

I Wish Someone Had Told Me That!



**64 SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN'S AUTHORS GIVE
YOU THE ADVICE THEY WISH SOMEONE HAD
GIVEN THEM**

By Jon Bard,
Managing Editor, *Children's Book Insider*,
the Newsletter for Children's Writers

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Introduction

Imagine being pulled aside by a successful children's writer. She knows you're embarking upon the same journey she is on, and she's decided to share with you her absolute best advice for the trip. She'll tell you of her greatest mistakes, of her most important lessons and of her true sources of inspiration.

Then she whisks you into a room where 60 more published authors are ready to do the same.

When your head stops spinning, you realize that you are now privy to information that few writers have ever obtained. Advice that will stay with you for a lifetime. Advice you will, perhaps, someday pass on to another fellow sojourner.

The concept behind this ebook is simple. We asked published children's authors to complete these paragraphs:

- When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:
- The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:
- The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:
- The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:
- I *Really* Need To Tell You This:

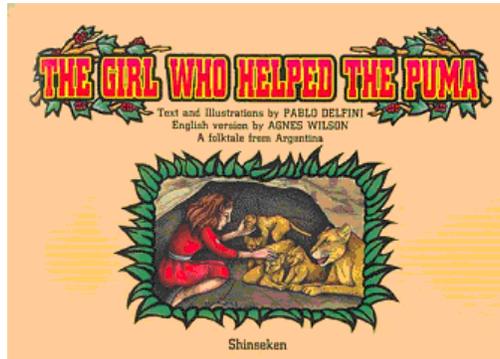
More than 60 authors opened up and shared their thoughts with us. Some are touching, some are funny, some are true nuts & bolts. But all of the responses are truly inspirational.

I hope you find much wisdom and motivation in these words, and that they help make your own journey that much more rewarding.

Jon Bard

Managing Editor,
Children's Book Insider, The Newsletter for Children's Writers
www.Write4Kids.com

Agy Wilson



Agy Wilson lives in Maine with her husband and two children and a houseful of pets. She writes and illustrates features, articles and is working on a graphic novel and revising her picture book, *Duke Day for Annie* for an editor. Her most recent work can be seen in *Windows of Gold*, by Marianne Mitchell, and purchased through <http://www.mariannemitchell.net/album.html>. You can access more of her work, including tutorials at www.Yellapalooza.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

How to balance the everyday with my passion. Putting aside the guilt from pursuing the knowledge and skill necessary to compete in today's market, it takes not just writing, but an immersion in all aspects of the field of children's literature. Thank goodness, this is a passion, a love, because it's not only become my vocation, but my hobby, my free time, my obsession.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Pat McKissack, "Different is not WRONG."

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I haven't made any mistakes, per se. At least I don't think so. But there's definitely been a learning curve. I take that back, I've not mastered how to build a website yet, and it's a priority in the next six months. I think if one wants to be professional, one MUST have a website. It's by far the most cost-effective marketing tool and a great way for people to access you or your work. Even while you're asleep.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Write what's unique to you. Perfect your craft and submit, but make sure what you have to share is YOURS, what's from your heart, mind and soul.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

To stick it out before publication, you have to do it because you love the process. Having the butt-in-chair to come back to it over and over again and wrestle the words, the characters, their story to the page. To be fearless about forming the story you have to tell. And secure enough to not only tear down and build up again, but to SHARE it with publishers. Brave enough to listen to the feedback. And loving enough to realize the hopeful stories you give children are what you also need to manifest in your own life to realize this challenging quest. I do believe if you let your work touch your inner life, it can't help but touch someone else's--hopefully a publisher and many, many children. But if it doesn't matter to you, it most certainly won't matter to anyone else.

Amy Wachspress



Amy Wachspress, who has an M.A. in English Language and Literature, is the author of *The Call to Shakabaz*, a children's and young adult fantasy adventure featuring all black characters that demonstrates the fundamental principles of nonviolence as practiced by Dr. King and Gandhi. She is also a grant writer who has raised over \$75 million for initiatives that benefit children, youth, and families in over 20 states. She and her husband have raised three children on a remote 40 acres in Northern California. You can visit Amy on the web at www.wozabooks.com.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Publishing the book is the tip of the iceberg. The iceberg is promoting and marketing the book, i.e., getting the word out. Picture me, the author, as the Titanic and marketing my book as the iceberg. Are you seeing the crash?

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was: Join the Publisher's Marketing Association. Their monthly newsletter has the best actionable information -- really helpful. (Also check out John Kremer's *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*.)

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Having too many books printed in my first print run. If I had gone with a smaller print run, then I could have said I was "back on press" after I sold my first 1,000 books.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Believe in your imagination to take you where you need to go; and be persistent!

