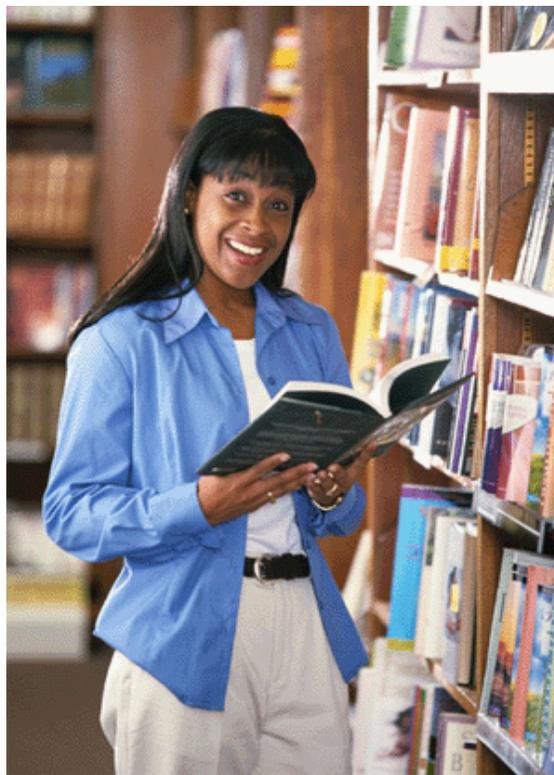


 **FabJob**[®] **GUIDE TO**

BECOME A PUBLISHED WRITER



BY SHEILA SEIFERT

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1. Introduction

1.1 From the Author

“Do I have what it takes to be a writer?” The face of the woman blurs, but her hopeful eyes, waiting, begging permission to believe, are universal.

There are so many things I want to tell her, so many words I wish I could give her from my ink-stained years as a writing teacher and author. Yet, hopefuls can only hear one word, “Yes,” or “No.” They want to know, “Is this my calling? Am I one of the chosen? Am I wasting my time?”

The romantic idea that writers are born and not apprenticed is invalid. No matter the talent, every writer must begin, persevere, and make choices. The ***FabJob Guide to Become a Published Writer*** is an introduction to writing gleaned from the insights of hundreds of working writers, writing teachers, and editors who are pursuing their dreams.



Instead of profiling or interviewing authors, I have compiled their words to portray the common threads of the writing life. This book offers multiple perspectives from diverse genres, cultures, and experiences to demonstrate the real-life patterns for becoming a successful author. From the generosity of authors, editors, and teachers, the essence of the professional writing community is revealed.

I have included few quotations from authors of classics (who wrote for a different audience) and best-selling authors (who can sell books on their names alone). Although some are included, most of these gems of inspiration can be located online, in libraries, and at bookstores. After all, an estimated seven percent of the United States' population (approximately 20 million) writes as a hobby or are employed as writers or editors. If you compare the entire writing workforce against those authors who make the *New York Times'* bestsellers list, you'll notice that best-selling authors make up less than one percent of the entire writing community. The ***FabJob Guide to Become a Published Writer*** is largely written by the other 99 percent who are active in the profession.

This book is a complete writing course. The fundamental elements presented give readers a foothold into the discipline, craft, and business of writing. Readers can study each category and work through each exercise. The book is arranged as a reference book with sections, chapters, and categories. As an e-book, readers can do a quick “find” search that takes the place of the traditional index to quickly look up topics such as “depth,” “voice,” or “language” and receive immediate access to first-hand experiences with the desired concept. I have compiled this book for people who are serious about moving forward in the craft.

Now when people ask me if they have what it takes, I can smile and ignore the questions racing through my head: “Are they confusing the term ‘being a writer’ with ‘getting published?’ Do they have the determination to improve in the craft and find their voice? How will they handle the solitude and discouragement that are a part of the writing life?” I cannot promise stardom or multi-million dollar deals, but I can look into hopeful eyes and smile. Do you have what it takes to be a published writer?

