The YPublish Introduction Packet
An Introduction to the
YPublish Reference Collection
for
Student Writers
about to Become
Published Writers

For more information, email the YPublish Club at ypublish@gmail.com
Using the YPublish Reference Collection

How do I start?

You have a manuscript. Your piece may be fiction or nonfiction, or it may even be art, music, or photography. After you browse through this binder and the YPublish Submissions Helps website (see the YPublish Club website, accessible through http://clubs.byu.edu, for more information), sit down for at least half an hour with Writer’s Market and the other books in YPublish Submissions Helps. Almost all of your general questions can be answered this way. By doing this, you can familiarize yourself with the publication process and find markets for your work.

What next?

Once you find possible markets, you may need to adjust your piece to fit them better. Also, pay close attention to whether you will need a query or cover letter for each market, whether a magazine, journal, or book, and approach them accordingly. At this point, you sell yourself as a writer and your work as worth publishing.

What if I need more information?

Email the YPublish Club at ypublish@gmail.com. Club members are willing to answer basic questions about the submissions process. Also, your email will add you to the YPublish newsletter, keeping you up to date on publication opportunities. Further, you will be informed of various Club activities, which are open to campus at large, and focus on training to become better and more frequently published writers. Lastly, you can join the YPublish Club and participate in events or even in a writing group.

What are the limits and the rules?

The books in the reference collection for YPublish Submissions Helps only go as far as the photocopier and back. The YPublish Submissions Helps are open from 9 a.m.–5 p.m. daily, whenever 4037 JKB is open, and are free for use within that room any time a class is not meeting there. (Class schedules are posted on the door.) Do not remove any books from the fourth floor of the JKB and always put them back.

Help given by any member of the YPublish Club is not considered professional, is not on a contract basis, and constitutes no formal arrangement. The Club will not expect a cut from your royalties; if for some reason the Club cannot help you, whether due to time constraints or any other reason, the YPublish Submissions Helps are always open to you. As said one novice club member: “I learned all I needed to about publication by reading Writer’s Market, especially the front pages. I’ve now published more than some significant campus writers.” Your decision to use these materials means you recognize that they are helps, not end-all answers for publication.

Good luck in your quest through the submissions process on to publication!
The Publishing Process

Why should you publish your work?

Publishing your work can open doors to graduate schools, employment, even jobs as few other things can. You can often spread the gospel through your writing, even if the topic is astronomy or linguistics.

If you have created something good—writing, art, music—it deserves to be published, and the chances are probably better than you think. Undergraduate students at BYU have sold and published articles, stories, and poems in magazines, newspapers, and journals, as well as photographs, drawings and paintings, music, and even books; one became a best-seller before the author graduated.

This binder contains some basic information on how you go about getting your work into print and/or on-line.

Section one: Markets. How to find the right place to send your specific work.

Second two: Submission. How to prepare that work for publishers and how to send it to them.

Section three: Rejection or Acceptance. How to react to disappointment and success.

For further information, contact the YPublish Club at ypublish@gmail.com and check their Reference Collection house in the Humanities Publication Center, 4037 JKB.

Note: The publishers, editors, policies, websites and other specific information about companies and individuals listed here may change from time to time, so ask questions and read current websites carefully.

Some of the websites given here represent non-profit organizations and some belong to commercial organizations. They are recommended here for the free information given on their websites, not for any products or services they may sell.

All of these are suggestions only. Neither BYU nor the YPublish Club necessarily recommends any of these publishers or websites unconditionally—except maybe the LDS Church magazines. They treat new writers very kindly.
Section 1: Searching the Markets

The first step in publishing your work is locating the appropriate market(s) that would be interested. This section has materials on locating the right place.

Obviously some pieces are applicable to a specific set of publications. Microbiology journals are extraordinary, but they don’t want to know about your Boy Scout camping trip unless it includes some new information about a microbe or two. *Boys’ Life*, however, would love to hear it.

But even scholarly work can find a home in popular presses. One student wrote an excellent article about using positive reinforcement to help children learn to behave well. Then a tutor trained in publishing suggested he check the parent and family magazines. All he needed to do was change the format from scholarly to something like *10 quick tricks to get your kids to mind* and he had two sets of markets—one of them offering prestige for his first format and the other offer $1500 for his second—both valid possibilities.

*This section contains information on places to look, tips from established authors, possible pitfalls, and gearing work to a specific market.*
Section 2: Sending Your Work Off

Once you have found a market and geared your work toward it, then it’s time to send it off. This section tells you about querying publishers and submitting your work.

**Non-fiction:** Publishers will often accept, either by email or snail mail (check *Writer’s Market* and the company’s website to be sure which you market wants) a query letter with a quick synopsis of your work. See the pages on query letters in this section.

**Fiction:** Send the entire manuscript, plus a synopsis and a submission letter. See the pages on writing synopses and submission letters in this section. See *Writer’s Market*, *Children’s Writer’s Market*, or *Novel and Short Story Writer’s Market* for more information. Copies are kept by YPublish Submissions Helps in the reference collection.

**Poetry:** Send the poem(s) with a submission letter. See the pages on submission letters in this section. See *Poet’s Market*, located in the YPublish Submissions Helps reference collection, for a copy.

**Art:** Check the current issue of *Artists and Illustrators’ Market*. You should be able to find a copy in the HBLL or the public library and probably that and more in the Art Department. Additionally, some copies are kept in the reference collection of YPublish Submissions Helps.

**Photographs:** Check the current issue of *Photographer’s Market*. You should be able to find a copy in the HBLL or the public library and probably in the departments that deal in photography and illustrations. Additionally, some copies are kept in the reference collection of YPublish Submissions Helps.

**Music:** Check the current issue of *Songwriter’s Market*. You should be able to find a copy in the HBLL or the public library and probably in the Music Department. Additionally, some copies are kept in the reference collection of YPublish Submissions Helps.

In all cases:

- Be sure to include your name, address (both street and email), and telephone, home and cell if you have both, including area code(s).