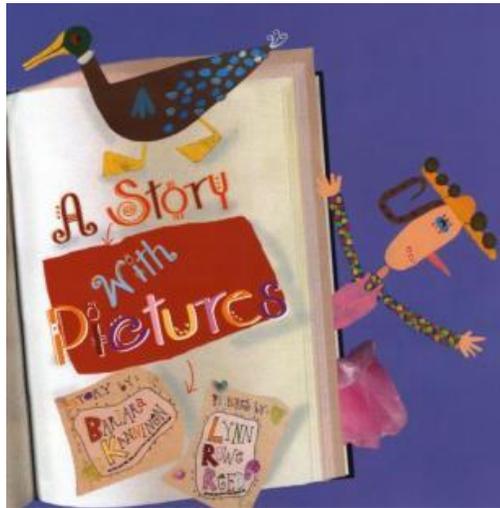
I Really Need To Tell You This:

Publishing a book has often been compared to having a baby, that's not a new analogy. But taking the analogy a little further, let me remind you that first-time parents are usually very focused on the birth and they don't quite get that when the birth is over, they will have a child to raise, a son or daughter for life. When you publish your first book, remember to look beyond the production process and the publication because you will have your work cut out for you selling that book for a long time into the future. Youngsters need to know your book is out there and how much they will enjoy it or benefit from it. Parents, grandparents, teachers, and librarians need to know your book is out there and that the children they love and work with will enjoy and benefit from your book. I have started to say to people "If I hadn't published that darn book then I might have time to write." Getting the word out, marketing, publicizing, well, it's a bottomless pit.

Be ready for it so you're not blindsided like I was, but also remember to set aside protected time to keep writing. Otherwise your first book will be your last!

Always bear in mind that the chances of making much money off your book are slim. It could happen. But you have to be very lucky. So go into authorship for love, not profit. Then you will always feel great about your experience and your work. I can't think of anything I'd rather be doing than reading excerpts from my book aloud to children and youth and talking with them about books. And every once in awhile I meet someone for whom my book has made a huge difference. That's the best reward of all.

Barbara Kanninen



Barbara Kanninen has had a number of stories and poems published in children's magazines such as *Highlights for Children*, *Ladybug* and *Fun for Kidz* and has written easy readers and other curriculum materials for educational companies such as McGraw-Hill, Core Knowledge, Kane Press and Kaeden Books. Her first picture book for children, *A Story with Pictures*, was recently named a "Picture Book We Admire" by the Children's Literature Network. Barbara lives in Arlington, Virginia with her husband and two boys. For more information about Barbara and her books, go to her website: www.barbarakanninen.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That my stories were ordinary. I see it now when I read new writers' stories. We think we're being original when we write a story about a kid who thinks there's a monster under the bed, or who gets picked last for the baseball team. But the truth is, there are thousands of such manuscripts getting sent to New York every day. To get published, you have to come up with a truly original way to see a child's world.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Start with magazines. This was such an important step for me. Among other things, magazine editors forced me to figure out how to be funny, how to make a character truly change by the events of the story, and how to cut needless words. Magazine editors are quicker to notice a new writer and they're more willing to provide feedback and maybe ask for revisions, which will strengthen your work.

It's true that magazines don't pay well, but the early encouragement, personalized writing tips, publishing credits, and sheer joy of seeing one's work published are priceless experiences!

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Starting a novel without having any idea how the problem would be resolved. It was a mess and I ended up having to drop the project. Now, I plan before I start writing!

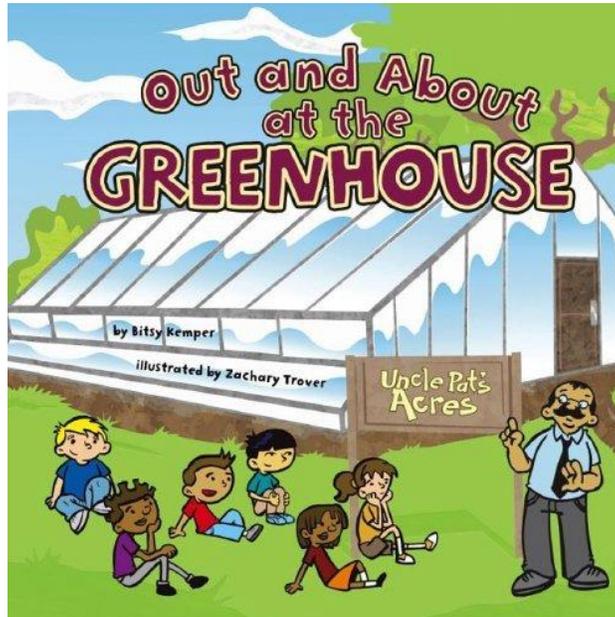
The most important thing a writer can do to gain success is:

If you're a picture book author, read at least 100 picture books that have been published in the last 2 years by fairly new authors who are not author/illustrators. Author/illustrator books are often published on the strength of the illustrations and some established authors get published on the strength of their names and marketability. You need to understand how truly original and outstanding the writing has to be to get noticed when you're an unestablished author. Then you need to figure out how to write your own original and outstanding story.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

I recently judged a picture book contest and I don't think a single manuscript I read was paced like a real picture book. Picture books have a certain rhythm and pace that is dictated by the 32-page format. There are pauses as the pages are turned and each page spread should depict a new scene. -- that's 16 scenes, each building on the one before it, leading toward a climax and then quickly resolving into a fabulously satisfying conclusion. There is a reason many picture book authors end up taking several years to perfect a picture book manuscript. Unfortunately, once they're perfected, they seem so effortless, which I guess is why people think picture-book writing is easy!

