

The Writers Network News: Motivation versus Determination/September 2023

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Notes

Some links in this newsletter are created through TinyUrl.com, which converts long links into shorter ones.

Our format doesn't support italics, so italics are indicated with underlines before and after words.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

Mozart said, "When I am completely myself, entirely alone, and of good cheer—say traveling in a carriage or walking after a good meal or during the night when I cannot sleep—it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not, nor can I force them."

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If our email to you bounces, our system automatically unsubscribes you. Before you change your email address, subscribe again with your new address. We cannot add you or change your address, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. Please go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and sign up with your new address, and do it before you stop using your old address.

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One: From the Editor's Desk: Motivation versus Determination

Dear Fellow Writers:

I admit to having a secret life, a guilty pleasure some people may not understand. I absolutely love to watch survival shows. After an intense day of editing, I relax and watch people on TV being transported to and left in the most obscure and dangerous locations on the planet. While participants struggle to find drinkable water and anything edible, while they frustrate themselves attempting to start a fire with nothing but wet wood, I sit on my comfortable sofa and watch. While they fight hunger, dehydration, exhaustion, intense heat, freezing snow, or thousands of biting bugs, I munch popcorn and watch in air-conditioned comfort. I know. I should be ashamed.

This week, though, a starving, exhausted participant said he didn't feel motivated to look for food. His partner, a more skilled survival expert, told him something like, "You don't feel motivated? Are you waiting for motivation? If you wait for motivation, you'll never win. Motivation doesn't win anything. You have to have determination. With determination you can win every time."

His teammates shook their heads and didn't appreciate the guy's sermon, but I stopped chewing my popcorn and sat up straight. I had to hold that thought for a few moments. The man was a hundred percent right. If I wait to be motivated to write, nothing happens. When I have a deadline, though, I become determined to meet that deadline. As a consequence of my determination, I always get my work done on time, whether it's editing a book-length manuscript or simply writing a five-hundred-word blog entry.

With determination we win every time, so now I'll ask my readers: do you sit around and wait for motivation, or are you determined to finish that book you always wanted to write?

Yours in writing,
Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com
Author of two award-winning editions of Write In Style, owner of Zebra Communications, editor of "The Writers Network News," and senior editor of Enjoy Cherokee Magazine

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Members Write

In my last newsletter I wrote about the tragic reality of royalty checks, that they rarely represent big bucks. My comments brought interesting responses from readers.

William Speir wrote a fascinating and educational letter that went like this:

"I just read your article on royalties and reality, and I found it spot on! When the publisher I work for signs a new author (I'm an officer of the publishing company), we take great pains to explain how royalties work and what can impact the payment they receive. I also tell them that if they are publishing to make money, then they've already lost. It's like the scene from The Candidate with Robert Redford. When he's meeting with his new campaign manager, the campaign manager has two words written on a piece of paper that he hands to Redford: 'You Lose.' The point is that if you're entering politics to win, you've already lost, but if you're entering politics to be yourself and try to make a difference in the world, that is something that can be achieved.

"Publishing is the same game. If you write to become rich, you've already lost. But if you write to share your stories or research or thoughts with the public, you could just win, because THAT is a goal that can be achieved. Money cannot be the goal, because you have absolutely no control over the spending habits of the target audience, just as politicians in non-communist/totalitarian countries have no control over the voters. You can write your book and share your book with the world at large, but you cannot make people buy your book, even if it's the best story ever written.

"I currently have twenty-three published novels with two more in development. I write because I'm compelled to write by a force I have no control over. I don't do it for the money, I do it for the love of storytelling and sharing my stories with the world. I'm a storyteller (someone who lies for a living), and I will continue writing and publishing my books, even if I never sell another copy. When the stories stop coming to me, I'll stop writing, but until then, I expect to write until I drop dead or cannot type or see the computer screen anymore. I have no choice. It's part of who I am."

William added, "They say you should write what you like to read, and that's exactly what I did. I actually enjoy reading my own stories, and even if I'm the only one who ever reads them (and fortunately that is NOT the case), I'll keep writing them."

I happen to know William, and I know he's won awards for his books too. Thank you, William, for your insight.

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Empish J. Thomas wrote, "Thanks for sharing about your royalty check experience. I agree. I don't write for the paycheck either. I write because I love it and to help others. My blog is simple and straightforward, yet I always try to add a nugget of wisdom in each post I write. I don't have children, so this is my legacy."