Yes. Now, the rest is up to you.

1.2 On Being A Writer

Great American Authors

<http://volweb.utk.edu/TeachLnk/amerauth.htm>

American Authors on the Web

<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/AmeLit.html>

Great Writers

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~pwessel/writers.html>

What does it mean to be a writer in today’s culture? How do writers improve in the craft? Where should a beginning writer start?

The journey starts here. This book is a basic, hands-on guide to writing poetry, fiction, and other genres. It does not promise riches or condemn readers to poverty. Instead, it offers a glimpse into the creativity, discipline, craft, and business of writing through the eyes of today’s culture.

What does it mean to be a writer? To some, writing means “art for the sake of art,” and to others it means making money regardless of the content. People who hold these philosophical views are on the opposite ends of the spectrum. Fortunately, most authors are somewhere in between.

Decades ago, I believed that if I sold a story or poem I would be a writer. When I eventually accomplished my goal, I realized that being published did not make me more or less of a writer. So, I wrote harder to get the money I needed to quit my day job. I succeeded. Still, I could not grasp the satisfaction I craved. Not publishing my first book or being respected by editors helped. Only after attaining all of these accomplishments did I realize that writing is not about reaching an end. Writing is about **perceiving the world** and **translating it** into the written word.

Within the course of writing, people define themselves as writers. This is not a new revelation. In 1890, Oscar Wilde penned, “I write because it gives me the greatest possible artistic pleasure to write.” Being a writer is what occurs when people are writing.

What causes people to become writers? Everyone has a different answer. Some believe that if the burden to write is so great and a person cannot do anything else, then he or she should become a writer. Others warn hopefuls away from developing the depth of internal solitude that is required to be successful. Perhaps they understand the price, the sacrifices that must be made, in order for the written word to be pursued. For even when the struggle to write well is won and words are formed into a manuscript, an author’s glory can only be achieved through a **vulnerability** that has the potential to end in humiliation. Manuscripts are offered up on the public opinion altar where readers, critics, enemies, and friends make judgments not only on the work but also about the author.

Regardless, many obey their inner drive. Some of these professionals have recorded their perceptions about what it means to be a writer. The following paragraphs offer insight into the writing process — the internal journey, life of a solitary figure, and outward awareness.

1.2.1 An Internal Journey

Diana Rowe Martinez, *fiction and nonfiction writer*:

Initially, I wrote total crap. When I matured, I wrote drivel. As I became more experienced, I wrote crappy drivel. That’s when I realized that I truly knew absolutely nothing, and how could I possibly write about anything when I didn’t know anything? After all, who wanted to read anything an Iowa farm girl wrote? It took time for me to learn that **creativity is an attitude**. Before I could be creative, I had to forget who I was, where I came from, and what I knew or thought I didn’t know. To be a writer, I had to stop limiting my creativity and myself.

Laverne Bardy Pollak, *nonfiction writer*:

Writing is cheaper than therapy. If I couldn't write, I have no doubt that I would explode. It is a **cathartic tool** that allows me to reach into my soul and organize my thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Often, I am not even in touch with my feelings until I begin to write and can see the words flowing before me onto my screen. In conversation, I am often unable to find the words I'm searching for, but writing grants me the luxury of pausing and searching for just the right ones.

John Hildebidle, *nonfiction and fiction writer*:

"Does it feel good when you write?" Actually, no — but I feel uncomfortable when I am not writing. That **emotional itch** is what makes a writer distinct from someone who dabbles in writing. I write for the relief of it.

1.2.2 The Solitary Figure

Julia Ross, *fiction writer*:

Being a writer means being hopelessly in love with language. Writing fiction also means being enthralled by stories — as in "thrall," meaning slave. It's lonely. You face the fear of failure on a daily basis. There's no map, nothing to rely on but some mysterious inner assets you hope to tap, but never quite control. It's also immensely **rewarding** and **fulfilling**. A retired Coast Guard officer thanked me for giving him an escape when his daughter lay in the hospital. A 16-year-old girl wrote: "I know it's not really real, but your novel helped me believe in love for just a few moments." Not much means more than that.

