

## **How to Get Published--Session 3** By Tim Shoemaker

### **Ten Topics that are fairly standard in magazines....**

*Money, Physical Fitness, Mental Health, How-to Features, Lifestyles (how others live), Profiles (famous or unusual people), Activities, Self-Help, Amusement, and Education*

Dr. Dennis Hensley, *How to Write What You Love*

### **STRUCTURING ARTICLES. . . TIPS, TYPES, & POINTERS**

#### **1. PRAYER**

#### **2. BOOKEND your article with an ANECDOTE . . .**

-Leave a QUESTION in the reader's mind as to how the SITUATION WORKED OUT.

-Then, at the end, go back to the story and finish it to drive home your point.

#### **3. If using SCRIPTURE . . .**

-Translation noted . . . (capital NIV after the verse, etc.)

#### **4. Avoid Christian CLICHÉS & "CHRISTIANESE" phrases or words**

#### **5. WRITE TIGHT. . . avoid wordiness, big words, & long sentences.**

#### **6. The "HOCUS-POCUS" is in the FOCUS . . .**

-The real "magic" in an article is often in your ability to *focus the entire article down to one compelling sentence* . . . & keep it there.

#### **7. MAGNETIC TITLE . . . AND LEAD PARAGRAPH . . . you've got 10 seconds, max.**

**4 TYPES of LEADS** that are often **MAGNETIC**.

A. An INTRIGUING STORY or anecdote to make a point.

B. A BOLD or SHOCKING STATEMENT.

C. NAME DROPPING.

D. Getting the READER DIRECTLY INVOLVED.

#### **8. WORTHY CONTENT . . . write to *BENEFIT the READER* in some way**

#### **9. Avoid getting overly preachy . . .**

#### **10. Realize REWRITING will likely CONSUME MORE TIME than WRITING WILL**

### **ONE GENERAL FORMULA FOR STRUCTURING ARTICLES**

"The TRAIN" -Picture and old fashioned TRAIN.

-"Cow-catcher" That's your HOOK. Your OPENER. The TITLE and LEAD.

-The ENGINE is your FOCUS STATEMENT. What this article is really about.

-The CARS are the points you make, but not too many, the body of the article.

-The CABOOSE is your strong conclusion.

### **TYPES of ARTICLES**

**DEVOTIONALS** 7 essential elements

1. Make sure YOUR IDEA is NEW and FRESH--from TITLE to "TAKE-AWAY"
2. Boil it down to ONE IDEA.
3. Avoid getting overly preachy.
4. Have a "Show-Don't-Tell" approach, especially with anecdotes
5. Avoid Christian clichés and "Christianese"
6. Have a clear, realistic TAKE-AWAY . . . APPLICATION
7. As always, follow the publisher's guidelines as to what to include, length, etc.

**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE STORIES** 6 essential elements

1. Have a CLEAR THEME/story line
2. Reader IDENTIFICATION . . . is there SOMETHING HERE READERS NEED?
3. Honesty . . . be real . . . don't make self look HOLIER THAN YOU ARE . . .
4. Strong take-away . . . readers need to see how YOUR story MATTERS to THEM.
5. SATISFACTORY ENDING . . . something FITTING bringing resolution or hope
6. Use FICTION TECHNIQUES to strengthen your writing . . .  
-Show Don't Tell -Good use of CONFLICT, CRISIS, CHANGE, dialogue, etc.  
-Don't try to write your PERSONAL EXPERIENCE too soon . . .  
-wait for perspective . . . which generally takes time

**INSPIRATIONAL ARTICLES** 5 essential elements

1. Need a SHARP FOCUS, not "shotgun" approach.
2. CLEAR PICTURE of the READER, what do they need to know about this topic?
3. AVOID TANGENTS . . . OUTLINE, PLAN or STRUCTURE your article up front.
4. INSPIRE . . . help them WANT to TAKE the HIGHER ROAD
5. Use TRUE short STORIES (anecdotes) and ILLUSTRATIONS

**SELF-HELP ARTICLES, MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE ARTICLES** 5 essentials

These are often "how-to" type articles for improving some area of life . . .  
*-IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS -GETTING ORGANIZED*

If you haven't LIVED IT or seen it lived out by others . . .  
don't try to TEACH OTHERS HOW TO DO IT RIGHT.

A REAL LIFE situation is more powerful than just a "how-to" article on it's own.