- Offer to revise to meet the needs of that specific publication. They may ask for a side bar, a revision of the text, lengthening or shortening to meet their format, or similar changes, sometimes for a reason as simple as making it fit in the space available.

- Be sure it is in the proper format required for that market—printed, digital, Adobe, whatever.

*This section contains information and samples of query and submission letters, writing synopses and manuscript preparation.*
Section 3: Dealing with Acceptance and Rejection

Once your work reaches the market you have chosen, a series of events begins. This section tells you how to deal with those events and their consequences.

Unsolicited submissions usually go into what is unceremoniously called “the slush pile.” A junior editor (sometimes a secretary) reads it and makes the initial decision: either reject and send it back to you or hand it along to the next editor up the chain. That means it’s a good thing if you don’t hear anything for a few weeks. Rarely does an acceptance come right back. Some publishers may give you an idea of how long they will take; others don’t. If you haven’t heard anything by about six months, it’s all right to call and ask—but be very polite about it.

Rejection

Rejection notices tend to be forms, ranging from small cards (one publishers actually uses one that curtly says, “We don’t want this”) to form letters or forms with places for editors to check why they don’t want it. There are a few samples in this section. If you get an actual letter from an editor, you have done very well. If they tell you to send something else, your chances just went up sharply. Send them something else if you have anything you think will work.

What to do with a rejection: File it, save it to paper a wall, learn what you can from it. Then move on to another market. Rejection doesn’t mean the work isn’t good. Almost no author’s first submission is accepted (OK, so Isaac Asimov’s was [and he was 17 at that], but he’s too unusual to count). Dr. Seuss’s first book was rejected by 35 publishers; Theodore Driesser’s Sister Carrie by over 300. This really is a place to think that “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”

Acceptance

Shout for joy. Call your mother. Then read the small print.

For short articles, stories, poems, visual art, publishers may buy limited rights—something like first publication and first reprint rights. If they buy all rights, they usually say so and pay more. Even those that buy all rights may allow you reprint options with credit given to them.

Some publishers want to own the copyright; others allow you to keep the copyright in your own name even through the entire work (that issue of the magazine or journal or that collected book) must be copyrighted by the publisher of the whole thing.

This section contains information and samples of rejection letters, reading contracts, and warnings about some possible pitfalls.
Definitions of Three Kinds of Publishers

Commercial Publishers

Commercial publishers are out to make money, so they are looking for works that will sell well. Their works tend to be popular and some will specialize in specific genres – mysteries, science fiction, biographies and so forth. Some require agents; others will accept unsolicited manuscripts.

Check *Writer’s Market* if you have written a novel or short story, a book or article on travel or games or hobbies or any kind of activity or interest. *Writer’s Market* will tell you want each publisher accepts, how they pay, what they require, and sometimes specific ideas of their needs.

Non-Profit Publishers

Non-profit publishers are exactly what the name implies: Their chief purpose in publishing is not to make money. While that seems counter to the capitalist system, these can be excellent outlets, and some even pay royalties to authors.

University Presses specialize in, obviously, scholarly works. Charities and non-profit organizations publish newsletters, magazines, journals, and even books. Professional organizations have their own publications; if you are going into medicine, you will quickly discover the value of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, for example.

Check with the specific department that covers your field. Many departments have faculty mentors designated to help students publish. Some departments maintain their own libraries of scholarly journals and books in their areas.

The specialized subject librarians in the HBLL can guide you to the journals and publishers who deal in your field and can help guide your research in the area.

Self-Publishing

Self-publishing means simply that authors pay all costs of editing, formatting, printing, and binding for a book. They also handle distribution and sales, if any. Self-publishing can be the best route for things like personal and family histories, but it can also work for authors of other works. Richard Paul Evans, for example, originally wrote *The Christmas Box* for his two daughters, publishing it himself. Only after it sold very well did established publishers offer him contracts—but Evans is in marketing and knew how to promote it. Marketing and promotion are always the hardest parts of self-publishing.

BYU Print and Mail Production Center, Lobby, UPB, 801-422-2741 can give you good advice. Whether you are self-publishing in Provo or in your home town, simply check online or in local telephone directories for listings of printers and publishers who will work with you. Then call and compare prices and services.
Places to Look for Help

Your own department: Many departments or colleges on campus have someone designated to help students find a place to publish their work. In any cases, professors from individual classes have been extremely gracious about helping students publish their own work or giving credit for the help students give in the professor’s research.

The YPublish Club: Look online through BYUSA Clubs and find the link to the YPublish club, or email your questions directly to ypublish@gmail.com. If you are really interested in writing and publishing, this is an organization you will doubtless want to join. Club events feature speakers and panels—writers, editors, publishers, illustrators, and other professionals who can help you learn the ropes.

The club also maintains a reference collection in the Humanities Publication Center, 4037 JKB. They have information for on-campus journals and magazines, most of them need submissions and editors every semester. The reference collection also has files full of good advice and suggestions, and, best of all, YPublish has people who know what they are doing.

Writer’s Digest magazine: Writer’s Digest magazine publishes excellent articles by authors, editors, publishers, and reviewers about how to write and sell your writing. Each issue will focus on a specific genre or type—science fiction one month and travel articles the next. Copies are available in the HBLL and several department libraries.

Writer’s Market books: Annually, Writer’s Market produces a series of book on markets in a range of specific areas, from children’s literature to novels to music. The HBLL, the YPublish Submissions Helps, and the bookstore all have copies of many of them.

Conferences and Workshops: Perhaps the best place for beginning writers to look for markets, and even more important, make contacts, are meetings with other writers and editors. Dozens are available—The Association for Mormon Letters, BYU’s annual summer workshop on children’s and young adult writing, conferences in your specific field—ask in departments, watch bulletin boards, and graze online for notices.

Websites: Check publishers’ websites for information on their specific needs. Simply Googling a topic can sometimes take you to some possible markets.

