

The Writers Network News, July 2018

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The Writers Network News
No Rules; Just Write!
Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Meet Fellow Writers

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for local meeting notices today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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Warning: If your address changes, you must sign up again with your new address. We cannot change your address for you, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. Go to www.zebraeditor.com, click on the yellow box, and sign up with your new address.

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Some links in this newsletter are shortened with help from [www.tinyurl.com](http://www.tinyurl.com), a free service that converts long links to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.
—Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)

Encyclopedia Britannica has this to say of Chekhov:

The Russian playwright and master of the modern short story was a literary artist of laconic precision who probed below the surface of life, laying bare the secret motives of his characters. Chekhov's best plays and short stories lack complex plots and neat solutions. Concentrating on apparent trivialities, they create a special kind of atmosphere, sometimes termed haunting or lyrical. Chekhov described the Russian life of his time using a deceptively simple technique devoid of obtrusive literary devices, and he is regarded as the outstanding representative of the late 19th-century Russian realist school.

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One: From the editor's desk: Just Say No

Dear Fellow Writers:

Lately I have felt overwhelmed with all the tasks I have to complete for clients, for my website, and for my future speaking engagements. As a result I've had little time for myself or for my own writing projects.

A good friend who also runs her own business gave me some excellent advice, though. She too has difficulty turning down work, so her volume of work often overwhelms her. Her new plan, she said, is to say no to work that isn't exactly what she wants to do at the time. "Saying no," she said, "is not a negative; it means you're saying yes to creating the time for things that are more important, more fulfilling, or that pay better."

I almost never turn down work that comes directly from writers unless it's outside my area of expertise, such as religious works. Editing projects that come from publishing houses, though, can be more challenging and more abundant than I want, so I will now say no to some of those projects and leave "yes time" for my own clients, the work I prefer to do.

Are you saying yes to things you later wish you had said no to? Do those things keep you from having time to write the stories running around in your head? Try saying no to some of the requests you get and see if your life gets easier. You're saying yes to doing more of the things you want to do.

Yours in writing,  
Bobbie Christmas (Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com )  
Author of two editions of Write In Style, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, and coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service

Have you been following my zany, odd, and sometimes creepy blog about my encounters with the opposite sex? See [www.NeutroticaStories.blogspot.com](http://www.NeutroticaStories.blogspot.com), and sign up to follow it.

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own copy. Simply go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com), click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

Two: Ask the Book Doctor: All about Animals

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: How can I tell when to capitalize an animal breed and when not to?

A: The rule is that if a breed name contains a proper noun (a name of a person or place), that word is capitalized; all other words in the breed name are not. For example, we would write German shepherd and Maine coon. Unfortunately the rule is easier said than followed, though. How is a writer to know which words are proper nouns? The answer can be found in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the source preferred by book publishers. Look up German shepherd, and you'll see that the G is capitalized, but not the s. Look up Maine coon, and the m is capitalized, but not the c. The same goes with American shorthair, Australian terrier, and French poodle, but breeds such as basenji, beagle, borzoi, and bloodhound are not capitalized. The exotic shorthair cat also is always lowercased. The list of breeds is endless, but many do include or even stand for a proper noun, such as in Sphynx, Abyssinian, Burmese, and Bolognese.

The ragdoll cat breed is an interesting one, because it used to be trademarked, and trademarked words and phrases are capitalized. While the dictionary puts the capitalized Ragdoll as the preferred usage, ragdoll without the capital is now also acceptable.

If you're not sure whether a breed should be capitalized, don't look up the capitalization on a site featuring breeds, because few websites follow Chicago style, the style that book publishers follow. Instead check with Merriam-Webster, which is also available free online.

Q: Someone in my critique group chastised me for having talking animals in the children's book I'm writing. When my children were small many of the books I read to them featured talking animals. How do I respond to the critic in my writing circle?

A: Your critic is parroting information that has been floating around among agents and publishers for more than a decade. Publishers have indicated they no longer want talking animals in children's books and would rather have more realistic stories with which children can relate. Yes, the naysayers are out there, yet if you go into a bookstore, you'll still find some contemporary books that feature talking animals. If you watch cartoons on TV, you'll see many talking animals there as well.

Some folks ridicule the use of talking animals. Some writers continue the practice. Who is right? Everyone is right, because creative writing has few immutable laws. If you sense that you cannot get your story out in any way other than through talking animals, go ahead and write it your way. You may be bucking a trend, but you won't be alone. You may have a little more difficulty finding an agent, but your book may also meet with great success. Who's to tell?

Q: I am a veterinarian who has been asked to write a monthly advice column for pet owners. As soon as I started the first article I ran into problems with pronouns for the pets. Should I call them him, her, or it? "It" sounds too impersonal to me.