Bitsy Kemper



Bitsy Kemper has been interviewed on CNN and in literally hundreds of newspapers, TV and radio stations across the United States. She's presented at writing conferences and delights in making people giggle. She has four children's books published so far, and hopes to write many many more. Get the scoop at www.BitsyKemper.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That it's OK to negotiate. When you get your first contract, the editor/publisher knows you are both eager and inexperienced. I personally think they bank on you agreeing to whatever they say. It won't hurt to have a published friend take a look at the contract, or someone in SCBWI, or even a hired [book] lawyer review it. From what I hear, no contract has ever been revoked because an author asked for more time, more money, or more free copies. If your request is reasonable, the worst that can happen is they say no.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Negotiating for more free copies is an easy "win" -- from what I've seen, almost any publisher should be willing to give you more author copies; I know someone who regularly requests 30 free copies!

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Thinking I could change an editor's or agent's focus...let me explain: I was SO SURE one of my manuscripts was perfect for an agent. I knew he didn't represent picture books but I was SO SURE he'd love them that he'd drop everything and rep them anyway. Well, he did love them, but still politely declined since he doesn't do picture books. Duh. That isn't his expertise, that isn't the world he lives in, those aren't his editorial contacts. I wasted both our times. I don't know what I was thinking.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

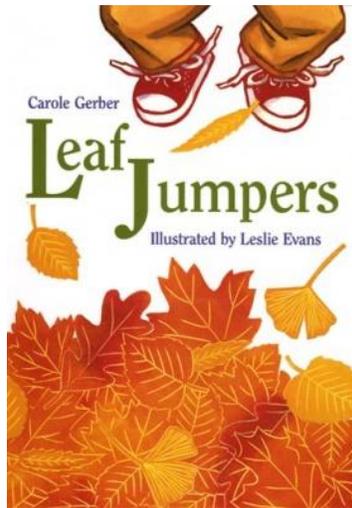
Keep learning. Research what's already been done, look into what's new, attend writer's conferences, subscribe to newsletters like *Writer's Market* or *Children's Book Insider*.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

KEEP TRYING! I see so many crappy books published that it makes me want to cry. How do they get published and mine keep getting rejected? I don't have an answer but I do say stick with it. Try a different publishing house, work harder on your voice, do what it takes to make your work better. No one else is going to back your ideas or your book more than you will.

Now, the exception is if you keep hearing the same feedback every time someone looks at your work (take it out of rhyme, make it into first person, whatever). If that's the case, LISTEN. It's not like they all ganged up on you for no reason; they just may have a point. But if you wholeheartedly disagree, find out why they are all saying the same thing. Maybe there's a reason behind it all, and if you revise that, things will open up. So be open to change, but stick with your gut. It's your book, not theirs.

Carole Gerber



Carole is a poet and children's book author living in Powell, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus. She's written 12 picture books, a chapter book, a nonfiction book for parents, a biography, and dozens of elementary reading and science texts. Carole holds a B.S. in English education and an M.A. in journalism from Ohio State. Her latest book is *Winter Trees* (Charlesbridge fall 2008.) Find out more at www.carolegerber.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Luck and persistence play nearly as big a role as talent. Keep plugging away and always look for opportunities to create your own luck.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Revise, revise, revise - be ready to cheerfully revise as many times as an editor requests.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Signing a contract that gave a small, new publisher first right of refusal on a sequel to the book the publisher bought - and then failed to get reviewed.

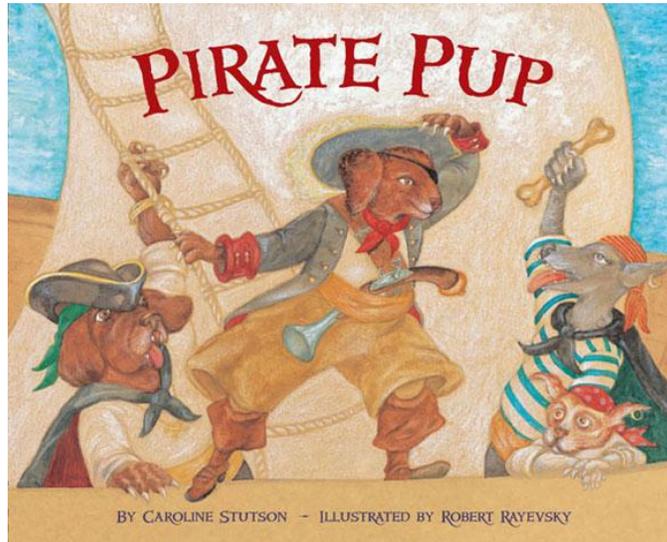
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Redefine what success means to you. Few children's authors become wealthy or well-known, so vow to write and revise to the best of your ability - and keep your expectations reasonable.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

The best way to avoid reading the writing of a neighbor or friend who is sure he/she has written a blockbuster is to smile and say, "Oh, but I'm a writer - not an editor - and am just not equipped to do that."