Empish's response struck a chord with me. From the time I was in high school I longed to write a book that would live on after me—be my legacy. It took me years to acquire enough knowledge to write a book, but I trust that Write In Style is my legacy.

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Mary Ellen Gavin reports, "Bless you for telling the truth about the very little money earned from book sales. I used Amazon. It paid little for the first years, and it got worse. While they are still selling my books, I get nothing. I gave up arguing and remain happy to know people are still reading my stories."

She adds that she's now writing screenplays and working with an agency.

Way to go, Mary Ellen!

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Dan Anderson shared, "My primary reason for writing is there are few experiences in life more exhilarating than the transformational process of converting imagination to ideation and ideation to written expressions that can be remedially refined to accurately share intended thoughts and feelings with your readership."

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Steve Moore wrote, "I've been publishing my stories for a while (my first novel, Full Medical, appeared in 2006), and I've never been motivated to write to make money. I had no expectations to have a "bestseller" either, but I hoped to make enough in royalties to pay for the next book, or at least to keep investments in my writing below what I'd spend to pursue a golf hobby.

"As a kid I read a lot (we didn't even have a TV until I was ten), mostly under the covers at night with a flashlight, praxis that annoyed the family cat. I read H. Rider Haggard, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Agatha Christie, and many other "classic" authors, as well as some more "modern" ones like Orwell and Koestler, Asimov, and Heinlein, and thought that I might be able to create stories like those: meaningful tales that also entertain. Of course supporting a family got in the way, so when other dudes retired (to play golf!), I retired to write.

"I've dabbled with various types of publications, from the old POD publishers like Infinity to traditional publishers (small presses) and finally Draft2Digital, the aggregator service that recently merged with Smashwords. Self-publishing is the most efficient, and Draft2Digital is best at making DIY easy (a polished MS and cover still required). All the mergers in

traditional publishing don't bode well for anyone but famous authors.

"Will there always be storytellers who use the written word to paint their different realities? Who knows? But I'm one of them. Telling stories has always been enough motivation for me, but I don't have to make a living as a writer. In today's competitive environment, I wouldn't even want to try."

What an exceptional story, Steve. I'm so glad you keep writing.

When I was growing up the librarian in my grammar school put books aside for me that she knew I would want to read. I don't know if she did the same for anyone else, but every week when I walked in, she'd reach under her desk and pull out a new book for me that she knew I would love, and I did.

I'm a nonfiction writer myself, and everything I experience becomes fodder for writing something, whether it's memoirs, articles, essays, or blogs. Life constantly gives me material.

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Changing the subject, fellow editor Ellen Holder posed the following concern: "Many of my friends (probably many writers) finish a book, do their revisions and self-edits, then they know they need beta readers and an editor. Some get me to edit first, then they pass it around to their beta reading friends. When their comments cause the author to revise further, even after the editing, this can introduce new errors into the manuscript, even faulty advice and conflicting opinions. I feel the beta reading should come before the editing. If a writer's English teacher friend starts arguing with the editor's changes, that teacher might as well be the editor instead of me working so hard on it. I don't like people going behind me who are not trained or experienced as an editor. I don't think any human can promise to spot every mistake, and I don't mind those being pointed out. But I am frustrated when beta readers suggest changes after the edit."

She asked me, "Have you had to deal with similar situations?"

I agree that clients should get all the feedback they want and need and make all their changes before sending anything to an editor.

While I haven't experienced exactly what you mentioned, I have had clients who asked me to edit a manuscript a second time after they made changes and additions to it. I charge to re-edit, but not quite as much as I charge for the initial edit.

Yes, it's frustrating when less-than-skilled people suggest changes that go against what we skilled editors know, but still the old adage applies: "Ten editors, ten opinions."

In the end the author has to decide which suggestions to apply and which to reject.

Thank you all for writing. Your responses inspire me to keep providing this free newsletter for writers.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: About Style Guidelines

Q: I've been tasked with editing a magazine article that has quotes from several people. Some of the quotes use less-than-standard English. The article is in praise of these people, so I don't want their quotes to make them look less than the great people that they apparently are.

Is it okay to correct some of the statements so they reflect more highly on the speaker, or am I breaking some kind of rule?

