

Writing for Focus on the Family
Presenter: Kate Jameson
Clubhouse Jr. Assistant Editor

1. What is Focus on the Family?
 - a. Nonprofit Christian organization based out of Colorado Springs
 - b. www.focusonthefamily.com
 - c. Provides resources about marriage, parenting, faith and more to a conservative Christian audience
 - d. Advocates for various issues
 - e. Multi-faceted outreach
 - i. Radio broadcasts (Daily broadcast, Adventures in Odyssey)
 - ii. Various websites (Plugged In, Boundless)
 - iii. Publications
 - f. Main goal is to serve families in Christ
2. Publishing Opportunities
 - a. Focus has a range of publications for all ages
 - i. *Clubhouse Jr.* magazine
 - ii. *Clubhouse* magazine
 - iii. *Brio* magazine
 - iv. *Focus on the Family* magazine
 - v. Boundless blog
 - vi. Books
 - b. Magazines afford the best chance of getting published.
3. *Focus on the Family* magazine
 - a. 48 page bimonthly magazine for parents
 - b. Guidelines attached
 - c. Special issues are published for empty nesters, grandparents, parents of special needs kids, and foster/adoptive parents
 - d. Works a lot on assignment
 - e. Hacks & Facts content
 - i. Best way to break in to Focus mag
 - ii. Once they trust you, they're more likely to give you an assignment
 - f. Address submissions to: Submissions Editor
4. *Brio* magazine
 - a. 76 page bimonthly magazine for teen girls
 - b. Guidelines attached
 - i. Only 1 fiction piece per issue
 - c. Address submissions to: Submissions Editor
 - d. Most important thing: tone. Aim for that of an older sister or trusted older friend.
5. *Clubhouse* magazine
 - a. 32 page monthly magazine for kids ages 8-12
 - b. Guidelines attached
 - c. Unique story needs
 - i. Choose Your Own Adventure

- ii. Quizzes
 - iii. Kid Features
 - d. Address submissions to: Rachel Pfeiffer, Assistant Editor
- 6. *Clubhouse Jr.* magazine
 - a. 32 page monthly magazine for kids ages 3-7
 - b. Guidelines attached
 - c. Unique story needs
 - i. Rebus
 - ii. Choose Your Own Adventure
 - iii. Kid Features
 - d. Address submissions to: Kate Jameson, Assistant Editor
- 7. Increasing your odds with Focus
 - a. All submissions, no matter how good or bad, are viewed through the context of the magazine. That's the real deciding factor
 - b. Things to do:
 - i. Research
 - ii. Edit and format manuscript
 - iii. Make personal connections
 - iv. Personalize submission
 - v. Adapt piece
 - vi. Include a clear and concise cover letter
- 8. Research
 - a. RESEARCH. IS. KEY.
 - b. If nothing else applies to each publication at Focus (or anywhere, really), it's research
 - c. When you have the research, you the best shot possible.
 - d. What do you research?
 - i. Audience
 - ii. Style and voice
 - iii. Submissions guidelines
 - e. Where do you find those things?
 - i. Websites
 - ii. Submissions guidelines
 - iii. Samples
 - f. Include everything asked for by publication
 - i. For example, Club and Jr. ask for a self-addressed, stamped envelope
- 9. Manuscripts
 - a. Edit for grammar, punctuation, and story consistency
 - b. Follow standard formatting
 - i. Avoid bold, italicized, underlined and capitalized text unless necessary
 - ii. Avoid unusual punctuation
 - c. Don't send the same story more than once
 - d. Send only what the publication asks for

- i. Keep submissions separate, even different publications within the same ministry or business

10. Personal Connection

- a. Writing is, sadly, not a solitary occupation
- b. Networking is becoming a big deal, vital in some situations
- c. At Club and Jr, submissions go through rounds
- d. Doesn't have to be someone you know
 - i. Displaying familiarity is just as important
- e. Show your connection with staff, either from a writing conference, other meeting or a mutual connection
- f. Show your familiarity with the publication
 - i. An impact the publication (or company) has had on you
 - ii. An experience you had through the publication or involving it
 - iii. Showing familiarity with publication or company

11. Personalized and adapted

- a. Address to specific person, unless instructed otherwise
 - i. Check the guidelines and publication
- b. Adjust story to fit tone and audience
 - i. Having a child character doesn't make it a children's story
- c. Takes time, but raises opinion of editors
- d. Be sensitive to audience and only address appropriate topics
- e. This is where research and connections start to come together

12. Cover Letters

- a. Why do you need a cover letter?
 - i. 20 submissions a month at least
 - ii. Editors often only have seconds to recognize the story
 - iii. Your first impression on the editor, so spend lots of time on it
- b. Should include:
 - i. Personalized greeting
 - ii. Familiarity with contact or publication
 - iii. Full summary
 - iv. Any publishing credentials or related experience
 - 1. If you have lots of publishing credentials, only include the relevant ones
 - 2. Experience with audience or topic is just as important
- c. Shouldn't include:
 - i. Biography
 - ii. Resume
 - iii. Copies of previously published work
 - iv. Should fit on one page
- d. Should be typed
- e. Don't need to be long, 3 paragraphs are plenty
- f. Be concise. Cover letters introduce your work, don't need to be long
- g. Include genre, word count and contact information
- h. Let your work speak for itself: we don't need excuses or endorsements

13. Questions

- a. One final thing to know. The journey doesn't end when your piece gets published. You'll likely be asked to rewrite the piece and then we'll edit it. This doesn't reflect on your skills as a writer.