Caroline Stutson



Caroline writes: *Like many writers, I'm never far from my childhood. I grew up on Long Island, not far from New York City. My best friend and I played pretend continually. We had many adventures exploring outside. My mother had a librarian friend who wrote book reviews, and I received all of her books when she was done with them. The words I said most often as a child were "Just as soon as I finish this page." I wish all children could have such wonderful childhoods.*

Caroline's many books include *Pirate Pup* (Chronicle) and *Cat's Night Out* (Simon & Schuster)

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

When an editor sends a personal rejection letter, do not take it as a rejection, Try to find ways to make that letter work for you. If someone likes your work enough to use their valuable time giving you feedback, it is a very good thing.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Set aside your work long enough for you to fall out of love with it. Let some time go by. Give it another look. Set it aside again.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Some time ago, I got a rejection letter from an editor I greatly admired. I understood what she was asking me to do and tried to do it, but I didn't know how to do it. If the same thing happened to me today, I would go looking for help until the problem was solved. We don't need to write alone.

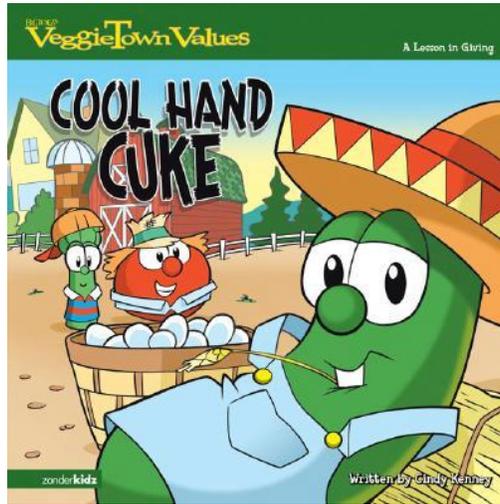
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

I feel that no matter what, we have to keep reading and writing every day, even if only for a few minutes.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

1. Pay close attention to coincidences and happenings in your life. Pay attention to physical feedback about your writing. Self-feedback can be subtle. It isn't always cerebral. An unsettled stomach might be telling you something about your work.
2. Keep trying. If you are hating something you are working on, stop and read something wonderful, then go back to it or work on something new for a while.
3. Give yourself time. Writing a book isn't a race. It's a fascinating journey.

Cindy Kenney



Cindy Kenney is an award winning author, editor, and international speaker. She has over 50 books, 8 curriculum programs, and numerous other fiction, non-fiction, scripts and articles published. Many of her books have been best sellers, and Cindy has millions of books that have been sold. She received the 2005 Editor of the Year award and a Gold Medallion award in 2004. More information is available at www.KenneyCreative.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

If you are writing a children's picture book, create a book dummy. (But don't submit it to the publisher.) This is an outstanding editorial tool. I learned so much through this process and discovered problems that I would never have found in simple manuscript format.

Attend writer's conferences! That is so essential. Not only will you learn many things from expert speakers and fellow writers, but you will have your work seen and critiqued without having to wait up to six months for it.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

To remember not to take rejection personally. Editors are people, too. They come with all sorts of opinions, just like anyone else. Just because one or more don't like what you wrote, it doesn't mean someone else won't. (Although do watch for patterns of negative feedback!) Your manuscript could be viewed by an editor on a bad day, by an editor who doesn't feel well, or the publishing house may simply

not have a need for the type of book you presented. Unfortunately, they don't always give you that feedback when they return a rejection notice.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I wasn't sensitive enough to word counts appropriate to each age group. Customers, and then ultimately retailers came back and refused to buy more books unless there was less content in it. Younger children especially, do NOT sit still while someone reads and reads and reads before turning the page.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Be flexible. There are many opportunities out there. Instead of living a prideful writer's life, it's best to tuck pride away and be willing to have your work PUBLISHED. That means being willing to do work-for-hire as well as royalty assignments. It means being willing to submit to magazines and online. It means writing curriculum, crafts, games, and parenting materials. It means being almost creative in where and how to submit as you have to be when you creative the work itself!

I Really Need To Tell You This:

- When writing for kids, you MUST know the age you are writing for. That means going beyond knowing your own kids and family members and friends. Spend time with a broad range of children in the age group. That means taking the time to sit and observe a few days in a school or church (although school is better, because you get a wider representation). You must get inside the little heads of the age you write for. Know their needs, wants, problems, cares, the things that excite them, anger them, make them fearful and so on. Know what makes kids tick!
- You must practice and research. Read the types of materials you want to write - both the good and the bad. Make a list of what you think makes the bad ones bad; and a list of what makes the good ones good. Then make a list of what you want to do different. Compare that list to your manuscript. Research the market. Know what's selling and what's not. Take a book store manager out to lunch and pick his or her brain. They are a wealth of information. Then practice, edit, practice and edit. Just because you wrote what you think is a good book, remember that it may not be plan for you to sell it. It may have just been God's training ground for your next book.