1. SHARP FOCUS is needed.  
*-How can you help the reader IMPROVE HIS LIFE or SOLVE a PROBLEM?*
2. EXPAND your KNOWLEDGE.  
*-Don't just go by YOUR EXPERIENCE . . . interview others.*
3. SHOW SOME EMPATHY for your readers . . . understand their MINDSET.
4. IDENTIFY WITH READER . . . "I've been there" or "I'm familiar with this"
5. Give PRACTICAL, truly WORKABLE SOLUTIONS

**AND A WORD OF CAUTION** . . . Wait for PERSPECTIVE . . . Wait for CREDIBILITY

**BIBLICAL TEACHING ARTICLE**

- Really important to be sure your article is THEOLOGICALLY IN TUNE with the publication
- Avoid simplistic answers . . . be practical and realistic.

### FICTION . . . SHORT STORIES

-Strong opener. Make it believable. Watch POV, SDT, DIALOGUE, ETC.

-SHOULD HAVE at least these 4 ELEMENTS of fiction . . .

1. -Character- realistic, likeable, and they want something
2. -Conflict- there must be some kind of struggle going on, keeping him from goal  
*man vs. MAN, man vs. NATURE, man vs. HIMSELF, man vs. SUPERNATURAL*
3. -Crisis- something goes terribly wrong . . . bad to worse
4. -Change- conflict is resolved, the goal is attained or not.  
*-some change takes place with the character . . . a lesson is learned*

### TESTIMONIES 7 essential elements

We can get a pretty good example of this through the life of Paul

1. -Begin at the beginning- how it all started *Acts 26:9-11-Paul persecutes the church*  
*-Careful not to glamorize past sin -Show the pain & regret of sin*
2. -Describe your encounter with Jesus *Acts 26:12-15- Damascus Road encounter*
3. -Clearly show the struggle *Acts 26:16-18- God confronts & gives Paul a tough mission*
4. -Show the turning point *Acts 26:19-20- His life radically changed--a new agenda*
5. -Don't gloss over your struggles *2 Corinthians 4:8,9,11 "hard pressed on every side . . ."*
6. -Avoid "I've totally arrived now" ending. *Rom. 7:15 -Paul still messes up . . . Phil. 3:12-14*
7. -Leave the reader with hope. *Romans 8:1-2 -No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus*

### LIST ARTICLES

-Among the easiest to sell because READERS LOVE THEM and editors know it.

-The title promises specifics . . . and OBVIOUS BENEFITS

*Twelve Ways to Drastically Improve Your Gas Mileage*

-They are easy to ORGANIZE and WRITE . . . and TOPICS ARE UNLIMITED.

*Six Safety Tips for Trick-or-Treating After Dark*

*Five Ways to Know if Your Teenager is Telling You the Truth*

*Eight Ways to Overcome Your Fear of Speaking in Public*

*Seven Tips for Giving Your Wife the Perfect Kiss*

-Brief paragraph of introduction, SETTING THINGS UP

-Then your LIST

-Sometimes a conclusion

### TRAVEL ARTICLES

An area of interest to SO many people . . . which makes editors open to them.

*When traveling, grab brochures, check places out, journal your feelings, and take pictures.*

### OPINION PIECES / EDITORIAL

-Letters to an editor . . . we can hit an issue that is out there NOW

-One word of CAUTION . . . don't give Christians a BAD NAME.

*-Be respectful, polite, logical . . . not abrasive, combative, or condescending.*

### INTERVIEWS & PROFILES

-People doing INTERESTING or UNUSUAL things or jobs.

-Ordinary people MAKING a DIFFERENCE in the world.

-When interviewing these people . . .

-Similar to doing a BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH on someone . . .

*-Focus on a SMALL ASPECT of their life*

*-Maybe a PIVOTAL EXPERIENCE that changed them or their direction in life*

***-Maybe it's about somebody in HISTORY . . . someone gone.***

*-If the person is FAMOUS . . . look for some OBSCURE ACHIEVEMENT*

*-If the person is UNKNOWN . . . show how this person had an impact on HISTORY*

**WHEN AN ARTICLE or SHORT STORY is ACCEPTED . . .**

**-RESEND it to OTHER MARKETS, other magazines AFTER it has been printed to maximize your benefit from it.**

**BASIC RULES for RESENDING a REJECTED PIECE back to the SAME PUBLISHER**

*-To same editor if it has been REWRITTEN & they're open to it*

*-To the same editor/publisher if SEVERAL YEARS have PASSED*

*-To the same publisher if a NEW EDITOR has taken over.*

### **FORMATTING THE ARTICLE**

**Page 1** (don't print a page number on page 1)

**1-1.5" MARGINS AROUND BORDERS** of page.

**-12 POINT FONT-** Courier or Times New Roman

**NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE, WEBSITE,**

upper LEFT corner, flush left, single-spaced.