Most writing genres have associations, like the Science Fiction Writers of America (sfwa.org) or Mystery Writers of America (mysterywriters.org). Even scholarly organizations, like the Utah State Historical Society (history.utah.gov), have websites. While those websites are geared to their specific audience, they also contain good information on topics of use to writers in other genres—how to write a synopsis, what to look for in a contract, even warnings about current scams.
LDS Markets: Short Works

Several periodicals accept short stories, poems, essays, and articles about LDS life, history, or theology. Check their websites for writer’s guidelines and submission policies. Some accept student writing; some require faculty mentors to submit; some run annual contests for students.

*Ancestry Magazine*  ancestrymagazine.com

(The Generations Network, previously known as MyFamily.com)

*BYU Magazine*  magazine.byu.edu

207 UPB
801-422-1963

*BYU Studies*  byustudies.byu.edu

242L CB
801-422-3168

*Exponent II*  exponentII.org

P.O. Box 128
Arlington, MA 02476

Exponent II is a non-profit organization that is made possible by countless volunteer hours and the generosity and support of our faithful readers. The purpose of Exponent II is to provide a forum for Mormon women to share their life experiences in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance.

*Family Voice*  familyvoice.com

3800 W. Morgan Blvd.

Cedar Hills, UT 84062

*Irreantum*  irreantum@mormonletters.org

Journal of the Association for Mormon Letters  aml-online.org

*Irreantum* publishes essays, fiction, poetry, reviews and features information on Mormon publishing.
“Segullah is a journal published three times annually to encourage literary talent, provoke thought and promote greater understanding and faith among Latter-day Saint women. We publish insightful writings which explore life’s richness and complexity while reflecting faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our aim is to highlight a variety of women’s perspectives within a framework of shared
beliefs and values.”

**Student Publications on Campus**

For current information about campus student publications, check the YPublish Reference Collection in the Humanities Publication Center, 4037 JKB.

**Note:**

Two journals and their associated symposia that focus on LDS issues, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (dialoguejournal.com), and *Sunstone* (www.sunstonemagazine.com) have at various times been deemed inappropriate markets for BYU faculty and students. Check with a faculty mentor if you are considering submissions to either of those.
LDS Markets: Longer Works

A number of publishing houses accept manuscripts for book with LDS themes or materials.

**Deseret Book**  deseretbook.com/pages/author_guidelines

40 East South State Street
Sal Lake City, Utah, 84111
801-534-1515

**Cedar Fort**  cedarfort.com/submission.htm

925 North Main Street
Springville, Utah 84663
801-489-4084

Imprints: Pioneer Plus

**FCP Publishing**

612 West 1550 North
Orem, Utah 84057

Imprints: Sharpspear Press

**Granite Publishing**

868 North 1430 West
Orem, UT 84057

801-229-9023

(They do full publishing, distributions and marketing, but they also offer printing services for people who want to self-publish.)

**Greg Kofford Books**  koffordbooks.com/submission.shtml

PO Box 1362

11444 South 1789 E.
Draper, UT 84092
801-523-6063

**Horizon Publishers**
191 N. 650 E.
Bountiful, Utah 84111
801-295-9451

**Millennial Press**  Ryan L. Bott, director of operations
CP.O. Box 1741 Orem,
UT 84059-1741
801-434-7478

**Parables Publishing**
PO Box 58
Woodsboro, MD 21798-0058
301-845-7040

**Rosehaven Publishing**
PO Box 247
Pleasant Grove, UT 84602
801-796-7605

**WindRiver Publishing, Inc.**
72 N. WindRiver Road
Silverton, ID 83867-0446
208-752-1836

Imprints: Mapletree
Zarahemla Books          zarahemlabooks.com
869 E 2680 N
Provo, UT 84604
(801) 368-7374
info@zarahemlabooks.com

Look for additional information LDS writers and publishers through:

Latter-day Authors
.latterdayauthors.com

This site contains links to websites for LDS writers, editors and publishers and information on contests, manuscript formatting and discussions in the LDS writing community.

Association for Mormon Letters        aml-onlinc.org

Find material on the association, its annual conferences, contests, and other insights into writing for the LDS community.

YPublish Submissions Helps’ reference collection in the Humanities Publication Center, 4037 JKB or email ypublish@gmail.com

The YPublish materials include writers’ guidelines, current needs of publishers, and other information vital to publishing in the LDS community.
Contests

Contests are often the best way for a new writer to get exposure, to be published, and even to break into a market. New contests are constantly popping up and even with established contests, the deadlines shift, so for current information, check with the YPublish Club or email questions to ypublish@gmail.com.

Here are a few established contests of particular interest to BYU students:

American Bar Association  http://www.abanet.org/lsd/competitions/writing-contests/

ABA has two dozen different contests for aspiring lawyers.

The Atlantic Student Writing Contests  theatlantic.com

The Atlantic annually sponsors contests in essays, fiction, poetry, open only to college students. Atlantic has a great reputation, so a break through here carries considerable weight.

The Elie Wiesel Essay Contest  eliewieselfoundation.org/

Wiesel is a holocaust survivor and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. His organization, the Elie Wiesel Foundation, sponsors an annual essay contest on the topic of ethics.

Deseret News  deseretnews.com

The Salt Lake City based Deseret News annually sponsors a contest for AThe Christmas I Remember Best.@

The Nation student writing contest  http://www.thenation.com/section/studentnation

The Nation focuses on politics, law, current issues.

Transitions Abroad  http://www.transitionsabroad.com/information/writers/student.shtml

Send your experiences on a study abroad program or just your own travels.

Poets & Writers Magazines annually lists writing contests in fiction, poetry, and essays at http://www.pw.org/content/deadlines

Watch for contests posted in specific BYU departments, especially in your own major.

Try an online search for Astudent writing contests. Then do some checking to make sure which ones are legitimate. You can start your investigation by emailing the YPublish Club at ypublish@gmail.com
Children’s and Young Adult Literature: Books

Young Adult and children’s literature are two of the most difficult areas for new writers to enter. Publishers receive thousands of submissions a year, and many publishers will not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

Because children’s books usually also involve illustrations, most publishing houses have their own lists of illustrators they want to use. Unless you are doing your own illustrations (a la Dr. Seuss, send only the text for the book.

Check Children’s Writer’s Market to see which publishers will consider your work.