- Join a critique group. Get feedback, but be sure that it's honest. You've got to receive criticism, but it should also be kind.
- Just having a good story idea doesn't necessarily make you a good writer. Know your craft. Understand how to construct an excellent story.
- If you are writing a children's picture book, create a book dummy. (But don't submit it to the publisher.) This is an outstanding editorial tool.
- Attend writer's conferences! That is so essential. Not only will you learn many things from expert speakers and fellow writers, but you will have your work seen and critiqued without having to wait up to six months for it.

Clifford Oluoch

Clifford is a primary school teacher with a great passion for writing stories with school as a setting. He was born and brought up in Nairobi's Jericho-Lumumba estate, situated in the east of the capital city of Kenya. His books include *Abdalla Plays Hide and Seek* and *Fight Like A Man*

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Writing is an ongoing process. When one story ends, another one starts. Seems like a life sentence (an interesting one though).

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

If others have done, you too can also do it. I did not believe this at first but later came to appreciate the challenge.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

To be in a hurry to get published and see my work on print. Because of this some characters were not as fully developed as I wanted them to be.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Research thoroughly on the subject matter and the target market. Get others to peer edit your work. Be humble and expect criticism as points of growth.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

When my first 2 books were published, I slept with the copies under my pillow. (Psst - don't tell my wife!)

Deborah Freedman



Deborah Freedman is an architect and the author/illustrator of the picture book, *Scribble*, published by Knopf and a "Book Sense Children's Pick" for Summer 2007. You can visit her at www.deborahfreedman.net.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

To join a critique group. I didn't realize how important it would be to me, to be a part of a community of writers and illustrators.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Write from your OWN experience and feelings.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Getting so excited that I sent manuscripts out too quickly, instead of letting them sit for a while and giving myself the chance to take another look with a fresh eye.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

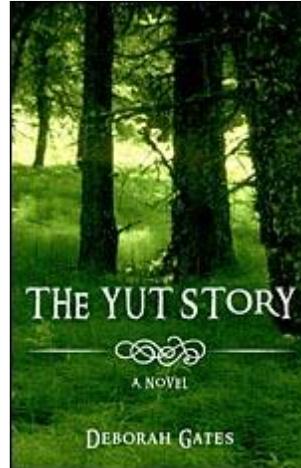
Keep writing. Even when it gets difficult, shoo your distracters away, close the door, keep writing.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Ideas are wonderful and necessary, but they are not worth much by themselves! Developing ideas into finished manuscripts takes a lot of hard work and

persistence. But the process itself is rewarding and necessary to growing as a writer.

Deborah Gates



The Yut Story, a fantasy/allegory by Deborah Gates, draws readers to the deep forests of upper Sandinavia. Tiny, fur people known as Yuts inhabit this territory alone, or so they think. Their perfect society is altered as they encounter humans for the first time. Mrs. Gates has a BA in English and Psychology and is the married mother of four.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I have wanted to be a writer all of my life. After being a student, wife, mother, counselor, factory worker, and teacher I finally had enough material to begin writing with. Good writing takes time, not only for the mechanical work of setting down words, but for the experience of having something to say.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

The best advice I ever got was from my Dad and had nothing to do with writing. As a child I was quite negative and the phrase 'I can't' often escaped my lips. My father spent the better part of my childhood convincing me that I could, if I would only try. Erase the I can't or I will never language from your writing self and believe you can, if you will only try. Breathe positive life into your characters and before you know it they will be living on someone's book shelf.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Impatience drove me to work through the editing process too quickly. I love my book, but am aware of several mistakes in the final copy that drive me crazy. Everyone wants to see the book in print, but take the time to make sure it is perfect!

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Successful writers love their stories. They may not make the most money or be the biggest names out there, but they are passionate about the pictures their words paint. My book, *The Yut Story*, has not sold millions yet, but I am told that usually happens after the author dies. Meanwhile, I keep writing about what I love.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Getting something published is exasperating. It seems to take forever. It wreaks havoc with your emotions and tests your ability to stay true to what you believe in writing. Yet it is what we all long for, and continue striving for. The thrill of finally seeing your creation, bound and by-lined, sitting on a bookstore shelf is topped only by having a non-relative tell you how much they enjoyed the story. Whatever you do, keep trying.