Jimmy Dean Smith, *poet and fiction writer*:

Writers must enjoy loneliness, not because they are unsociable, but because they can think of no one so clever, funny, or profound as themselves. When they are alone, writers do not suffer as some people do. Instead, they **amuse** and **startle** themselves and prepare for amusing and startling the public.

Tom Kappel, *fiction and nonfiction writer*:

I have found that writing is a voyage of discovery that should include the **body, soul, and spirit**. The body — the substance of the human being — is reflected in the use of smell, taste, sound, sight, and touch. The soul — the mental and emotional nature — is displayed in characterization, motivation, physiology, dialogue, plot, and movement. The spirit, the life principle, is presented as theme, character growth, moment of truth and understanding, and reader reward.

Heather Stimmler-Hall, *editor and nonfiction writer*:

Being a writer means **being alone**. A lot. I may go to conferences or chat with editors or interview for articles, but the productive writer's life is essentially a solitary one. Perhaps that's why many choose this career path, but I'm sure just as many leave because of it.

1.2.3 An Outward Awareness

Devorah Stone, *fiction and nonfiction writer*:

In my dream, I tried to enter a private club where everyone was dressed in evening gowns.

"Why should we let you in?" the owner asked.

"I'm a published freelance writer," I replied. The owner and everyone in the club laughed.

Writers aren't true insiders. We are on the **outside looking in**, observing everyone else, taking notes, and then telling the world how we see it.

Brad Mehlenbacher, Ph.D., *fiction and nonfiction writer*:

Writing is **engineering**, not birth. Writing is **revising**. All the other things that take place upfront are just clumsy scribbling before the project officially begins.

Arthur Saltzman, *nonfiction writer*:

First, writing is a **craft** more than it is a body of knowledge to be mastered and applied. The more you write, and the better the writing you immerse yourself in and sharpen your capacities against, the better your chances of producing something worthwhile. Second, writing is **self-indulgent**. Society needs you to raise your kids and help the poor more than it needs your stories and poems. This is not to say that you should stop writing; rather, write with an awakened commitment, with an awareness of the cost. Third, remember Samuel Beckett: "Fail again, fail better."

Katherine Rone, *editor and nonfiction writer*:

Writing is nothing more than a tool of communication, so the vital aspect of "being a writer" is answering the question, "What do I want to **communicate**?"

1.2.4 Reflections on Being a Writer

Personal Reflections

1. Whether you are a professional or beginning writer, describe where you see yourself in your journey.
2. Where do you realistically want to be ten years from now?
3. What talent, ability, drive, or other attributes do you have that will help you attain your goal?
4. How do you cope with the loneliness that is a part of the writing life?
5. What rewards do you receive from writing that makes it worth your time?
6. In this introduction, which quotation do you most identify with?
7. What role does writing play in your life?

What Do You Expect?

The value of a book is often derived from expectations. After looking at the Table of Contents and the first section, think about how this guide might help you improve as a writer. List three of your expectations.

Being a Writer

Exercise #1:

Through the use of this e-book, you will create a writer's practice log to find out which area of writing is of most value to you personally and to develop a file that is your own electronic journal filled with fiction, nonfiction, and poetry manuscripts.

To begin, create a folder in your word processing program where you can save the files of manuscripts that you will be writing as the e-book progresses. Then whenever you are asked to complete an assignment, include that assignment in your folder.

Resource for Being a Writer

If you would like to explore the area of being a writer further, try the following resource:

Shoptalk: Learning to Write with Writers, by Donald Murray
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0867092580>

You have reached the end of the free sample of the *FabJob Guide to Become a Published Writer*. To order and download the complete guide go to www.fabjob.com/program/become-published-writer/.