A: The answer depends on the style that the intended magazine follows. Some styles disallow changing a word from a quote. Chicago style, however, has less restraint, and it's okay to change a quote slightly, providing it doesn't change the speaker's intent. Check with the intended periodical or the author of the article to determine the style you need to follow while you edit.

Q: Is The Chicago Manual of Style the standard for editing nonfiction book manuscripts? What do you say about the comments below made by two editors I've used?

Original line of text from the manuscript:

In the late 80's, I was living in Dallas, Texas running a company that I had founded.

Here's the ensuing discussion over it:

Editor 2: 80s (no apostrophe because there is no possession—and you might want to use 1980s to make it even clearer)

Editor 1: This is a question of style. Each publisher will have its own style. This is one style.

A: Most book publishers prefer Chicago Style, so it is safest to use it for any book-length manuscript, whether fiction or nonfiction. Let me address one point at a time.

Editor number one was wrong; the issues are not a matter of style, but of grammar, and grammar remains the same in any style.

Editor number two was correct: "In the late 80s," without the apostrophe, complies with both grammar guidelines and Chicago style. Without the apostrophe "80s" is plural and refers to many years. With an apostrophe it would be possessive, meaning something that belonged to the 1980s. The editor is also correct that for clarity it's better to write

the full number: "In the late 1980s."

If the author wanted to say something that belonged to that era, it would be written with an apostrophe, for example, "One 1980's spokesperson said ..."

After the name of a city, the state should be set off by commas, which is another issue of grammar. I'm surprised neither editor addressed that point. Correct: "In the late 1980s, I was living in Dallas, Texas, running a company that I had founded."

Ah, but the sentence still raises more issues about style. In Chicago style a comma is not needed after a short introductory phrase unless necessary for clarity. For that reason in Chicago style the sentence would read this way: In the late 1980s I was living in Dallas, Texas, running a company that I had founded.

Because good editing examines every word, and because tight writing is strong writing, I'd go a step further and delete the past perfect "had" as well as the superfluous "that." For style issues as well as creative reasons, then, the final rendition would read this way: In the late 1980s I was living in Dallas, Texas, running a company I founded.

Q: Which is correct, writer's conference or writers conference? Or maybe writers' conference?

A: You touched on a point that disturbs me whenever I see it. I spot the term "writer's conference" all the time, yet that form means a writer owns the conference. "Writers' conference" would mean a group of writers own the conference. The correct form is "writers conference," which means it is a conference for writers; writers don't own it. You'll notice that my own newsletter is called The Writers Network News for exactly that reason. It is a newsletter for writers.

Bobbie Christmas is a book editor, author of Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing, and owner of Zebra Communications. She will answer your questions too. Send them to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or BZebra@aol.com. Read Bobbie's blog at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>.

For much more information on hundreds of subjects of vital importance to writers, order Purge Your Prose of Problems, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>. An excellent reference book for all writing groups.

Bobbie Christmas's award-winning second edition of Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing is available from Amazon at <https://tinyurl.com/y7ppcdkd> or buy it directly at <https://tinyurl.com/y7p9xkbb>.  
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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

In several of the books I've edited recently the authors got the same two words confused: farther and further. Which word is appropriate when? Here's the answer:

Farther/Further

These two words are easily confused.

Further: refers to abstract situations. Her disease debilitated her further.

Farther: refers to concrete, measurable distances. The school is farther away than I thought.

(Excerpt from Purge Your Prose of Problems, a book doctor's desk reference, available only at ZebraEditor.com.)

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Words Writers Should Know

Gawlix

gaw·lix 'grò-,liks (noun)

plural: gawlixes

A series of typographical symbols (such as \$#!) used in text as a replacement for profanity

"It's impossible to quote Ryan directly without liberal use of the gawlix" -Steve Rushin

(Excerpt from the Merriam-Webster dictionary)

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Pickup/Pick Up/Pick-up

Which word is correct? When is it one word or two words? When should it be hyphenated? You're not the only person confused, but a professional editor knows the answer.

Where do the commas go? What is the prudent and correct use of exclamation marks? You don't know what you don't know, and you may think you're right when you're wrong. Every book deserves a professional editor.

Zebra Communications offers three levels of service, two of which include developmental editing and an extensive report filled with advice, explanations, and suggestions on how to improve the manuscript's marketability. See our services, pricing, reviews, and more at [www.ZebraEditor.com](http://www.ZebraEditor.com). Zebra Communications: Excellent Editing for Maximum Marketability

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Writers Strike Continues

ABC reported that the Writers Guild rejected the latest offer from TV and movie studios August 22, 113 days after

Hollywood writers went on strike.

