

Writers' Rights

Book Rights

Rights to a book are spelled out in the contract. The book may be copyrighted in either the author or publisher's name.

Dramatic, Television, and Motion Picture Rights

The writer sells the option to produce a play, movie, or television show. The writer is usually paid 10 percent of the purchase price in exchange for the exclusive right to market and produce the work for one year. If the option expires, the author keeps the money and seeks other producers.

First Rights, First Serial Rights, First North American Serial Rights

The writer sells a publication the right to print the work for the first time. Rights automatically revert to the writer once the piece is published unless otherwise stated in a contract.

One-time Rights, Simultaneous Rights

The writer sells one or more publications the right to print the work one time but not necessarily the first time. It may be published simultaneously by markets in different geographic locations, such as newspapers, or at different times by markets with non-overlapping readership, such as denominational publications.

All Rights, Exclusive Rights, Work for Hire

The writer sells all rights to the piece to the publisher and no longer owns any rights to the work. In all rights, those rights will revert to the writer after thirty-five years; in work for hire, they do not revert to writer. Writers avoid selling except under certain circumstances.

Reprint Rights, Second Rights

A writer may resell an article to other publications once the rights revert to him. Sometimes the original publisher wants to be credited. Reprint rights are nonexclusive.

Nonexclusive Rights

If a writer does not specify what rights he is offering, he sells nonexclusive rights. After the publisher prints the piece the first time, he can reuse it in a later issue of the same periodical but not in any other periodicals they may publish. The writer retains rights to the piece.

Electronic Rights

In addition to other rights, writers may sell rights to distribute the work on CD, store the work in a database, publish and/or archive the work on the Internet, etc.

Adapted from *Sally Stuart's Guide to Getting Published* (Waterbrook, 1999) Used by permission.