legends, and superstitions surrounding cats.
117. Dog lore—myths, legends, and superstitions surrounding dogs.
118. How do other cultures, maybe the Orient, feel about house pets compared to how Westerners do?
119. Write about throwing a birthday party for your pet.
120. What you should never feed your pet.
121. Why (fill in the blank) breed is the perfect pet?
122. When a pet is injured, how do you know whether to see the vet? How can you treat small injuries on your own?
123. Write ten signs that a dog's health is not normal.
124. Write ten signs that a cat's health is not normal.
125. Write ten signs that a bird's health is not normal.
126. What are good ways to live safely and comfortably with an elderly dog?  
Discuss dealing with everything from incontinence to loss of sight and hearing.
127. Write about the joys and challenges of adopting an adult pet.
128. Think of the best pet adventure or pet humor story a friend, neighbor, or relative has ever told you and write it with excitement.
129. How do you start and succeed with a dog/cat bakery shop?
130. Explore recipes for the best dog treats ever.
131. How come you never had a pet and never want a pet?
132. Why do big dogs have the biggest hearts and make the best pets?
133. How do you set and maintain behavior boundaries and not spoil your pet?
134. Consider green pet life and pet products that are ecologically friendly.
135. How do you introduce your dog to another dog and create a successful relationship, or at least prevent mayhem?

136. What can be done when your new life partner hates your old pet?
137. Describe the worst pet incident of your life, your pet or someone else's.
138. Write about pet-centered miracles.
139. Is pet insurance a rip-off or a great value?
140. Free write—your pet's personality and personality disorders
141. How do you choose a puppy that will end up with a good temperament?
142. What puzzles you about people who keep large birds in their homes?
143. Have a look at pet carriers for all occasions and write what you discover.
144. Why might pet day care be among the best business opportunities out there, and how do you start one?
145. What do you do when your house has fleas?
146. Should you give your pet medications for fleas and parasites?
147. Write *How to Sneak Your Pet into a Hotel*.
148. What are the simplest steps to teaching Fido to fetch?
149. What should pet owners know if their pet has to travel by air or rail?
150. Talk about pets and car safety.
151. Feeling ambitious? Start a Twitter account or a blog at Blogger.com and write about pets so you can establish yourself as an expert.

## Chapter 6

### Foodies

#### **Jump out of your niche—smart writers diversify**

Food, glorious food. Hot pasta and purees. Here's yet another incredibly wide-open market place for writers, but it takes practice to understand the world of foodies. The writing opportunities are endless—recipes, food lore, food origins, famous foodies, interviews, photo essays, gardening, food prep and preservation, finding or growing quality ingredients, healthy food, decadent food. You can't run out of ideas, and both web and print markets abound.

But, you say, you're not a food writer? I'm betting you have experience with food; you eat, don't you? Do you cook? Buy food? If you said yes to one of these, then you may be a food writer. It's a great idea to step outside your niche every once in a while. Your writing will sound fresher; your mind can clear itself of cobwebs, and you might find a whole new set of markets.

Maybe you've labeled yourself a pet writer. Ok, you sell some work and might even get an ebook published. But times are tough, and freelance income can be iffy. So, today you decide to write a piece on gourmet food treats for pets. Hey! That leads you to write about treats people and pets can share. Well, now you can pitch a people-oriented food publication and make the sale. Then recast the writing a bit, pitch a green living magazine, and make another sale. Where's the downside?

Yes, a working writer benefits by creating and maintaining a personal brand and a definite persona, but variety is the spice of any career. Build a portfolio and clip file that demonstrate expertise and controlled versatility. Create a platform that demonstrates your connection to a genre of readers. Get your name out there, and make sure your social media presence is consistent. But be ready, willing, and able to kindle a new editor's interest in your work.

