



## The Secrets To Children's and Young Adult Publishing Success

So you have written THE manuscript that you think is just right. Now you want to know the secrets to getting it published. The secrets to publishing success are that it takes a lot of hard work, a lot of persistence and knowledge of the publishing market. Then there needs to be some good luck that the publishing house will love your manuscript and that it fits into their publishing list.

Some essential points towards successful publication include:-

### The Craft

- know the **basics** of writing—correct grammar, punctuation and language is vital
- take writing **classes** and learn how to edit, polish, and craft your story,
- read, read, and dare I say it **read** some more
- write, write, and **write** some more—writing is a craft and requires regular practise.
- know your **audience** and write for it
- do not **PAD** your story
- **show don't tell** (too much dialogue will kill your story and you aren't writing a movie or TV script)
- Give your characters a unique **voice**
- Look at the **websites** of other authors and illustrators that you admire, to find craft guidance.
- Look for curriculum links

### The Format

- write a one page **synopsis** of your manuscript if it is a novel
- prepare a **proposal** before you write the book
- **submit** your manuscript in the appropriate format detailed on the publisher's website which usually includes their response time too

### Submission

- find out what publishers and magazines are looking for through **checking** their websites, submission guidelines and the imprint page of their books
- enter **competitions** listed on the e-zines of the writing organisations including the Writers Centres, Fellowship of Australian Writers FAW, The Society of Women Writers, Partners in Crime, Australian Society of Authors, the Storytellers Guild
- Watch out for publishing **scams**. Consider these warning signs:
  - \* The sponsor or publisher asks for money.
  - \* There is no payment in either cash or publication copies.

\* The offer is a form letter that looks hand generated.

- Join supporting **organisations** the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators SCBWI where members have a support and advisory network.

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Award winning and successfully published SCBWI Australian children's authors and illustrators reveal some of their secrets to publication on the rocky and winding road to publication.

**[Deb Abela \(www.deborahabela.com\)](http://www.deborahabela.com)**

Join a writing group. If there isn't one in your area think of starting one up or asking your local writers' centre or library.

Listen to other authors talk about their craft. There are loads of sites and videos online but always keep an eye out for local author events or the larger writing festivals if you can get there.

**[Christopher Cheng \(www.chrischeng.com\)](http://www.chrischeng.com)**

Have fun with your writing. Once you start the writing journey you need to treat it as a business but when you are starting out – make sure that whatever you do with the writing is FUN! Once on the journey make sure you are persistent and chase up those contacts, rework your manuscript – and then rework it again as once is never enough. Remember that what is IN today will probably, most definitely, be so last year when your manuscript is ready to send to the publishers. So be original. That's what publishers are always looking for – a new voice, a new idea!!

**[Hazel Edwards \(www.hazeledwards.com\)](http://www.hazeledwards.com)**

Read twice, once as a reader and next as a writer to observe the technicalities of characterisation, humour, etc. How does that writer get their ideas across? See the great article [\*Hints for Young \(and not-so-young\) Writers on Getting Published\*](#) that is available at the SCBWI website.

**[Susanne Gervay \(www.sgervay.com\)](http://www.sgervay.com)**

Publication depends on a number of key items.

The first is the willingness to work on your craft to ensure that your piece is as good as it can be. This means having an open mind, so that you can accept critiques and take from those comments what you believe in. Without the courage to look at your writing honestly, it is unlikely you will ever be published. It means having a critique group, going to workshops, assessing your manuscript, looking for opportunities where you can develop your writing, joining groups and study writing through university and writing courses. The

added benefit is that once you begin the submission process, you have a support group for disappointments and successes.

When beginning the journey of submission of your manuscript to a publisher, it makes it easier if you have credentials, such as publication in magazines and newspapers, or winning competitions.

Once your work is good enough, make sure you send it to the right publisher. Research the publishers. Find out what is happening in the marketplace. How do you do this? Join key organisations such as SCBWI and the Writers Centres, and network at Writers Festivals.

### **[Frané Lessac](http://www.franelessac.com) ([www.franelessac.com](http://www.franelessac.com))**

Publishing Recipe

Ingredients: write what you know, love, and feel passionate about.

Stir in a pinch of patience, a dash of purpose and a splash of luck.

Combine with attendance at workshops, conferences, and festivals.

Mix with published authors and illustrators.

Serve to publishers whose lists will find your tasty creation appealing.

### **[Prue Mason](mailto:pruemason@bigpond.com) ([pruemason@bigpond.com](mailto:pruemason@bigpond.com))**

... because publishers are weary of the same-old, ms arriving on their desk there has to be something about your writing that makes them sit up and read your work. This X-factor is a combination of a well crafted story that is informed by your own unique and special understandings and experiences in life.

Writers are, after all, the story tellers of our world and readers read our stories because they want to be entertained, to be taken out of their own worlds and to understand their own lives a little better through reading someone else's story and no matter what genre the story still needs to be grounded in a reality the reader can understand.

### **[Jeni Mawter](http://www.jenimawter.com) ([www.jenimawter.com](http://www.jenimawter.com))**

'I view myself as a 12<sup>th</sup> year apprentice. Come to think of it, I'm still earning an apprentice's wage.' Writing is a business so treat it as such. Have a workspace; get business cards; have realistic expectations a professional attitude and approach to your manuscript; network, network, network; and very importantly learn to deal with the question 'When are you going to get a real job?' Also, accept rejection as part of an author's life.

- Research current trends, market needs, bookshops and libraries
- Establish a peer support with writer's groups, grow a tough skin so that bad or no reviews just bounce off.
- Ethics and censorship are part of youth writing

- Marketing and Self –Promotion and get your brand out there through your website, blog and being proactive.

**[Felicity Pulman \(www.felicitypulman.com.au\)](http://www.felicitypulman.com.au)**

Two words spring to mind if you want to be a published author: resilience and persistence. Keep writing, keep learning.

Try different genres such as poetry, fantasy, non-fiction. If you're just starting out, how do you know what you'll love to write and be good at? Having said that, it's a good idea to write the sorts of things you like to read as you'll already have absorbed some of the conventions of that genre.

It's also a good idea, if you're just starting out, to maybe target a series to write for, one to which different authors contribute. My first break came when I wrote a teen romance for the Dolly fiction label. It's easier for a publisher to market your novel as part of a series than for them to promote you as a new writer. Girlfriend fiction for teens, and Aussie Bites for primary age, are examples. A published novel gives you gravitas!

Subscribe to newsletters such as Buzz Words and Pass It On. Join organisations and look out for writing opportunities.

*Written and compiled by Christopher Cheng*

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*with lots of input suggestions and comments from Deb, Hazel, Susanne, Frané, Jeni, Prue and Felicity.*

*Christopher is speaking at the Kids and Young Adult Literature Festival, NSW Writers Centre 4<sup>th</sup> July*

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