A: Using the pronoun "it" may be politically correct and perfectly grammatical, but pet owners probably would perceive it as cold and impersonal.

My suggestion is to vary the pronouns and use other words for the animals as well. You can use feminine or masculine pronouns for animals you name in the article, as in these examples: When Muffin kept shaking her head, I inspected her ears. If you take Max for a walk in summer, be sure the asphalt is not so hot that it burns his paw pads.

As a neutral moniker, you can use words such as fur baby, partner, furry companion, fur kid, adoptee, and fluff ball. As you write more articles you will probably develop your own style and come up with even more alternative descriptions for our hairy sidekicks.

Send your questions about writing and editing to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com). Bobbie Christmas, book doctor and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions quickly. Read Bobbie's Zebra Communications blog at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>.

Bobbie Christmas's second edition of Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

Three: Subjects of interest to writers

#### FROM OUR MEMBERS

Member Ben Oswald admitted he's a little behind in reading my newsletters, but anyone would forgive him after reading the long list of things he does. Responding to my call for mistakes others have made in their manuscripts, he said, "I read my first novel, ECHOES OF ELLEN, to death looking for errors. When the print edition came out, I gave a copy to a neighbor who is a middle school librarian. She raved about it but at the same time gave me a list of 161 errors she found while reading its 325 pages."

Member Dotti Hydue writes, "Regarding magazine writing, I used to write for two magazines on a regular basis. One was a Florida-based gardening publication, and the second a national magazine for prospectors and gem hunters. The local owners/publishers of the gardening magazine sold it to a national company. Even though I had an article accepted and scheduled for publication, I never heard from the new publisher. It never returned my emails or phone call, nor did they ever publish the article that I know of. All the writers in

the new slate have degrees to validate their writing abilities, although most reside out of state. I reckon the new publisher did not feel actual gardening experience in the state to be of value. The new editorial staff for the prospecting magazine decided it wanted its articles to highlight equipment and products featured in its advertisements, which is not how or why I write. I am researching new leads for print and online opportunities. I look forward to reading future issues of 'The Writers Network News' to learn how other writers have fared."

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CMOS ONLINE Q & A

Dangling or not?

Someone sent the following question to the folks at The Chicago Manual of Style Online:

"This is sort of a dangler, and yet it seems OK: "As a captain, most of my duties are administrative." I rewrote it to be safe, but is that kind of construction OK?"

How would you answer this question? If you rewrote the sentence, how would you rewrite it?

Read the CMOS response to this question as well as many more questions and answers at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE dictates such things as where commas go, when and what to capitalize, when and how to abbreviate words, when to spell out numbers or use numerals, and much more. If you write books, you will want to know more about Chicago style or be sure to use an editor intimately familiar with Chicago style.

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PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS  
A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, Sixth Edition

Save thousands of dollars and edit your own book!

In alphabetical order, PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction. Get information on grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and much more. The spiral binder of the printed version lies flat on your desk for easy use. For a discount price, PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS is also available as a PDF, which allows you to keep all this vital information on your computer for ready reference.

Order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS today at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/book/purge-your-prose-of-problems-a-book-doctors-desk-reference/>.

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2018 Pulitzer Prize Winners Announced

See <http://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-year/2018>

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Author of ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE dies at age eighty-eight. Read the whole story here: <https://tinyurl.com/y7b87ltx>.

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Write In Style is Now Also an E-book

Find your fresh voice at a lower price here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y8fp5nym>

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HOW MANY WORDS?

How many words should a novel be, a novella, a short story, a children's book, a dissertation, or other forms of writing? See <https://tinyurl.com/y7h4a8w5>.

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Become my friend on Facebook and follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>
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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

MOMMYISH

Mommyish is a home for women of all ages who are interested in the final frontier of work/life balance: Parenting. Over the past five years, Mommyish has built a dedicated community of moms who believe that the only parenting sin is being a sanctimommy (A Sanctimonious Mom). At Mommyish, we recognize that nothing is easy and that we must strive for acceptance, balance, and most of all, a strong sense of humor.

Mommyish writers take parenting seriously, but we don't take ourselves seriously. We care about the realities of parenting today, and combine a thirst for the latest parenting news and trends with a tongue in cheek approach to childrearing. On Mommyish, we welcome an array of perspectives on pregnancy, sex, partnerships, work life balance, and of course childrearing. We're not interested in telling our readers the RIGHT way to parent, but we do care about the choices parents make every day and we want them to be informed.

We are currently seeking paid contributors (remote) to create content for Mommyish. If you are interested in working with us, please send samples of your work to the managing editor at editor@mommyish.com or check out our pitching guidelines at <https://www.mommyish.com/how-to-write-for-mommyish/>.