Debra Garfinkle



Debra Garfinkle writes for teens and children. Her young adult novels include *Stuck in the 70s* (Putnam 2007). Her children's series is *Supernatural Rubber Chicken* (Mirrorstone 2008). Visit her at www.dlgarfinkle.com.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That waiting a long time to get an offer from a publisher and then to get the book published is perfectly normal.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

To avoid passive main characters and episodic stories, the protagonist should always have a plan to reach his goals, and should have to revise that plan when things stand in his way.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Being lazy and not revising for an agent who requested revisions.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

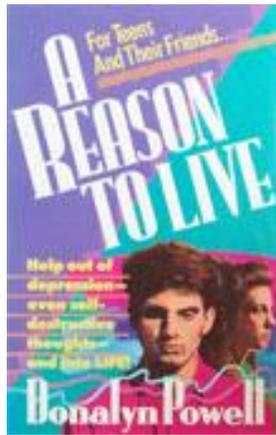
Spend the time crafting the best manuscript you possibly can, and only then start worrying about finding an agent or publisher.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Publishing is not about who you know or how many conferences you've been to or even about crafting a good plot and pretty words. It's about writing a

marketable manuscript that totally sparkles in a unique way in at least one area--
such as having an incredible voice, a masterful plot, or gorgeous phrasing.

Donalyn Powell Parker



Donalyn's books include *A Reason To Live* (Bethany House Publishers) and *Through a Child's Eye's* (Harold Shaw). You can find more information about the author and her work at www.donalynparker.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I wish someone would have told me I needed to create a space of my own early on in my writing. For years I wrote everywhere and then had to go back and find pieces of this and that from all the places I had been. I even wrote in church if the idea hit me. I had to approach my writing as a real punch-in-time clock job. Even though there are not weekly checks it's a job. It's who we are. We are writers and we have to write in order to breath and live. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. Being a writer is work and it deserves your daily attention and the time to do your craft. Love what you do with all your heart even when a publisher says no. Never stop. Believe in the reason why you wrote your manuscript in the first place, than someone will believe in you.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

- Be yourself in who you are and in your writing.
- Sharing an honest heart makes your reader believe in your characters.
- Each character owns a part of you!
- When writing for kids ask a youth what they think of your manuscript before anyone else.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

As a woman and a southern woman you tend to put your personal needs on hold while you take care of your family. The writing doesn't get done and your heart aches. I now know that lie isn't true. When I take care of my needs first (yes, there are times when as a parent that rule doesn't apply), I'm a lot happier caring for others. The writing gets done and their needs do get taken care of and the rest of the world can be on hold until I have finished the next chapter.

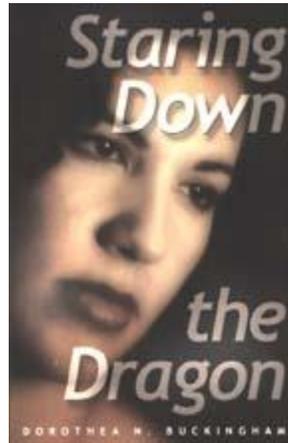
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Work with the publisher. They know what is best for your work. Their goal is to sell your book. Work with the editors. Allow them to guide you and then they will be more open to suggestions you would like to keep. It takes years before a writer is treated like a diva. Even then you are remembered by how you treat your publishing house.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Write what you love not what you think is selling right now. Daydream everyday and allow yourself to come up with ideas even when they seem foolish. In that pile of rubbish you might find a real jewel.

Dorothea N. Buckingham



Dorothea Buckingham lives in Wilmington, North Carolina. She and her husband have lived in Hawaii for 23 years and spent 3 years in Japan.

Her books *Staring Down The Dragon* and *My Name Is Loa* can be found at Amazon.com and ordered through most bookstores

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Nothing you write will be perfect. Focus on becoming a good storyteller.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

When you want to give up writing, stop writing. You'll realize you have to write to be you.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Not believing in myself.

The most important thing a writer can do to gain success is:

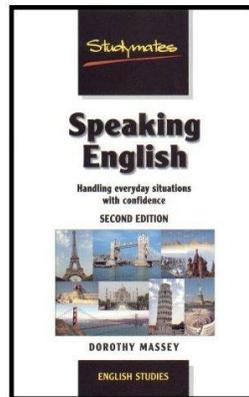
Live to be 112, and work until the day you die.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Don't write to the market. Don't write to be "like someone else." Write something you feel passionate about. You're going to be married to the project for years, you better love it.

Hone your craft. Read the best books in your genre. And read each book like it is the only one in print. Study it. Then study another, then another. Then write the book YOU want to read.

Dorothy Massey



Dorothy Massey lives in a small town in the Northeast of England with her husband, son and a lively border collie called Zero. Her book entitled, *Speaking English*, the third edition of which is entitled, "Better English" can be purchased from studymates.co.uk or from the Amazon website. Her short story, "Little Red Riding Hooood" is soon to be made available on the publisher's website, pinesteinpress.com and her Ghost Twins Stories will be published this fall in the Pinestein Press anthology, "Mini Mysteries and Kookie Spookies." All four stories are suitable for children aged 6-10.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

How to finish something.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

"Write loads of stories."

