

## How to Interact with a Publisher or Editor

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As I said in the course description, we are going to talk about the best ways to interact with publishing professionals. As the writer, a great deal of the responsibility for a pleasant exchange falls on you.

You're bringing an idea to someone, probably someone who's more or less a stranger, for their consideration. You're asking them to set aside time to hear what you have to say. If you want your interactions to be mutually respectful and God-honoring, which you probably do, there are several things you can do to prevent any strain or hard feelings from developing – on either side of the professional relationship.

### DO YOUR RESEARCH

Submit what the publisher or editor is looking for.

**Read and follow the guidelines.** Only submit things that meet their requirements. Most publishers provide writer's guidelines on their websites.

*The guidelines are your friends! Follow the guidelines.*

**Send only appropriate materials.** Do not submit something for consideration that is clearly a misfit.

**Respect the company's goals and purposes.** Publishing companies will not redefine their goals, their purposes, even for a great article or manuscript.

**Submit your materials as requested.** Every publisher or editor has specific parameters for writers who are submitting materials. Please follow them.

**Read and follow the guidelines.** Not following the guidelines will gravely endanger your writing project! *The guidelines are your friends. Follow the guideline.*

**Queries/proposals or completed manuscripts.** Some magazine publishers will request a query letter and make a decision about whether to pursue an article based on the idea pitched. Others prefer to see the completed article. Likewise,

most book publishers prefer to see a book proposal but some would rather see the completed manuscript. Give the editor or publisher what he or she asks for.

**Unsolicited materials and agents.** I don't think there are many book publishing companies that still accept unsolicited manuscripts. Most now prefer to work through a literary agent. If you're nearly done with a project, you may want to consider finding an agent to represent you.

**Resource Recommendation:** *The Christian Writers Market Guide* is updated every year and will give you all the information you'll need about various Christian publishing companies. It's available as a digital book for \$9.99 per year, or you can buy a print copy. Here's the web address in case you're interested:  
[www.christianwritersmarketguide.com](http://www.christianwritersmarketguide.com)

**Familiarize yourself with potential publishers.** There are several ways you can explore different publishing avenues.

**Read back issues or back lists.** Take time to read through back issues of magazines or get acquainted with a book publisher's backlist. Take a few moments to look through current books for sale as well.

**Attend conferences to make connections.** Writers' conferences are great places to connect not only with fellow writers, but also with editors, publishers, and agents.

**Please, please, please follow their guidelines.** If you take only one thing away today, please remember to follow the guidelines.

## **Have Realistic Expectations**

-Editors work for publishing companies

**When they're "on the clock"** editors are busy trying to procure and produce excellent writing.

Publishing professionals connect with writers at conferences to help them improve their skills and opportunities to be published.

Editors may offer coaching “off the clock.” You shouldn’t expect it, but editors may help you on their personal time.

-Editors do not work for writers.

Editors work with contracted writers for the good of the company if they choose to publish your work..

Editors are busy people. Don’t expect feedback

Here’s the industry standard:

*Don’t expect to hear back from an editor or publisher unless they are interested in your work.* It’s common for agents, editors or publishers to tell you: “If you don’t get a response within “x” amount of time, we’re not interested.” So, if you don’t hear anything within the defined time frame, you have your answer.

## **Respond Well to Feedback**

Sometimes a publishing professional will take the time to give you some feedback. There are several reasons they might do this:

They see merit in your work but have suggestions for improvement.

They may recommend a publishing contact or suggest another venue that’s more suitable for your work

They want to offer an explanation for why the work was rejected.

They may want to sign a contract. Positive feedback will often result in a writing contract.

If you receive feedback, positive or negative, there is only one appropriate response. Say “Thank you.”

Give the input serious consideration. Be open-minded. Be willing to step back from your work and view it with a critical eye.

Apply what you’ve learned as you move forward. Feedback gives you an opportunity to learn and grow.

Try to be objective about negative feedback.

Accept it as constructive criticism. See the seemingly negatives as what they are intended to be: an opportunity to improve your writing skills.

Remember it’s not a personal attack. Because any creative endeavor is a reflection of who we are, a rejection letter feels personal, but it’s just a business decision.

Remember everyone has a story to tell. This opportunity might not be the right one. Don’t get discouraged.

Remember God’s sovereignty. Negative feedback or a rejection means not right now, or not through this venue. Remember, in all things, God is sovereign.

Keep moving forward.

Rejection letters are normal in this industry. Even after you’ve done your research and whittled your list of publishers down to potential matches, it will take a while to weed through publishers before you find the right match.

Be tenacious. Don’t give up.

Exercise discipline. Keep writing consistently and working to improve your skills.

**Obey God's Calling.** If writing is more than a hobby for you persist until God makes it clear you are supposed to stop.

## **General Principles:**

**Respect the editor, publisher or agent's time.**

**Show the person basic, human dignity.**

**Accept "no" graciously.**

**Pitch what aligns with the publisher's purposes.**

**You're selling yourself, not just your writing.**

## **THE BOTTOM LINE:**

**BE PROFESSIONAL**

**BE CHRISTLIKE**