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Bobbie's Blogs

The book that changed my life: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/the-book-that-changed-my-life-a-tribute-to-wayne-dyer/>

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How to Become a Successful Freelance Writer

<https://www.writermag.com/get-published/freelance-writing/successful-freelance-writer/>

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Be My Friend on Facebook

Follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>

Follow Zebra Communications on Facebook for news for writers, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff. <https://tinyurl.com/ydyn3pcu>.

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CMOS Online Q&A

This month someone posed the following question to The Chicago Manual of Style Online, and it's one I address in many of the manuscripts I've edited:

Q. When should you capitalize AM and PM?

To get the answer to this question and many more based on Chicago style, go to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>.

The Chicago Manual of Style sets the standard in book publishing for issues such as punctuation, capitalization, and much more. If you write fiction or nonfiction books, you will want to know about Chicago style or be sure to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style.

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Write Tight: Learn What To Look For, How to Look for It, and What to Delete

In five-time award-winning \_Write In Style\_ you'll learn how to find and delete or rewrite words, sentences, and phrases that weaken your writing.

\_Write In Style\_ uses humor and expertise to show writers how to tighten and strengthen their writing and create a fresh voice.

\_Write In Style\_ is also available as an e-book or printed through the following source, although you may pay for shipping for the printed book: <https://tinyurl.com/y8fp5nym>.

Want to buy the book in Kobo through Rakuten? Easy. Go to <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/write-in-style-3>

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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

The Unnamed Press

The Unnamed Press is a leading independent publisher of fiction and nonfiction based in Los Angeles and founded in 2014. Our books represent a diverse list of voices—ones that challenge conventional perspectives while appealing to a broad general audience: exciting, radical, urgent. We nurture emerging talent and partner with more established authors to help their platform grow.

Considering a submission to Unnamed Press?

Before you do, please look at our catalog to determine whether working with us would be a suitable match, both for your book and you.

Queries and submissions can be addressed to [info @ unnamedpress DOT com](mailto:info@unnamedpress.com). Please include a manuscript. Due to the extremely high volume of submissions we receive, we cannot confirm receipt of every query. If we are interested we will contact you directly. For more details see <https://www.unnamedpress.com>

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The Forge Literary Magazine

<https://forgelitmag.com/competition/>

We hold flash fiction and flash nonfiction competitions annually. The entry fee is \$5 for a flash prose under 1,000 words. We strongly believe in removing barriers to submission. If you are a low-income writer and the \$5 fee poses any hardship, we warmly encourage you to submit to our free categories, no questions asked. The fee-free entries are capped at 100 pieces per category. If you are comfortably able to afford the fee, please leave the free submission slots for those who are not. Thank you for your generosity and consideration.

In 2023, the first-place winners will be awarded \$1,000.00 (writers who reside outside the United States must be able to receive payment via PayPal) and publication. Additional prizes might be offered at our discretion. Submissions open

September 1 each year with the submission window closing on September 14 or when we reach our Submittable limit, so hurry! Please read the full guidelines on the website carefully and submit your brilliant flash prose.

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Margret McBride Literary Agency

Our agency welcomes the opportunity to review your work. As of July 20, 2020, we are no longer accepting email queries. Please submit your query or proposal via QueryManager:

<https://QueryManager.com/MargretMcBrideLiteraryAgency>

Please note, for works of nonfiction, we require a complete, polished book proposal. Your book proposal should include a 1-2 page overview of the book (think of it as your elevator pitch), information regarding your author platform, a promotion/marketing plan, a comparative works section, chapter summaries, and at least two sample chapters. We have included general proposal guidelines at <http://www.mcbrideliterary.com/submission-guidelines>.

For more detailed information and guidance about writing book proposals, we recommend the books Write the Perfect Book Proposal by Jeff Herman and Deborah Levine-Herman, How To Write a Book Proposal by Michael Larsen, and this excellent post about book proposals on Jane Friedman's website.

Due to the volume of queries we receive, we ask that you allow six to eight weeks for a response. In the meantime, please inform us if you receive interest from other agents, or if you have contracted with another agent.

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Send it in the body of an email to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com. Deadline: 18th 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 <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and signing up for The Writers Network News.

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