**Terms Every Writer Should Know**

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**GENERAL**

**COVER LETTER** A Cover Letter is a letter of introduction that accompanies any submitted work. In many cases they are optional; in all cases they should be brief.

**FREELANCER (WRITER/EDITOR)**  A Freelancer works on various projects by contract, and is not the employee of any single publisher. However, Freelancers often do maintain long-term relationships with editors and/or publishers.

**GENRE**  The category that a novel, story, article, or script falls into. Fiction examples: thriller, horror, science-fiction, romance. Non-fiction examples: self-help, history, memoir, how-to, essays, inspirational, interviews, etc. You *must* know your Genre in order to sell your work effectively.

**HOOK**  The opening of your article or story is usually referred to as the Hook; it is how you grab a reader's attention.  In a short story, it is usually your first paragraph or two; in a magazine article, it can be a little as your first sentence or even your title. In a novel, it can be as much as your entire first chapter.

**MARKET GUIDE**  Includes submittal information on how to contact magazines, editors, and publishers. *Writer's Market* by Writer's Digest books is probably the best known Market Guide. There are also a wide range of online Market Guides.

**MULTIPLE SUBMISSIONS**  Sending more than one piece of work at a time to a single publisher or editor. Very good idea if allowed (can save a LOT of time); very bad idea if not. Always check publisher’s Submission Guidelines to see if allowed.

**NICHE**  Defining a specialty area to write in. Generally a sub-category of Genre.

**OUTLINE/SYNOPSIS**  A detailed description of a book (fiction or non-fiction) that you have written/are proposing to write. These can vary in length from one page to fifty pages, depending on the requirements of the publisher. Check publisher’s Submission Guidelines. (Are you seeing a trend here…?)

**QUERY/QUERY LETTER** A query letter can either be an inquiry as to a publisher's interest in seeing a particular piece, or a letter/email checking on the status of a previously submitted piece/book. In the case of the fiction, the former (gauging interest) is done almost exclusively with novels, not with short stories. It is done with non-fiction at all lengths.

**SELF-PUBLISHED**  This means exactly what it sounds like: you published it yourself. On the one hand, it means that you incurred all the costs and risks associated with publishing a work (usually a book). On the other hand, it also means that you did all the work and are entitled to 100% of the profits. You also retain all Rights. Opinions vary on the pros and cons.

**SIMULTANEOUS SUBMISSION**  Piece/work (article, short story, or book) sent to more than one publisher/editor at a time. As with Multiple Submissions, always check the publisher’s Submissions Guidelines to see if allowed.

**SMALL-PRESS PUBLISHER**  This term generally applies to any of the smaller publishers working outside of New York City. They can vary considerably in their size and their ability to distribute/promote your work.

**SUBMISSIONS GUIDELINES**  A set of guidelines or rules the publisher wants all writers to follow concerning when, where, and how to submit work for publication. It covers everything from subject matter to font size and margins. Guidelines are readily available on the publisher's website and should be strictly adhered to.

**CONTRACT TERMS**

*\*\*Think of it less as 'selling' your work and more as 'licensing' your work.*

**ADVANCE/ADVANCE AGAINST ROYALTIES** This is money paid to you by the publisher for a book (fiction or non-fiction) before the book is published. You will not be paid any more money until the book sells enough copies to earn this amount back for the publisher. Some publishers (usually smaller ones) do not pay an Advance; they simply start paying Royalties right away.

**AGENT/LITERARY AGENT**  This is a essentially a professional negotiator who will represent your book. A good Agent will protect the interests of you, their client, and only get paid when you get a contract from a publisher. *If anyone claiming to be an Agent offers you representation but asks you for money up front (anything from a signing fee to administrative fees), they are probably a scam artist.* On the other hand, it is important to note that if you have an Agent, your publisher will pay the full amount of any Advance and/or Royalties to your Agent, who will keep a percentage (usually 10-15%) and then forward the rest to you.

**ALL RIGHTS** Avoid this clause. This means you are selling *every* Right you have to your work and so, in effect, it is no longer yours for as long as the contract remains in force. You forfeit the Right to ever use the work again and you are not entitled to additional payment if the publisher uses your work again in any way.

**BASKET ACCOUNTING** This is something publishers often like to do with books published as a series. It allows them to pay Royalties according to how the whole series is selling, regardless of how an individual book sells. Avoid if at all possible.

**EARNED OUT** This means a book has earned enough to cover the publisher’s Advance to the author. If an Advance was paid, additional Royalties will NOT be paid to the author until the book has Earned Out.

**ELECTRONIC RIGHTS**  This covers digital publication in all forms, ie. online, ebook, etc.

**FIRST RIGHTS**  Rights for a publisher to publish a work for the FIRST time anywhere, i.e., the work cannot have appeared anywhere else (including blogs) before appearing in the magazine/book/website you're offering First Rights to.

**FIRST NORTH AMERICAN SERIAL RIGHTS (FNASR)**  The magazine/publisher has the right to be the first one in North America to publish the piece. FNASR is the most-commonly found Rights asked for in magazine contracts.

**KILL FEE**  Usually 20-30% of the agreed upon fee, this is the amount you'll be paid if a publisher accepts your piece but then decides not to use it. Mainly used in the magazine industry (print and online).

**NON-EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS**  You retain the Right to resell the piece elsewhere.

**ONE-TIME RIGHTS** Grants the Right to publish the piece one ime, but not first or exclusively. (One-Time Rights and Non-Exclusive Rights generally pay less.)

**RIGHTS** Publishers are contracting for the legal Right to use/publish your work and they should pay you to do so. There are a lot of different kinds of Rights; the more the publisher asks for, the more they ought to pay you. This can include, but is in no way limited to the Rights mentioned in this handout, as well as Audio Rights, Foreign Rights, Movie Rights, etc.

**ROYALTIES** This is the percentage of the profits that will be paid to you for sales of your book. If you've received an Advance, you do not receive any Royalties until the book Earns Out its Advance. Royalties are commonly between 8% and 15% of the book's profits (some publishers pay a percentage of the book’s net profits, and some pay a percentage of the gross profits; know which one you are getting). This only applies to books; magazines do not pay Royalties.

**ROYALTY PERIOD** This is how often your publisher will pay you Royalties. Industry standard is twice per year, but some contracts call for either annual or quarterly Royalty Periods.

**WORK**  Formal industry term used in contracts, interchangeable with 'Piece,' ‘Story,’ or 'Article.' Refers to the 'work' you are signing the contract for.

**WORK-FOR-HIRE** Pretty much giving away all Rights for a single, set fee. All Work-For-Hire (of any kind: books, articles, etc.) becomes the property of the employer, to use as they like, as often as they like, in any form they like.