**RIGHTS** (like First Rights), upper right corner.

**WORD COUNT** (rounded off is okay), just below RIGHTS.

**TITLE-**About 1/3 way down, centered, all caps OK, 12 pt. font.

**YOUR NAME-** Drop 2 lines, by Tim Shoemaker, centered

**TEXT-** Drop 4 lines, indent .5 for paragraphs, double-spaced.

No extra space between paragraphs, just double-space.

**Page 2** (and beyond)

**HEADER-** last name/article title or partial title.

Shoemaker/Renewing the Wows

**PAGE NUMBER-** upper right corner of header.

**Last Page**

**INDICATE THE END-** with "THE END" centered 4 lines below text

Note: If sending by mail, don't staple. Leave loose or paperclip the pages.

### **Query Letters**

If you have a book, article, or something you want to present to a publisher or an agent and you're looking to see if they're interested . . . you send a query letter.

**You DON'T SEND THEM YOUR MANUSCRIPT.**

**You ASK IF THEY'RE INTERESTED in SEEING IT.**

**A QUERY is like a MINI-PROPOSAL and it's JOB IS TO . . .**

*-HOOK the attention of the editor or agent*

*-DESCRIBE your project*

*-Tell the agent or editor WHO YOU ARE*

*-Get the agent or editor to ASK FOR MORE*

**A QUERY, LIKE A PROPOSAL, NEEDS to be your BEST WRITING . . .**

**10 KEYS to a SUCCESSFUL QUERY LETTER**

**1. Know who you're sending to . . .and the type of books they handle . . .**

**2. Follow the guidelines on their website . . .**

**3. Ideally one page or less . . .**

*-Format it like a business letter . . .*

**4. Address it to a specific person—not generic if possible . . .**

**5. Start with a HOOK—a variation of your ELEVATOR PITCH . . .**

*What if three friends witness a violent crime and fear their lives will be in danger if they tell anyone what they saw? What if an innocent man will die if they don't?*

**6. Help them understand what you're OFFERING . . .**

*Code of Silence is a 85,000 word contemporary suspense for middle grade readers that both guys and girls will enjoy.*

**7. Give a MINI-SYNOPSIS—a better picture of what it is all about . . .**

*In Code of Silence, Cooper and his two friends witness a violent robbery and fear their lives will be at risk if they talk. They form a pact, a code of silence, unaware of how dishonest they'll have to be to keep it.*

*The lies and dishonesty mounts up, threatening to destroy their friendship. Cooper is cornered into choosing between sticking to the code or risking his own life and telling the truth. Naturally, Cooper makes the right choice in the end.*

**8. Give them a HANDLE—something to hold onto . . .**

*-Help them see if this is the type of book they'd be interested in.*

*-Possibly the THEME or how it fits a market.*

*In Code of Silence, readers will see how easily dishonesty can be rationalized and how devastating it can really be. We're pitting two widely accepted maxims against each other. This is "honesty is the best policy" versus "silence is golden". Readers will learn right along with Cooper that honesty truly is the best policy, and living that way can save us from a lot of guilt and pain.*

**9. Your CREDENTIALS . . . why you're the perfect one to write about this . . .**

**10. CLOSING the Query Letter . . . with an offer to send more.**

*May I send the proposal and sample chapters or complete manuscript?*

**AVOID these in your QUERY LETTER . . .**

*-“GOD TOLD ME TO SEND THIS TO YOU”*

*-“All my friends love it, and so does my wife.”*

*-Predicting your book's climb to the bestseller list.*

*-Conveying a sense of DESPERATION . . .*

*-Putting yourself down . . .*

*-Something too “out of the box” in an effort to stand out . . .*

**IF SENDING VIA E-MAIL . . .**

*-SUBJECT LINE: QUERY from TIM SHOEMAKER*

**IF SENDING VIA MAIL . . .**

**ENVELOPE:** Business standard size . . . #10

**FRONT of ENVELOPE:**

- Your name & return address
- Publisher name and address—specifically to a name
- Proper Postage

**PAPER:** Nice, white . . . nothing fancy or cute

**FONT:** Standard business-type font (Times New Roman, Courier)

**SASE:** Self-addressed, stamped envelope fully addressed to you with proper postage, folded in thirds with stamp showing . . . so they can reply . . .