Check the same work for agents who might be willing to look at your work.

Visit a good bookstore and see what is currently selling. That gives you an idea of what publishers are looking for right now.

Talk with creative writing teachers in the English Department and professors who deal with elementary education in the Education Department.

Attend the annual Children’s and Young Adult Writing Conference sponsored by the English department every summer.

Websites

As with any website, use good judgment and ask for help from the YPublish Club.

Rick Walton’s Home page http://www.rickwalton.com

Rick Walton is a very successful Utah author of children’s books, and he often teaches classes or presents seminars at BYU. He is also incredibly generous about helping young authors.

The First Story thefirststory.org

Cheri Earl and Carol Lynch Williams, two very good local writers who have often participated in seminars and workshops on writing, have some good suggestions.

The Purple Crayon: http://www.underdown.org/

AI am a children’s book editor, and I created this site so I could post articles and other materials about children’s book publishing. Over the years, the site has grown and now includes articles contributed by other people, covering writing, illustrating, marketing, and editing.

Write 4 Kids: http://www.write4kids.com/getstarted.html

Presented by the AChildren’s Book Insider,@ the newsletter of children’s writers.

Or just Google “writing children’s books” or a similar keyword.
Children’s and Young Adult Literature: Contests

Perhaps the best entrance to children and YA publication is through contests.

Delacourt Writing Contests randomhouse.com/kids/writingcontests

Delacorte Yearling Contest for Middle Grade Readers, formerly the Marguerite de Angeli Contest
Random House, Inc.
1745 Broadway, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10019

The contest for middle grade books awards a contract for the best manuscript for contemporary or historical fiction for 9 to 12 year olds, $1,500 in cash and a $7,500 advance against royalties. In several cases, runners-up have also been awarded book contracts.

Delacorte Press Contest
Random House, Inc.
1745 Broadway, 9th Floor
New York, New York 10019

This contest seeks books for children ages 12 to 18. Manuscripts should be no shorter than 100 typewritten pages and no longer than 224 typewritten pages. Include a brief plot summary with your covering letter. Winner will receive a book contract, $1,500 in cash and $7,500 advance against royalties.

Milkweed Prize for Children’s Literature milkweed.org

Milkweed is a non-profit organization that publishes quality literature for both adults and children. You can enter the contest or just send a manuscript to

Milkweed Editions
1011 Washington Avenue South
Open Book, Suite 300
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Individual publishers and magazine periodically sponsor contests.
Children’s and Young Adult Literature: Periodicals

One of the best ways to break into writing in any field, but especially writing for children and young adults is though periodicals—and there are a lot of periodicals out there. When you can list a few periodical publications to your credit, book editors will take your manuscript submissions more seriously.

Check the current *Children’s Writer’s Market*.

Go to the children’s book collection in the HBLL; it’s remarkable. You can do a massive amount of market research in the comfort of the library.

Check bookstores and magazine shops to see what is currently selling.

Consider publishers who deal in a range of publications.

**Children’s Better Health Institute**  http://www.cbhi.org/cbhi/magazines/index.shtml

They publish *Turtle, Humpty Dumpty, Children’s Playmate, Jack and Jill* and *Children’s Digest*, each one geared for a specific age range. If you cannot tell which age your poem or story is best suited for, they can.

**Cobblestone and Cricket**  http://www.cobblestonepub.com/index.html

Originally set up to serve gifted children, the company has expanded to publish a range of magazines, geared to specific ages and interests.

**Highlights**  http://www.highlights.com

The staple of every doctor’s office and hair salon, *Highlights* features fiction and non-fiction, games, puzzles, and activities.

And don’t forget *The Friend*. It’s local, which means the editors know who BYU students are and appreciate what they can do.

Those are only a very few possibilities. Google “children’s magazines” or a similar keyword and get a wide range of options.
Clear and Present Dangers: Things to Check

Unfortunately, as in all industries, there are sharks in the writing and publishing waters—and there are new scams all the time—so watch out for anything like the following items:

Some publishers may place limitations on you. There was a local publisher who required authors of books to sign contracts giving the publisher right of first refusal (effectively control of the author’s output) for everything that author wrote for the next 15 years. It’s both immoral and illegal but very expensive to fight once you have signed the contract. Don’t sign a contract like that unless you are over 85 years of age—and not even then.

A reasonable restriction would be, for example, if they publish your book of jokes for 10 to 12 year-old boys, a requirement not to publish a similar joke book for boys 10 to 12 for two years. You can still write for girls or for boys younger or older, or you could write adventures and not jokes, or so on.

Some publishers buy all rights. For a short magazine article, that’s not a problem. For the first chapter of a book, it’s a huge problem. Most will negotiate. LDS Church magazines, for example, buy all rights so that material can be translated for the Liahona, used in seminary manuals or Primary manuals or similar materials, but they will usually allow the author reprint possibilities upon request.

Places to Go for Help:

Writers Bewaresfwa.org/beware

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America maintain this website to post messages from writers about unscrupulous publishers or agents. There are links scattered throughout to similar pages and lists of A thumbs down@ agents or publishers. It does not claim to be complete, but it is updated frequently as new reports come in.

Ask professors in the fields in which you are looking—creative writing teachers for fiction, religion teachers for inspirational works, and so forth.

Ask the YPublish Clubypublish@gmail.com

Even if the club has not have heard of the specific group or individual you are asking about, they may be able to put it in context for you.

J. Reuben Clark Law Society 404 JRCB 422-1407

Law students are sometimes available to answer questions.

BYU Copyright Licensing Office 3760 HBLL 801.422.9339

Staff will help answer your questions about copyrights.
Agents: Take Them or Leave Them?

Whether to use agents has become a far more difficult question over the last several years, especially for writers of fiction. Publishers used to take un-agented works readily, but several factors have changed the landscape.

Authors, publishers, film directors and producers who achieve great success know they are bound to be sued. They make easy targets and many simply pay off rather than lose the time and court costs. The writers and producers of some films have even started pools to guess how many suits will be filed if the picture is a big success. It helps to have a sense of humor about the whole thing.