## **Moving on to the foodie prompts:**

1. How do you cook healthy with pasta and make it taste incredible?
2. What's a puree, how do you get one, and how do you use it?
3. Name and describe a dozen miracle foods to eat every day.
4. Write thoroughly about eight foods healthy humans never want to eat.
5. Consider home-made pet food or home-made baby food.
6. Write your take on meatless eating.
7. Why do we have to include some meat in our nutritional plan?
8. What's the best food you ever, ever ate and why was it best?
9. What was the worst food you ever ate and why?
10. Write about preparing, cooking, and eating liver. Maybe write about why no one in their right mind would do that.
11. List—seven easiest lunches in the world
12. Write all about legumes. What? Don't know what a legume is? Get out there and read!
13. Write the story of grocery shopping miracles.
14. Compose wine tips for noobs. (newbies, people who know nothing about wine)
15. What are the best food businesses for entrepreneurs?
16. Pick a season and talk all about natural foods of that season.
17. Find out why today's tomatoes and watermelons are more likely to be pink, not red, and too firm instead of yielding and succulent.
18. Stalking the wild asparagus has been done, but write about eating wild—foraging and you.
19. Write about cooking vacations, food vacations, or diet vacations.
20. What do you know about growing food in your yard?
21. List—a dozen best spices to have in any kitchen
22. Write about how to use, store, buy, and combine spices and seasonings.
23. Figure out how to eliminate sodium from your diet, or argue that new medical thought says we don't get enough iodine, and iodine comes from salt.
24. Why will dieting never work?
25. Invent a diet that works.

26. Do a quiz about which beverages are healthy and which are not.
27. Write about the good and bad sides of dietary fat. Why isn't it the monster some would have you believe it is?
28. How can we be proactive and avoid getting type 2 diabetes?
29. Where did cookies come from? (probably not from elves...)
30. Write the history of a favorite food—maybe pizza?
31. Free write—your relationship with food
32. What do you do with a food processor? Why do you need one? What kinds are best?
33. What are the best techniques for success with frying foods?
34. What ever happened to boiling, poaching, simmering, and steaming?
35. Self-preservation. Can modern women put up foods for later use? How? What?
36. List—unique food storage solution
37. Chocolate can be good food, but how do you make it healthy?
38. Survey the dessert cart for at-home cooks.
39. Soup can be a book in its own right. So write it.
40. What can you tell us about growing and using a salsa garden?
41. Write a sexy piece about growing and using a salad garden.
42. Revisit the herb garden; its time is coming around again. Write about growing and using one.
43. What's up with the safety of America's (or any country's) food supply? Think of all the food recalls in the past year or two and write about what's happening.
44. Create tips for keeping your food clean.
45. How can you get kids to like vegetables, or at least get them to consume some?
46. Look into making cosmetics from your food garden at home. This is FUN!
47. Write a primer on foodie careers. How to choose, where to find, how to get hired
48. Do an advice piece for other writers on writing about food.
49. Pick a holiday and write about your favorite food tie-in.
50. Free write—eating with your eyes
51. Write about how easy it is to overcook food, what a difference proper time and temp make, and where to get the right information.

52. Think high-speed, high-temperature cooking. Restaurants do it. How about a 20-pound turkey in 2.5 hours?
53. Write a delectable piece on summer cocktails, or winter, or any season.
54. What's the best restaurant in (pick a location) and all about why you think so.
55. List—top five restaurants in your city or state.
56. Pick an outstanding restaurant and write their history. Don't be afraid to call the principals and pick their brains.
57. Fish is so misunderstood—make your readers lust for fish.
58. Pick out the hottest trends in dining out.
59. Pick a miracle food—honey, avocado, figs, whatever. Write its whole story. Debunk the myths and reinforce the truth.
60. How do you know when various fruits are ripe?
61. Explore the current truths or theories about food allergies.
62. Gluten-free is all the rage. Write where to shop, what to buy, good recipes, how to spot hidden gluten. Debunk the myths.
63. Is there such a thing as green cooking?
64. Come up with tips on cooking for senior citizens. The tips can be for seniors who cook or for those who cook for seniors.
65. Explore gathering family recipes and preserving them scrapbooking style, or computer style, or whatever. What a legacy!
66. Write all about the humble egg.
67. Think on the rituals of eating and how they bind people together.
68. Can you discourse on eating on the fly without ruining your health?
69. What are the best brain foods? Are they different for babies and adults?
70. Let's talk cooking for your pets.
71. List—top cooking shows on television
72. Ok, which are the best cookbooks you have ever used, and why?
73. Pick a White House or royal chef and research him or her.
74. How do you prepare the food for a great party without wearing yourself out?
75. Describe the preparation and serving of an early people's food—maybe an American Indian tribe?

