

Writing From the Crypt - Almost

Old, broke, and out of work are a bad combination. Can't fix old, but working as a paid writer helps with the other two. It took me four years, being more stubborn than a two-year-old, and an old computer to kick the crap out of when things go wrong. Which is often.

I took courses. Read books. Joined writers' groups. Set up a website. Sent out queries. Applied for jobs. Got accepted by content mills. I've been ghosted, scammed, and done in by technology—because I am a technological dinosaur.

Writers are needy and prone to panic. Older writers, maybe more so. Most of us were successful at something else. Learning new stuff is difficult, especially if you feel pressure to succeed. So, here's what I think I know.

- **Writer's Courses.** One decent course covers what you need to know. Expecting to find the “magic bullet” with course after course is counterproductive. If you are 70 years old and can't write, nothing will fix it.
- **“Make Money Writing” Books.** Cheaper than courses. Won't teach you how to write either. Even if Stephen King wrote the book.
- **Build a Website.** I did. It is beautiful. Nobody cares.
- **Find Your Niche.** I did. I know more about windows, with glass, than most people. Small niche.
- **Write What You Know.** How much do **you** want to know about egress, Low E coatings, or double-hung sliders? I thought so.
- **Queries and Pitches.** Learn how to write these things. I probably sent out 50 before I even got an answer. And it was a laughing emoji.
- **Content Mills (Farms).** Needy? Panicky? I am still listed on a couple. Write a minimum of 6000 words per week for two cents. Do not work for \$0.02 per word. Period!
- **Job Boards.** Like Problogger and WritersWeekly. Don't procrastinate. Apply now. There are thousands of us looking for work. Submitting the 57th email is worthless.

A few more things to look forward to:

- **Scams.** Be prepared. They happen frequently. I wrote four articles for someone in the Netherlands—or maybe Nigeria. No pay. No more communication. And it is too far away to go and introduce them to my Louisville Slugger.
- **Ghosted.** Wrote 15 articles for a client and was paid. Never heard from him again. WTF. Check out Jennifer Brown Banks's August 19/23 article for a more professional response. Most of us old construction guys have attitudes.
- **Theft.** Plagiarism is bad enough. One of my clients had more than a dozen of my articles lifted word-for-word and published on another website. The owner does not exist. I can't get to him either.
- **Technology.** My biggest enemy. Eats my homework. Crashes. Reconfigures my work. Makes me feel dumb regularly.

The perfect client does not exist—especially for older writers. Many of us don't understand half the terms used in the ads. And the perky, made-up words will gag a maggot. (Ideate, anyone?) So here are a few suggestions. (I offer no advice because even my kids and grandkids don't listen.)

- **Never Quit.** May be old but not dead.
- **Be Honest.** You don't have to write like J. K. Rowling. Write your best every time. And be content with what you produce. If you can't do the job—admit it.
- **Expand Your Niche.** You have lived a lot of years and gained a lot of knowledge. Think about what you know and pitch it. I write about construction, homesteading, farming, and lawn care because I have experienced them.
- **Research.** Learn how to find information and use it effectively.
- **Never Cheat.** Not your clients. Not your writing. Not yourself.
- **Dark Rum.** Best thing I know to eliminate panic and neediness.

Bio

Terry is a freelance writer focusing on home renovations, DIY advice, and construction topics. He writes, or has written, for numerous online sites. He spent over 30 years in the construction industry. Terry admits to being slightly older than dirt. Politically, he is to the right of Vlad the Impaler.