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

There are two: not believing in myself and letting others convince me that writing was, and could only be, a hobby.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Be brave: enter that competition, contact that publisher, go to that writers' class or conference, write that story, poem, article or novel you don't think you can, talk to that agent or publisher.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

The best advice I ever got, "Write loads of stories," was written by a published author called Julia Darling when I asked her to sign a book of short stories she'd written. When Julia later died of breast cancer, I resolved to do as she had asked. Before then I had never completed a full piece of fiction. I now have written about twenty short stories, one of which won 1st prize in a competition and led to a commission to write a further three for an anthology. Some of my stories won't be published, some of them will, but I've had the pleasure and the satisfaction of having written them. Thanks to Julia.

Edith Tarbescu



Edith's children's books include: *Annushka's Voyage* (Houghton Mifflin) and (Scholastic.) She's currently working on a novel for adults, as well as a picture book biography for children. Edith's website is home.earthlink.net/~tarbescu

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Never send out only one copy of a manuscript unless the publisher asks for an exclusive submission. And inform an editor if the ms. is a multiple submission.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Revise, revise, revise.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I finished my first work for children: a MG novel and sent it to an editor in NY. I waited and waited, even coincidentally met the editor at a NY conference. She said, "I'll have an answer for you soon." Well, she didn't respond soon, nor did she accept the novel. She said it needed more editing than she had time for.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Continue writing and never give up. Also, keep sending out manuscripts. It's also important to become a member of a writer's group.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

I could never have published my four books without a writer's group. The members of the group listened, gave advice, and never patted me on the back. There was always room for improvement. As a result, I lots of revisions.

Emily Goodman

Emily Goodman once worked as a gardener at the zoo. She is fascinated by the relationships between plants and animals. Her first book, *Plant Secrets*, is forthcoming in 2009 from Charlesbridge Publishing. For more, see www.emilygoodman.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I have a lot of trouble telling publishers apart. I didn't even really know which ones were large and which ones were small. People say to read the catalogs to see who publishes what, but I have trouble with that too because I haven't read all the books in the catalog, so I'm not sure what it's telling me. I think you have to know the nuances of the children's book business pretty well in order to glean much info from catalogs, and most beginners just don't.

I wish I'd found someone who was a professional in the business and talked with them about the kind of books I write, then asked them where they thought I should submit and what I should look for in a publisher. Then, I wish I'd investigated those publishers extensively and chosen who I wanted to send my manuscript to. It would have saved me a lot of rejections!

When I got an actual offer to publish, to my joy and amazement, I spoke with a lawyer about my contract, and she told me things about my publisher that I'd never thought to ask. She said that even though they are small, they have a nationwide sales staff reaching bookstores all over the country, and that they make good quality books. I was glad to hear the good news, but I remember thinking, "Gee, shouldn't I have found this stuff out before I sent them my manuscript?"

If I could do it again, I wouldn't leave so much to luck. I'd find out more about publishers, preferably by talking to someone in the business who would tell me the straight story, not the Pollyanna stuff you find in print. Then I'd choose who I wanted to target, and I'd know why. And I'd send my manuscripts to them in my order of preference, rather than randomly, with my fingers crossed.

In short, I'd learn more about the business of publishing, and I'd try to be more professional.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Remember the moments you loved best in the books you read for fun. That's why you write -- to create more of those great moments.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Not getting serious about writing sooner in my life. I wasted a lot of time.

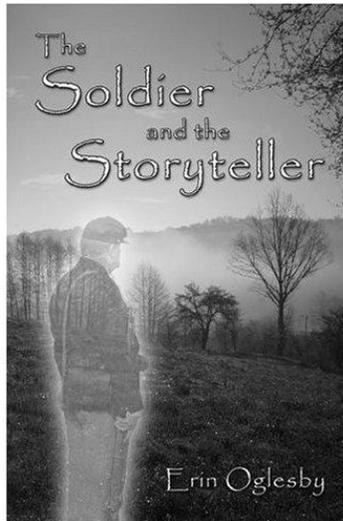
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Master the art of joining what you love to do with what you have to do, and don't compromise either side. Learn your craft and learn your business. Write what you love best. Then, join your professional organization to learn how to market what you love best. Ultimately, both sides work together.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Regardless of career success, writing is still an art. Love your books. Write what you care about so much, you'd do it even if you thought it would never get published. And then, figure out how to get it published!

Erin Oglesby Steeley



Erin writes: *I have worked with children who are deaf and in special education over the past decade, ending with a wonderful year as a deaf education teacher. As a person who hears, I have been changed by my experience with the deaf culture and language. In my writing, I want children who are deaf to open my books and find characters that they can relate to, and to give hearing children a glimpse of the deaf world that many have not seen. My first book, The Soldier and the Storyteller, is my first venture in this goal. I have new manuscripts that I will soon be sending out, especially one that deals with one the great deaf culture icons, William Ellsworth 'Dummy' Hoy. Children are the greatest joy of my life, and I strive to create stories that will inspire and be enjoyable for newer generations of readers.*