76. What about progressive dinner parties?
77. How and where do top chefs and local chefs get their training?
78. Write about the best food writer you know of.
79. The pantry—what should you have on hand almost all the time and why?
80. What's your take on making ice cream? Think equipment, flavors, time savers.
81. How do table manners differ from place to place?
82. What the heck is cheese, and why do we eat so much of it?
83. What are the differences between traditional supermarkets and new-fangled whole and natural food markets? How should the consumer approach each?
84. Free write—food and your emotions
85. List—twenty-five things to do with a banana and its peel.
86. Make stone soup sound like a great idea.
87. Tell all about gas vs electric cooking.
88. How can you choose great cookware that will never let you down?
89. Explore your favorite or some little-known kitchen gadgets.
90. Write a step-by-step on how to make outstanding coffee.
91. Why organic food is or is not all it's cracked up to be.
92. Look at the food pyramid or its present equivalent and make it easy to live with.
93. Have fun writing about sustainable food and eating locally.
94. See if you can do a piece about weird and strange foods that aren't just on reality TV.
95. Write all about the culture of modern chili.
96. What are the best places on the Web to get top-drawer food information?
97. Got some can't-miss tips for baking cakes, pies, and cookies?
98. Consider how the U.S. Federal Food Stamp program works or doesn't work.
99. How should schools' food programs change to meet current needs and standards?
100. Tell readers how to read and use nutritional labels on food packages to incorporate lots of variety in their families' diets without committing nutritional suicide.
101. Explore food additives we don't need or want and why they are in what we eat.



102. If you are very enthusiastic about food writing, explore the idea of establishing a Facebook page or Tumblr.com account centered around food writing. What a fun way to discipline yourself into writing each day!

## Chapter 7

### Travel Writing

#### **The desk chair tourist's theme song can often be "Cha Ching!"**

From *The Accidental Tourist* to CondeNast Publications magazines, travel is a perennial and ever-green topic. There are plenty of trade mags that buy travel pieces, too. It's a ripe marketplace out there if you understand how to write for the travel industry.

High-demand travel writing is not about how much you liked a place or how cute the souvenirs were. Think yourself into the reader's shoes and paint a realistic image of the destination or of the travel experience. Tell the truth. Avoid embroidering and glamorizing. Learn how to convey a sense of place and time.

Consider the sights, sounds, smells, and textures, as well as the who, what, where, and when. Don't forget the how, since how-to articles are in high demand. If you'd rather write books, then pour over market listings for guide books, guide book series, tip books, and how-to books. This is where you can truly succeed with a little practice.

It's not too tough to springboard off travel writing to public speaking, travel coaching, and other revenue streams. There are still free perks for professional travel writers, too. Dig in. Take a cool vacation or have a great get-away weekend. Explore day trips in your own region.

Write about your experiences for your own pleasure; just tell it like it was and really explore the sensory input and the way it felt. Then, polish your work and send it out to carefully selected markets. Re-read the marketing tips in Chapter 5.