Moreover, lots of people have similar ideas and can even reasonably claim authorship or a notion if not of the text itself. J. K. Rowling was sued because someone had used the word “muggles” in a published book; in that book it didn’t mean non-magical people and the book didn’t sell at all well. There was no indication Rowling had ever even known about it, let alone read it, but that suit took a lot of time and money to fight.

As a result, many publishers, especially of books, will no longer accept works directly from authors. Some will not accept unsolicited works at all. Check Writer’s Market to learn individual publishers’ policies.

Writer’s Market also lists agents, saying what each one will handle—science fiction, romance novels, non-fiction—and whether they are accepting new clients. It also has information about what writers can and cannot expect an agent to do.

Check Writers Beware on the Science Fiction Writers of America website (sfwa.org/beware) for postings by writers about really unscrupulous agents or publishers.
**Adult Fiction: Synopsis**

You can’t query on fiction; you must send the entire manuscript, but most publishers also want a synopsis of the story.

You do not need to break the synopsis into chapters. Paragraphs are fine. Just give an overall plot summary of the whole story. The crucial thing is that you are also doing a sales job to get them to buy your manuscript. Put in some flavor of the experiences, possibly even some quotations. You can take two or three pages if you need them.

**Help with synopses**

Wikipedia has an entry on writing summaries at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_to_write_a_plot_summary

Writing World (which is a site that promotes self-publishing; just ignore that part of it) has some good ideas and samples


You can find examples in any of the literature for dummies series. They may have some in the bookstore.

You could also ask at the library information desk if they have any books containing plot summaries.

The crucial thing to remember is that you make your book sound very, very good.
Put some publish in your pencil.

The YPublish Club is a BYUSA-sponsored club with connections to departments all across campus. We work both with those who are self-identified writers and those who are writing by default to help them navigate the submission process and get their work published. The secret behind publication is not just writing to put your idea down on paper. It’s not just writing to get a grade.

The secret behind publication is writing to get published.
The Mindset: Purpose and Audience

Art for art’s sake and papers for grades’ sake both have their places, but in preparing a piece for publication, you need to consider your purpose and your audience.

Your Manuscript

Regardless what you’ve written—research paper, short story, novel, song lyrics, poetry—there comes a point where you finally feel that it’s done. All your hard work has paid off as you can sigh with relief, get it off your shoulders, and call it complete—or at least “good enough.” (Sometimes, that sigh comes half-hopefully as you hurry to turn in that research paper that was due this morning.)

However, the difference between what you call complete and what a publisher calls complete includes a series of factors, such as appeal to the readership, alignment with certain goals, and appropriateness for the market. To many writers, it is a shock to realize that their “finished” manuscript, in the eyes of a potential publisher, really isn’t finished at all. Understanding that—and understanding what extra touches can bring on that finishing polish—will help you to feel more confident in submitting your piece and to have more success in getting it published.

Your Purpose

Magazines craft mission statements, book publishers espouse ideals, and other groups set their own goals all to know what it is they’re about and how it is they’ll go about it. Your piece needs to match that mission in order to be considered for publication. Before matching any other group’s mission, though, your piece needs to match your own.

“I wrote this for a grade” is not an acceptable purpose when you submit for publication. Your manuscript needs to have a guiding objective. Its purpose could be to inform, to reveal a new development in your field, to entertain, to expose a flaw, to recreate life, or to demonstrate the effects of feminism or power or language or ethics or even just story on a given culture or community or individual or collective. Your purpose is what you want your readers to take away when they set the manuscript down.

And if the purpose of your research paper initially was just to write for a grade, think about how you could use that information to more effectively inform—and then figure out who needs that information.

Your Audience

With your purpose well in hand, it’s time to tailor that purpose to who specifically needs it. To continue the research paper example, you may have your capstone piece, say, that examines family dynamics surrounding conversations at dinner time. It’s fascinating to you and to your professor, but what about the world at large?

Twenty or thirty pages of information is a lot for a magazine to swallow—but a parenting magazine might be interested if you can make it fit. Your purpose is to inform but your audience doesn’t want more than three pages of information, so you pick out the juiciest parts and slap on a story or two—
now you fit your audience. Or maybe you do want your audience to stay in the scholarly realm; in that case, you revise to make the piece fit the scholarly conversation.

Whatever your purpose, you can make it fit your audience; but to get published, you need to know who your audience is. Ask yourself: Who would want to read this? Who could this information or story benefit? Who is most likely to get excited about this piece and run to share it with a friend—and if the answer really is “my mother,” what is it about your mother’s interest that you can use to good effect in your writing?

**Two Types of Writers**

As you work with your purpose and your audience, remember that there are two types of writers: there are writers who write and there are people who write. The writers who write are the types that carry pens wherever they go, wear berets, attend writing workshops, and dream of changing the world and living in a purpose house in New Mexico.

But those aren’t the only writers out there—and, in fact, they aren’t the only successful writers. Many successful writers are people in other fields, such as politics, engineering, mathematics, medicine, education, the sciences, and marriage, family, and human development. What makes these people writers is that when they have to write, they think in terms of their purpose and their audience. Instead of cranking out a paper for a grade or to please a department chair, they write to get published. That’s the key—if you write to get published, you will.
The Obstacle: Troublesome Terms and Concepts

Both for experienced and inexperienced submitters of writing, understanding the basic jargon of the publishing world will make the process all the more smooth.

Agent

Usually, you will only need an agent for book-length projects, and not even for all of those. Agents know the business of publication. They liaise between you and your publisher, getting the best royalties and advances they can for you (because they take a cut of those). When you submit for publication, consider submitting both to agents and to publishers.

Byline

This is the line of text (usually in a magazine) that says “By [Your Name].” Generally, when you get something published in a magazine, you’ll receive a byline if it’s a long enough article—and because most publications use their staff to write the shorter pieces, you should probably get a byline.

Contract

All reputable publishers and publications will send you a contract before publishing your piece. Your contract includes your payment terms (whether including royalties or a fixed payment or both) and a description of what rights are being purchased. Be sure that you understand your contract and that you keep a copy.