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Divertir Publishing

Please note queries that do not follow our submissions guidelines, do not contain the correct information in the email subject, or are sent to the wrong email address will automatically be rejected.

What we are interested in fiction, nonfiction, and short stories.

In fiction: Science Fiction, Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Historical, Historical Romance, Alternate History, Mystery and Suspense, Paranormal, Romance, Short Stories, and Young Adult.

Nonfiction: Political/Social Commentary, Current Events, and Humor and Satire.

Short Stories: Divertir Publishing believes the most effective way to establish readerships for up and coming authors is through short story collections. Thus we publish several collections each year. We prefer stories between 1,000-15,000 words. We are currently accepting short stories in all of the genres listed for fiction.

For novels and nonfiction manuscripts Divertir Publishing uses a sliding royalty scale dependent on the total number of copies sold, starting at 12.5% of net sales and going up to 17.5%. We do not pay advances and do not make exceptions to this policy. Divertir Publishing also currently does not compensate authors for short stories or poetry published in one of our multi-author collections.

Divertir Publishing currently uses a combination of digital printing (print-on-demand) and electronic formats for distributing books. We do not accept returns from bookstores, so most major brick-and-mortar bookstores will not carry our books. Our decision to use digital printing and to limit returns has resulted in a more cost-effective distribution model, allowing us to publish materials in niche areas, such as experimental works, short story and poetry collections, and manuscripts from authors who are not well known. There are several outlets for selling books online, and we target these outlets for distribution. If you feel your book would best be marketed in brick-and-mortar bookstores, then we are not the right publisher for your manuscript.

It is important for authors to be an integral part of the publishing process. Therefore, we involve authors in all major decisions concerning their manuscript, from cover design to suggestions for book promotion. We feel that the advantage of an independent publisher is the personal attention we are able to give authors.

Please send all queries to [query@divertirpublishing.com](mailto:query@divertirpublishing.com). You can address the email to Ken Tupper, the publisher. We currently accept queries only electronically.

You absolutely must follow specific guidelines to submit, so see <http://www.divertirpublishing.com/submission.html> and follow the guidelines, including how your email should look.

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VIDA SEEKS GHOSTWRITER

We're currently hiring 5+ new dating ghostwriters to write profiles and get dates for our clients on sites and apps like Match, OkCupid, Tinder, and Bumble. (To learn more about how ViDA helps people find love, feel free to visit our website <https://www.virtualdatingassistants.com/>)

Depending on your performance, you'll earn somewhere between US \$13 and \$17 per hour. And you'll do this from the comfort of your own home. It's fun, flexible, and rewarding.

Here's What You'll Do:

Craft honest, charming profiles that grab the reader's attention right from the start and hold it as she reads every last word. Come up with creative, eye-catching icebreaker messages that can be used over and over again. Handle the back-and-forth messages with your clients' matches until you get a phone number or set up a date.

Are You Right For The Job?

Do you have top-notch writing skills and a great sense of humor?

Ideally you even know a thing or two about how to represent yourself in the modern dating age. Or worst case, you find it all fascinating and can't wait to learn what works best.

Are you looking for long-term writing work you'll truly enjoy with the opportunity for growth?

If you'd love to have a stable and predictable source of writing income for years to come, this could be for you. We're looking only for long-term additions to our team who are ready to consistently clock 20+ hours per week.

Do you have excellent time management and organization skills?

You absolutely must be the reliable, self-motivated type who works well without supervision; otherwise, it will never work. ViDA is a virtual company, and the hours you work will be relatively flexible, but daily.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cY2amrdxHMzUKiY9pB6UIXlgtbThht5Z0x32GYyz-U8/edit>

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WORKERS WRITE SEEKS SUBMISSIONS

<http://www.workerswritejournal.com/>  
Issue fifteen of Workers Write! will be More Tales from the Classroom. It seeks stories and poems from educational settings. We're looking for fiction about teachers, counselors, admins, school librarians, principals, janitors—anyone who works in a school or classroom setting. Drop us a line if you have a question.

Word count: 500 to 5,000 words  
Payment: Between \$5 and \$50, depending on length and rights requested. We will consider previously published material. The deadline for submissions is Dec. 31, 2018 (or until the issue is full).

Submit your stories via e-mail to [classroom@workerswritejournal.com](mailto:classroom@workerswritejournal.com) or send a hard copy to  
Blue Cubicle Press  
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Plano, TX 75025-0382  
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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Please send it in the body copy, not an attachment, to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com. Deadline: The 15th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting www.zebraeditor.com and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No Rules; Just Write!

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