## **Fasten your seat belt and consider the travel prompts:**

1. Write about why you love to travel at this stage of your life, whatever the stage is.
2. Consider the converse and write about why you hate to travel.
3. What was the best vacation you ever had, and has that area changed at all?
4. Of course, you have to consider the worst vacation you ever had and be sure to write very, very factually and include tons of detail.
5. What's it like to take the family on the road, and how can it be more fun?
6. Let's have some tips for packing your bags.
7. How much money is enough spending money for a trip? How do you determine that? Think budget planning.
8. Free write—lost in America
9. List—ten essentials a girl needs in her carry-on bag.
10. What are the most effective ways to use technology on the road?
11. Have a look at the sunny South and tell readers where the best-kept secrets are.
12. If someone travels abroad, how can they find assistance of all sorts when they need it? What agencies or businesses help travelers in trouble?
13. Write about how germs travel right there with you.
14. Write a guide for choosing souvenirs that don't just waste your time and money.
15. It's a great place to visit, but...
16. Give some tips on choosing spas and luxury resorts. How can travelers check these places out in advance?
17. Write about vacations in the rugged outback. You don't even have to have been there; do some research or find some experts.
18. Welcome to the world of motel horror stories.
19. Plains, trains, and automobiles: How to get where you're going at the best rates
20. Who is your ultimate travel companion, and what makes them that?
21. Are we there yet?
22. Write a humor piece on your experience with maps, directions, and men. (or women)
23. The funniest thing that ever happened to you on the road...

24. Now boarding at gate 31, and where the heck is that? How to keep your sanity in an airport.
25. Consider how the skies have gotten less friendly and why travel by air is nothing like it was in the days of the pampered air passenger.
26. What are some ways to overcome shyness when you land yourself in a strange land?
27. Are there safe ways to hook up with strangers as you travel? What are the pros and cons of bonding with your companions, especially during group travel?
28. Where are your five most exotic vacation spots?
29. When you travel, you make it a rule to always...
30. Title: *My Longest Vacation and Why It Felt Like Forever*
31. Write about mini-mini vacations or fabulous stay-at-home vacations.
32. Do some really incredible tips for business travel.
33. What about women on the move? Are there special tips? Can women travel safely?
34. Where are the best vacation spots for women on their own?
35. What does every solo traveler need to know?
36. Describe awesome trips you've taken right around home and why that's the perfect solution for seniors or families.
37. List—tips for always being comfortable
38. How to travel by cab and not get lost or ripped off
39. Free write—travel and your body functions
40. Ever go on an organized tour? What was it like—the good, the bad, and the ugly?
41. The ugly American—how does our conduct look to Europeans?
42. Why you would never go to Central America, or would you?
43. How does planning your itinerary keep you sane?
44. Where are the places that were once terrific vacation spots but should be avoided now, and for what reasons?
45. Humor—winging it without a clue can trash your trip.
46. Camping is a great idea for frogs, kids, and hobos, but humans belong in luxury hotels.

47. How does a finicky sleeper find ways to sleep on a boat, a plane, or a train?
48. Write about why train travel can be the most incredible trip ever.
49. How can someone get through a twenty-hour airline flight without losing their grip?
50. What choices do we have today for awesome travel on a budget?
51. Profile five types of travelers, seriously or humorously.
52. Everything you need to know about becoming a snowbird.
53. Write for writers about using travel experiences to make money.
54. Create a collection of travel freebies and perks anyone can get.
55. Don't forget about day trips. With good writing, these pieces always sell.
56. What are your favorite cities to visit? I've sold many articles on things you must see in (whatever city).
57. Tell about the best beaches, amusement parks, casinos, spas, or any other attraction. One writer has made a living writing his best beaches list every year. It's all in the descriptions.
58. Lots of places on long-established highways, like Route 66, still have vintage roadside attractions that opened in the 40s and 50s. Find them. Visit them. Write about them. To get you started—Weeki Wachee Springs, FL, on Route 19.
59. How do you stick to your nutritional plan, whatever it is, when you're eating on the go?
60. What would it be like to explore your own city as though you were a tourist?
61. The ins and outs of reliable ground transportation.
62. How can you battle jet lag when you're sleeping across time zones?
63. Budget airfares, the good, the bad, and the scams
64. List the top ten places for a girls-only weekend.
65. Write about popular wedding destinations, marketing opportunities are endless.
66. Even if you have never engaged in high adventure travel, you could write a clever piece about why it just isn't for you.
67. Free write—your last trip out of the U.S. or your home country
68. What do you do about medical challenges while traveling, and how can you prevent many of them?