Cover Letter

If a publisher wants to see your actual manuscript—whether in whole or in part—send a cover letter along. And it doesn’t matter whether the publisher wants to receive a hard copy or an email attachment; that just lets you know whether your cover letter gets printed out or pasted in the email text. Usually, fiction publishers want to see your manuscript and a cover letter.

Your cover letter sells you and your manuscript to the publisher, giving a quick glimpse into the piece and why you wrote it for them. To learn how to write an effective cover letter, consult Writer’s Market.

Editor

Usually, this is the person who sees your manuscript first, whether at a large or small publication. Editors select and revise manuscripts. If time permits, they will work fairly extensively with the author to ensure that the appropriate revisions are made. Such revisions may include adjustments in organization, voice, characterization, tone, and even content, to make sure that the manuscript lines up with the purpose and audience of the publication.

Freelancer

Freelancer is likely a label that will apply to you. Unless you are part of the staff at a publication, you are freelancing—that is, working from your home to create writing worthy of publication.
Manuscript

Your piece of writing or composing as it stands, pre-publication. Often, a publisher will help you revise your manuscript before printing it.

Market

The market, at large, is that great force of supply and demand that helps determine just how valuable your piece is in terms of money and its ability to be published. With that said, however, you don’t always have to sacrifice your art for the market.

(A) Market

A market is a specific segment of the greater market at large. Sometimes, a market could mean fishing magazines—note that the market is the specific place or places you could publish to a chosen audience (in the case of fishing magazines, the market, the audience would be people who go fishing or are otherwise involved in fishing). Sometimes, a market could be used to mean one specific target: the Ensign would be your market for personal, spiritual stories.

Periodical

A periodical is a publication that comes out on a regular timetable, such as a weekly newspaper or quarterly magazine.

Publication

In general terms, publication is what happens when your words go out to the world. (Even your blog is a form of publication.) You aren’t always paid when you get published, but if somebody likes your work well enough to publish it, that’s a good first step. A publication also means a complete set of published material. Your magazine article would not be a publication, but the magazine containing it would be (and so would the book, and the journal, and the sheet music . . .). Often, publication is synonymous with periodical.

Publisher

A publisher prints or e-creates publications and sends them out to readers. The publisher is the person or entity behind the publication, and either the publisher or the publisher’s editors are the ones deciding whether your piece matches their purpose and speaks to their audience. Often, whereas a publication is a magazine, a publisher is a selector and publisher of books.

Query Letter

This is not the same as a cover letter. A query letter does not accompany a manuscript; a query letter enters the market all on its own. It describes your idea, why a given publication needs to print that idea, and what qualifications you have to write that idea down with your name printed alongside.

More often than not, it will be nonfiction publications that want to see a query letter before having you invest your time in writing. (If you already have your research paper or other piece written, then,
you would mention that in your query and say that since you intend to revise your piece anyway, you would love some guidance.) For more on writing effective query letters, consult *Writer’s Market’s* Query Letter Clinic or download a sample query letter as part of the YPublish Introduction Packet.

**Rights**

The rights to a work include the permissions and privileges to reproduce or use it in various ways. Copyright—the right to copy a work—is the biggest. Many magazines buy first-time serial rights (permission to print in a magazine for the first time), either for North America or worldwide, and some buy first-time reprint rights (the right to print your piece again, as in an anthology).

Be sure that you understand your rights so that you know how soon you can send your piece out again. Sometimes, once the rights to your manuscript revert to you, you can revise it from a different angle and send it to a different publication. Some authors can get paid for ten or more different versions of what was basically the same idea—as long as they are careful to observe not only their own but also their publishers’ rights.

Depending on the publication or publisher, you should know what rights you want to give up. Church magazines tend to buy all rights, so that the articles can be used in classroom settings without copyright infringement. That’s usually not a problem. If a book publisher, however, wants to buy all rights to this book and your next one, too, you might want to try negotiating a different arrangement.

**Royalties**

Royalties are what authors get paid—book authors, that is—as a percentage of their piece’s sales volume. Usually, a magazine or journal does not pay out royalties. Royalty payments can range anywhere from five to twenty percent, usually hovering around the ten percent mark. Agents can help negotiate royalties.

**Search Engines**

Search engines are websites like Google, Yahoo! and MSN—and they are the best friends of a budding writer. Search for any of the terms on this page to learn more and you will invariably be able to walk away more confident in your understanding of the publishing industry. Also, search engines are a great tool for feeling out the competition.

**Self-Publishing**

Self-publishing means writing, editing, printing, and marketing your piece (usually a book) all by yourself. Of course, you can outsource any of the pieces of the process—say, to a freelance editor or to a marketing company—but you have to be willing to make the investment. If a self-published book performs well enough, it might get picked up by a mainstream publisher.
**Simultaneous Submissions**

When you send your single manuscript to more than one publication at the same time, you are submitting simultaneously. Some publishers will not accept simultaneous submissions.

**Slush Pile**

A term used most often among fiction publications, the slush pile is the stack of unsolicited submissions or unsolicited manuscripts that an editor or publisher must go through to find what he or she wants to publish. Because slush piles can be big, you sometimes won’t hear back about your manuscript until some time has passed.

**Submissions**

Once your manuscript is off your desk and in the mail (or in cyberspace), it is a submission. To get published, you want to have more submissions than you have manuscripts! Also, it is crucial that you format your submissions the way the publisher wants.

**Unsolicited Submissions or Unsolicited Manuscripts**

When you are working as a freelancer, the majority of your submissions will be unsolicited—that is, you see a market you like, find a publication that fits, prepare your piece, and send it off, all without anybody asking you to. Some publications do not accept unsolicited submissions; if that is the case, publish somewhere else. If you make a big enough name for yourself, that publication might eventually come to solicit you for a submission.

**Vanity Press**

A vanity press or print-on-demand publisher is the key element of self-publishing. Some vanity presses will help you with the layout of your book; others will expect you to do most of it (and in either case, if they do help, it usually costs more). Vanity presses charge a per-copy price to print your book (usually cheaper the more you print) and do nothing for marketing it; the marketing is up to you. Sometimes, for an extra fee, they may provide warehouse space. Also, some offer a discount on future print runs of the same material.