**STANDARD MAIL or PRIORITY is OK . . . not registered or insured.**

**UPS Ground or FedEx Ground is fine . . . no signature . . . but you can track it.**

**THE BOOK PROPOSAL**

**MAIN COMPONENTS.**

1. Cover Letter
2. Premise Statement or a one or two-page “sell sheet”
3. Author Information
4. Synopsis (1-3 page) (chapter by chapter—non-fiction)
5. Audience/Market
6. Competitive Titles
7. Marketing Strategies/Sales plan
8. Sample Chapters

***Always check the SUBMISSION GUIDELINES for EACH publisher on their website. Don't send more or less than they ask for.***

**COVER LETTER**

**VERY SIMILAR to your QUERY LETTER . . .**

***-Thank them for the invitation to send a proposal.***

***-Remind them of the story in the most compelling way.***

***-Tell them what is enclosed (attached)***

*Enclosed (Attached) you'll find the complete proposal along with sample chapters.*

***-AT THE END OF THE LETTER, ask for the next step . . .***

*Code of Silence is complete and I would love to put the full manuscript in your hands.*

**FORMAT -Business letter.**

**LENGTH -One page maximum . . . less is more.**

### **One or TWO-PAGE SELL SHEET**

**-Short overview summarizing our novel . . .**

#### **-Page 1**

**-Attention-getting phrase . . . big and bold at the top**

*Cooper and his friends must decide between "honesty is the best policy" versus "silence is golden"... will they make the right choice?*

**-Short summary of the book . . .**

**-Possibly a picture and some key bio points . . .**

#### **-Page 2**

**-A bit more formal version of the above . . .**

*-Include book title, word count, how book differs from others, target reader market, qualifications, availability, and one paragraph summary.*

### **AUTHOR INFORMATION**

**-Biographical sketch--to show our experience . . .**

**-Anything hinting at your platform . . .**

### **SYNOPSIS**

**Non-fiction . . .**

*-Chapter-by-chapter, 2-3 lines, or a short paragraph for each.*

*-Clear, but compelling . . .*

**Fiction . . .**

*-1-3 page compelling summary of the story.*

*-Include major story points showing how story develops, high points, how it ends.*

*-Written in present tense and fast paced.*

*-Start with hook and identify the main conflict & theme.*

### **AUDIENCE/MARKET**

**-Who is this book written TO or FOR? -Who would be willing to buy this book?**

**-Zero in more on some ASPECT that will appeal to SPECIFIC groups of people . . .**

### **COMPETITIVE TITLES**

**-THIS is NOT about SHOWING WHO I WRITE LIKE . . .**

*"The readers who like (names of other books) will also LIKE my BOOK."*

**-It is showing there is a MARKET OUT THERE for your book . . .**

### **MARKETING STRATEGY and SALES PLAN**

**How can you help the publisher sell your book?**

**List ways you intend or are willing to help . . .**

### **SAMPLE CHAPTERS**

**-NOT just 3 chapters, but the FIRST THREE CHAPTERS**

### **FORMATTING THE MANUSCRIPT (or sample chapters)**

-At least 1" MARGINS ALL AROUND . . . sides could be 1.5"

-Double-spaced

-12 point font . . . Courier or Times New Roman.

-Paragraphs should be indented .5" with no extra blank line between paragraphs.

-One space between sentences . . . not two.

-Each chapter starts nearly midway down the page. (16 lines)

-Header at the top of each page that includes last name, title of the book, page #

### **PACKAGING and SENDING the PROPOSAL**

**IF SENDING VIA E-MAIL : -REPLY to the editor's response to your Query . . .**

**-SUBJECT LINE: -REQUESTED PROPOSAL from TIM SHOEMAKER  
or REQUESTED Code of Silence proposal**

**-E-MAIL as ONE DOCUMENT ATTACHMENT**

**-Cover letter, sell sheet, and all other components including chapters . . .**

**IF SENDING VIA MAIL: 9.5" x 13" envelope or 10" x 13" with proper postage**

#### **OUTSIDE ENVELOPE:**

**-Your return address, publisher name & address—specifically to a name**

**-"REQUESTED PROPOSAL" written below address**

**PAPER: Nice, white . . . nothing fancy or cute**

**PAGES: Loose, not stapled or bound**

**FONT: Standard business-type font (Times New Roman or Courier)**

**SASE: 9.5" x 13" Return envelope fully addressed to you**

**with proper postage, folded in half, stamp showing.**

**BRIBES: Gifts of candy, etc. don't work & don't help**

**MAILING: Nothing that requires a signature . . . that may annoy editors . . .**

**NOTE: Don't call an editor to see if they received your proposal . . .**

### **Finding Markets for Your Writing**

**The more you write & connect with other authors and editors, the more you'll find.**

**1. Writers Conferences**

**2. Use the Market Guide to Query Editors**

**3. Contests**

**4. Start SMALL**

**5. Find an active LOCAL WRITER'S GROUP**

**6. Pray About It**

**7. Write out of your PASSIONS . . . write for Yourself . . . write for Your Family . . .**