69. Consider flying with children or children flying on their own.
70. Find out about and describe little-known airport services and how to access them.
71. What is the USO, and why is there one in many major airports?
72. Where are the good Christmas (or holiday) shopping destinations?
73. List—eleven ways to find the secrets of any city
74. Why can small-town destinations be the very best vacation choices?
75. Cover youth hostels, Elder Hostel, Road Scholars, and other uncommon ways to find learn-as-you-travel trips.
76. Investigate and plan a perfect state park vacation, then write about the plan.
77. Traveling with pets (a very hot topic)
78. Historic Route 66—what's the big deal?
79. Do a philosophical piece to support dieting on vacation or blowing the diet because you're on vacation.
80. Free write—how did that get in your suitcase?
81. The pros and cons of taking grandmother's advice: Take half the clothes and twice the money.
82. Do a quiz on group tours and tour travel, thinking of pitfalls, myths, truths, and survival tricks.
83. Consider how to get to know Africa or another exotic place from the perspective of the average traveler, not the world adventurer.
84. How do you find and avoid high-crime or other unsavory areas in a strange city?
85. Explain how many people limit their adventures to armchair travel and how that can be very satisfying. What kind of media or technology is used?
86. Write about finding deals and steals in any location.
87. Describe the conventions of tipping while traveling: Who, how much, and when?
88. Write how to complain effectively about accommodations, transportation, or meals.
89. Traveling through history, can you help your reader plan a vacation around a historical era or event?
90. List—fifteen quirkiest trips or destinations that are hot, hot, hot!

91. Pick an aspect of cruising that the novice would find perplexing and enlighten that reader.
92. Give some travel tips for nature lovers, like what to bring, how to find secret spots, and proper conduct in nature areas.
93. Free write—your favorite childhood vacation
94. Write a comprehensive guide to finding do-nothing vacations. Hint: There's a website that lists private homes to rent short-term. It's not hard to find short, small ship cruises that encourage deck-sitting.
95. Encourage readers to take this year's vacation budget and make their backyard as sexy as it can be.
96. List—top dozen seasonal destinations
97. How can two people, spouses or lovers, share a vacation without wanting to strangle each other?

## Chapter 8

### Inspirational Musings

#### **Selling the softer side**

One of my most interesting and enjoyable revenue streams is the work I do for a relationship blog that has subscribers all over the world. Several years ago, I answered an online ad looking for an experienced writer familiar with blogging, mysticism, women's issues, relationships, and psychic events. I stretched a little and sent an inquiry.

I didn't like their first compensation offer. So we negotiated a slightly better figure, and I agreed to do ninety days at that number, but my price would go up if they liked my work during the three months. They did. It did. And I have been writing for them under a pen name for years. I keep writing for them because I love the company, the audience, and the articles I get to write.

Such writing seldom requires huge amounts of research. Much of it comes from what you've learned as you've traveled through life. It may not be the best choice for a very young writer, unless he feels like he has lived many times.

To do this engagingly, you just gotta have total respect for your readers, and you need a way of writing about issues you may not completely buy into. I'm not advising you to fabricate. I'm saying, an open mind is a prerequisite.

If you're really into poetry or verse and can write sentiment in 100 words or less, the place for you may be somewhere like Blue Mountain Arts greeting card publishers (a very lucrative market for the right writer). But if you simply want to explore the softer side of your muses, sit quietly and consider inspirational writing. It's soothing, and you may do a world of good for your readers.