**Writer's Guidelines or Submission Guidelines**

All publishers and publications should have writer’s guidelines or submission guidelines. These are the rules that prospective writers need to follow in preparing unsolicited manuscripts. Usually, a quick Internet search can help you find the writer’s guidelines for a specific publication. *Writer’s Market* also lists a summary of the writer’s guidelines for thousands of possible markets. Writer’s guidelines will tell you not only what kind of submissions a publication needs but also the appropriate formatting for your submission.
The Process: Markets and Submissions

Submitting your piece should not be difficult. It may be time-consuming, but knowing how to approach this step lets you use your time most efficiently.

Your Competition

When you sit down to publish something, know what else has been said in that genre or field. Just like you wouldn’t butt into a conversation without at first listening, you need to read the competition. Go to bookstores and libraries. Bookstores have especially great collections of recent magazines. Know what you’re up against so that you don’t send out a repeat.

Your Publishers

While you’re browsing the competition, you should also be getting to know your publishers. Whether you go to the bookstore or library or decide to use Writer’s Market, you need to get a feel for possible places to publish. Knowing the names and the addresses isn’t enough, though; go back and read the last five or ten or entire year’s worth of issues. Know what they’ve printed and how you can make your manuscript match.

Submissions Guidelines and Keeping Records

Be sure that you know the submission guidelines for your chosen publications—do they accept simultaneous submissions? What rights do they buy? For definitions of these terms, see The Obstacle: Troublesome Terms and Concepts. Also, keep track of what you send, where you send it, and when you send it. Whether in a notebook or an Excel spreadsheet, have a record that tracks your submissions.

Most publishers include guidelines about following up. Some say that if you haven’t heard within a certain time period, that’s a rejection; others say that they will respond no matter what within a certain period. Make note of those guidelines so you know when to appropriately follow up; nothing is worse than the writer who hassles the publisher about a manuscript the publisher hasn’t even had a chance to look at yet.

Dos and Don’ts

Do know which editor you need to send your piece to and address it to them personally. Don’t expect that editor to be your instant best friend. Do follow up if you haven’t heard back within the promised window. Don’t be surprised if the editor hasn’t read your piece yet. Do always have another publisher for your piece lined up. Don’t jump the gun. Do be courteous and respectful. Don’t be a diva. Do develop relationships with editors. Don’t stalk them or expect that they bow to your will. Do permit revisions of your piece. Don’t get in the way of your piece getting published.

Acceptance and Rejection

When your piece gets accepted, congratulations! Learn from what you did right and go duplicate it. If your piece is rejected, don’t despair—and don’t hassle the editor with email or phone queries for
writing advice, for whom to submit to next, or for anything else.

Pay attention to the form of the rejection, too. Sometimes, even in standardized rejection letters, the editor may provide a check-the-box form that lets you know why your piece was rejected. If the editor does give you reason to follow up—“We can’t run this piece, but we like your style, can you send us an article about a particular topic we need?”—then follow up immediately. Still, remember that you aren’t published yet—and even if you are, you still need to cultivate the relationship with your editor. Reread the dos and don’ts and live them.
The Helps: YPublish and the Reference Collection

While much of YPublish’s mission involves bringing self-labeled writers together to fine-tune their craft, those writers also gather to help the greater campus community benefit from learning more about submissions by offering expertise, events, and even a reference collection.

Working with Professors

Your professors publish—and if they don’t, they have the insider’s scoop on the professors who do. If you have an academic piece you want to publish, sit down with a professor and talk candidly about publication and not just grades.

Professors can give you realistic expectations and invaluable information. Do everything you can to track down a professor to mentor you through the publication process—and if they want co-authorship, make sure it really is “co,” get your name on it.

Location and Hours: Collection and Club

The YPublish Club meets weekly as a writers’ group to discuss improvements on its members’ writing as we work toward publication. We also take the opening of each meeting to talk generally about publication or specifically about members’ submission attempts. Visit our website at https://secureapp.netclubmgr.com/ICS/CM/V2/Student/Club.aspx?uid=byuniv&ClubId=10169 to find out our meeting times and locations.

In addition to club meetings, YPublish maintains the YPublish Reference Collection in 4037 JKB. This collection includes Writers’ Market and other important books and files that list publishers and tips. Visit our website at https://secureapp.netclubmgr.com/ICS/CM/V2/Student/Club.aspx?uid=byuniv&ClubId=10169 or email us at ypublish@gmail.com to schedule an appointment to visit the Reference Collection and to ask for additional help.

The YPublish Reference Collection is contained within a computer lab that is not an Open Access Lab and is therefore kept locked. However, YPublish members and Reference Collection patrons have the privilege to access the materials according to policy. Email YPublish at ypublish@gmail.com for more information or, if you stop by 4037 JKB and find it open, you are permitted to enter and make use of the Reference Collection materials and any desk space that has not been previously scheduled.

As part of the Reference Collection policy, books are not to leave the fourth floor of the JKB. You may walk down to a photocopier and make copies as needed (and as fall within copyright law), but keep your work confined to 4037 JKB. Your use of the YPublish Reference Collection is a contract between you and YPublish that we will keep the Collection up-to-date and you will take care of it—leaving it as you found it, observing the Honor Code, using it only during open hours, and not creating disturbances.
Club Events

YPublish frequently hosts writing salons, speakers, and other publication- and writing-themed events—including an annual Publishers Fair—to allow writers of all types to meet and learn more about the submission process and writing for publication. Additionally, we send out a newsletter approximately once per week to update members on upcoming submission opportunities. Email us at ypublish@gmail.com to join our newsletter and receive updates on meetings and markets.
Query Letters and Cover Letters

Query letters can save time and postage and can help both the author and the publisher make sure they are moving in the same direction. They are generally used with non-fiction submissions for books or articles that will take considerable research and/or time. Fiction and short articles are just sent in their entirety, except for book manuscripts; book publishers may request the complete manuscript but will more often ask for the first chapter, or the first three, and a synopsis. Such works should be accompanied by a cover letter; while some of the material about query letters applies to cover letters, see page 38 for a sample cover letter to see what does and doesn’t apply.