Let's have a look at some ever-green inspirational ideas:

1. The incredible power of prayer brings about incredible results for some people. Look into this topic and write about prayer's effectiveness or ineffectiveness.
2. How can spring be a time of renewal for us?
3. Write about New Year's changes, not about making resolutions, but about a new year rebirth for your thinking. If you write about resolutions, try ten you should never make.
4. Describe how to claim a quiet, small space in any size home and dedicate it as your own personal prayer, meditation, or daydreaming corner. Furnish it. Decorate it.
5. List—a dozen of the absolute most inspirational films you have ever watched, over and over and over.
6. Write about how we grow through sharing.
7. Discuss your favorite new-age topic from a wildly different spin. Ignore what today's writers have said and tell it your way.
8. Describe what a life coach is and talk about what parts of your life could use one.
9. Write about getting over your ex without becoming bitter or bitchy. What can be learned from such an experience?
10. What are the rewards of gratitude?
11. How do we know when our prayers are answered? Should we always expect a "yes"?
12. Always a heavily read topic — explain your attitude toward past lives.
13. How can you be friends, or at least at peace, with your enemy?
14. List — thirty-five reasons to feel happy today.
15. What do you know about facing adversity?
16. Human relationships are tricky. Describe what kind of work we all must do to preserve and nurture love.
17. It's okay to cry.
18. Tell everything you know about the process of truly creating a new you.
19. Describe how to let go, really let go, of what you don't need in your life.
20. Look into the idea of chakras and do a beginners' guide.
21. Tell readers how to find, recognize, and develop personal wisdom.



22. How can you tell if you have psychic talent?
23. What is holistic medicine, and how can you find a good practitioner?
24. What do you know about miracles ?
25. List—Six of the most incredible inspirational books out there.
26. Do you know any angels? Ever met up with one?
27. How do you get started healing with prayer?
28. What about all this hands-on stuff—massage, Reiki, and so on—is it for real, and how does it help?
29. Write an idiot's guide to meditation.
30. Describe the most basic ideas about Karma. Think about the fact that there are consequences for every action.
31. List—thirteen best CDs or DVDs for guided meditation.
32. How does real and absolute relaxation change your life?
33. How can you pull yourself out of a blue funk and fall in love with yourself?
34. Write about finding the blessings in every challenge.
35. List—Seven ways to spring clean your soul
36. How do you find your true soul mate?
37. What's the difference between a soul mate and a soul match, and how do you hook up with your match?
38. Write about the most inspirational ghost story you ever heard or read.
39. Explore all the benefits of yoga breathing and describe the basic techniques.
40. What are the simplest, most effective, feel-good paths to personal inner growth.
41. Write from your deepest inner self on overcoming fear.
42. Free write—your best life

## **About the Author, Maryan Pelland**

When someone decides to become a writer as a way of earning a living, it is not uncommon to feel insecure and hesitant about taking risks and mapping out a

direction. My great passion is empowering success for those who have the motivation and passion to become working writers. I help my followers to consistently become inspired and confident every time they begin to write, so they can build and grow a satisfying revenue stream.

I have been educated and trained by some of the best writers and editors in the business and have made a robust living through writing books, articles, websites, and marketing materials—I have ghosted six books for celebrities in several fields. These entities have paid me very well for my work over the past four decades: The Chicago Tribune, the (Chicago) Daily Herald, Pioneer Press, Copley Press, the Poynter Institute Publications, Gannett Publications, Californina Psychics, Beach BLVD Magazine, Drury Inns, Cable World, Financial Poise, DailyDac, Sun Newspapers, and many others.

My portfolio includes 700 bylines in major newspapers and magazines. I was an editor at DemystifyingDigital.com and editor-in-chief for two news outlets and four major websites. I was lucky enough to publish my own women's magazine for 25,000 subscribers for three years.

I've written several books that have continued to sell well for up to 20 years, including three for Arcadia Press. My ghost projects include a business how-to book for start-up entrepreneurs; a guide to American wine; a regional history, an archeological breakthrough, a business/personal memoir; a life memoir; an award-winning non-fiction book about handwriting analysis, and a science-fiction novel.

Now semi-retired, I focus my writing on Medium.com and Substack.com, concentrating on stories to make the writing career journey less stressful for burgeoning writers. I do coaching and teaching sessions on request, and I publish a newsletter for writers at [Pen2Profit](#), along with writing courses and ebooks.

When I'm away from my keyboard, I spend time with my six grown kids and my 15 amazing grandkids. I can be found wandering the midwest with my camera,

shooting pictures of interesting abandoned buildings, and I'm an amateur techno-geek.

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