A writer or editor sends a query letter to a prospective publisher to determine whether they would be interested in a proposed book or article. The book or article itself may or may not be completed at the time the letter is sent, but it must be reasonably under way and a manuscript should follow shortly, especially if the writer expects that publisher to take him/her seriously in the future.

A query letter should contain the following:

1. Complete address, telephone, and e-mail information, including a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) for the publisher to send an answer. Make it as easy as possible for the publisher to make contact.
2. A few statements establishing the credibility of the writer, including information such as education, previous publications, field of expertise, etc.
3. A description of the work proposed – the thesis and a discussion of the material to be covered.
4. An expression of willingness to work with the publisher to make the piece fit their needs.
5. An admission that other publishers are being queried if that is the case. It is consider fair to query several publishers at once so long as they are all aware of it.

Some publishers will accept e-mail queries, but an author needs to determine whether they will before emailing. Writer’s Market has information on publishers and their preferences. Most publishers also have author’s or submission guidelines on their website or will send a copy of them for a SASE.

Your street address
Your city, state, ZIP code
Telephone number including area code
Email address
Current date
Name of the editor, if you know it
Name of the publisher
Address of the publisher
City, state, ZIP code
Sample Query Letter

Dear (editor’s name),

I represent several writers and historians, each of whom is interested in a specific individual or incident in our state’s past that significantly impacted the ecology and led to improvements in our local environment. In addition to the articles themselves, we can make period photographs and illustrations available to accompany the separate chapters.

While much is now being written about saving the planet, readers are often unaware that the movement to improve our use of fuels or recycle materials is over a century old. Among the individuals and topics we intend to cover are the following:

- The campaign by the Salt Lake City Ladies’ Book Club to have sewers installed under city streets in the 1890s.
- Huntsman Chemical Company’s pioneering work on recycling plastic in the 1970s.
- Efforts by electrical engineers at the University of Utah to make solar energy units that could affordably be placed on individual homes.
- Utah Power Company’s flexible rate system which allows solar producers to use energy as needed or to sell back to Utah Power any excess energy they may produce.

I would edit the book and write connecting interchapters and introductions. I am a graduate of Brigham Young University’s editing program and have worked extensively with campus publications. We would, of course, be open to your suggestions and recommendations in all phases of the work.

I have included a few sample pages and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your reply. For your information, I am querying other publishers and will let you know immediately if any of them chooses to accept this book. Thank you for your consideration of our work.

Sincerely,

Your signature here

Your name typed
Sample Email Query

Dear Ms. Editor,

Perhaps the hardest thing about parenting is that it involves children—and perhaps the hardest thing about music lessons is that they involve students. To the on-the-go parent whose children are either involved in or considering music lessons, a quick understanding of how to approach the commitment will definitely help.

I am currently in the process of building a freelancing career, and would like to draw on past experience as a piano teacher to children in order to help express some things that will assist the parent with musically inclined children (or children who would like to incline themselves so). I have been working on an article that explains how parents can shoulder the commitment of private lessons for children without increasing the already hefty burdens of raising them. My plan is to include tips on effective communication with the teacher, helping children to practice, and using the whole process to help the child to learn goal-setting and accountability—not to mention a love of music. I'm aiming for 1,000 words, but can work with something shorter if it will fit better.

I have family ties to the Chesapeake area, which is what caught my interest in your magazine when I found it in the 2008 Writer's Market. I have had a look at the website and feel this article will be a good fit—unique, but universal enough not to be esoteric. It is only fair that I mention as well that I'm querying a few other magazines regarding this topic—none, however, have the same locality of circulation.

As mentioned, I have taught piano to children primarily age 5-10, and am in the process of working on a music minor at Brigham Young University. These credentials of firsthand experience will lend an authentic flavor to the article. I have published once previously in a mainstream magazine, The New Era, a magazine for youth with a circulation of 230,000.

One point from the website that I wasn't clear on was the inclusion of clips and story ideas. The link to the aforementioned story is available here <at this URL>. From the writer's guidelines, it seemed that you wanted greater specifics from local writers. I'll be working from a bit of a distance, but if I ought to send along a second idea or more information, I will gladly do so.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email and consider the article. I hope to hear back soon.

-My email signature
Sample Cover Letter

[My Name]
[My street/apartment address]
[My city/state/zip]
[My Phone]
[My email]

[John Westermann—be specific with the editor’s name]
Director of the Short Fiction Prize
Department of English
Humanities Building
State University of New York at Stony Brook
Stony Brook, NY 11794-5350

Dear Mr. Westermann,

I am submitting my short story, “One Locker Over,” to the Stony Brook Short Fiction Prize. “One Locker Over” recounts three hilariously eventful days in the life of a love struck high school boy, Andrew, and the final maturation out of his middle school years. It is about 5,500 words long, as noted on the first page. The story and evidence of enrollment are included.

I recognize that the website for the Short Fiction Prize noted that while encouragement for Asian writers has been the historical precedent, it would not affect any other entrant’s eligibility; nevertheless, for humor’s sake, I feel to mention that I was born and grew up surrounded by friends and society of generally Asian-American background. My hometown? Right in the middle of the famed Silicon Valley—and I can keep pace with chopsticks at any time.* While not all of that particular background made it into this story, some of those high school experiences likely influenced “One Locker Over,” reflecting universal principles of coming to grips with our maturing.

I am in the process of building up my writing career, working on several projects in both fiction and nonfiction. I have had an anecdotal article published in The New Era, a magazine for youth, and am anxious to continue to expand my writing. Currently, I am an English Major at Brigham Young University and volunteer as a publication tutor there.

Digital copies of “One Locker Over” are available upon request. I am also willing to do any reformatting necessary for publishing, if required. Thank you your time in reading my story.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

*While this is not a prime example of humor, consider using a little to make your cover letter stand out—just don’t go too off-the-wall. Try to feel out the target editor or publication.