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I wish that someone would have told me when I first got started how to write a decent query letter. My first rejection letters were very frustrating, and at the time I had never even heard of a query letter. I was lucky enough to pick up a publishing guide for children's writers that gave examples and had an excellent article on how to write, edit and present one. One of the most important rules that it gave was to treat your query letter just like your manuscript, making it reflect the character and creativity your story possesses. That bit of advice is so crucial, as your query letter is your first impression to an editor.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

I had a karate instructor several years ago who is incredibly talented. One day in class, he gave us an interesting perspective on how he attained a higher rank, "It's not always the greatest athletes that get a black belt, it's those that stay with it and don't give up. They are the ones that are left when all the others have quit." This I have found true in every aspect of my life. Talent and skill are important, but determination is the key in so many things. Those writers that keep churning their imagination and sending out new manuscripts despite a million rejection letters are those who eventually will find the niche where they belong. They are the ones who find their books someday gracing a bookstore shelf and in the hands of a child eager to read. What would have happened if J.K. Rowling, E.B. White, and others had given up? What a loss that would have been! I thank my teacher Mr. Edwards for telling me that determination can be just as important as talent.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

The biggest mistake that I have ever made is waiting to send in a manuscript because I was too afraid that it would get rejected. I wish that I had sent in and not let the overwhelming amount of entries and publishers to stop me. Focusing in on a goal and pursuing it with zeal is critical. Do not let the fear of the unknown kill your manuscript. Send it in anyway.

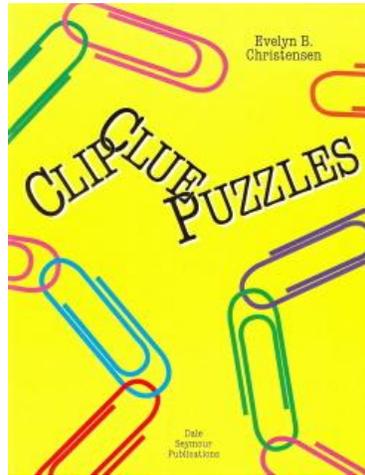
The most important thing a writer can do to gain success is:

Keep who you are writing for in mind, and ignore everything else. The children are the audience, and when you focus in on them, you find the ideas that others only continue to chase after. Keeping in touch with their perspectives, opinions, and ideas can help you to grow your own base of ideas and inspiration. Who better to know what kids are interested in than kids themselves?

I Really Need To Tell You This:

DETERMINATION IS EVERYTHING!!!! My husband always tells me that I am the most determined woman that he has ever met. Every time someone has told me I couldn't do something, I did it anyway. I decided one day that I wanted to publish a book before I turned 30, and around three months before my 30th birthday I pulled my dusty manuscript out of the drawer and sent it in to a small on-line publishing company. Three or four days before I left my twenties, the acceptance letter for my manuscript arrived. Now, that's determination. The world of publishing is an endless ocean of opportunity, slim chances, and high hopes of new writers. Hold on to those hopes.

Evelyn B. Christensen



Evelyn has a master's degree in math and a doctoral degree in math education. She's taught at the elementary, middle school, high school, college, and graduate school levels. Most recently she taught kindergarten because that's her favorite age. As a parent of four, she's had much experience in providing children with stimulating educational activities, not only in the classroom, but also in the home. She's the author of more than 30 educational puzzle books and has designed several math games. Her two newest books are *Fraction Finders* and *Decimal Destinations*. To see sample pages from her books or her weekly puzzles visit: <http://echristensen.atspace.com>

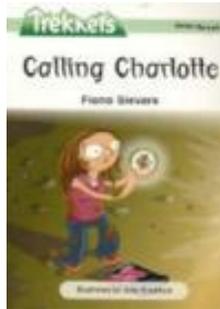
When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Educational publishers prefer activity and resource books in sets. With fiction we always hear the advice: don't mention your book is part of a series until the publisher has bought your first book. With educational publishers that advice isn't valid in my experience. I've had at least two editors tell me books in sets sell better and sets are what they prefer. One of my stand-alone books got discontinued from my publisher's regular catalog (the primary way they market). I was told it wasn't selling well enough to earn its catalog space. However, another of my books which wasn't selling as well didn't get discontinued because it was part of a set. When a single book takes up almost as much catalog space as a set and space is at a premium, it's clear one reason sets are preferred. So if you're subbing a resource or activity book to an educational publisher and there's potential for a series, mention it!

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Persevere and remember how subjective this business is. A poem of mine received a form rejection from one of the best known children's magazines. The reason on the form? "Lacks a fresh approach." I was crushed, but because I loved this poem and believed in it, I kept subbing. The poem has now been accepted to be in the hardback, fully illustrated children's picture book, *Sweet Dreams*, due to be published by Blooming Tree Press in 2009. And I'm rejoicing that the original magazine did NOT accept it because they would've taken all rights!

Fee Sievers



Fee writes fiction, children's stories and poetry and is the editor of the Melbourne Poets Union newsletter, *POAM*. She runs Rebus Press (www.rebusdesign.com.au) assisting authors to self-publish. Her two books for children are both for upper primary levels. *Calling Charlotte* (Macmillan) is about a young girl with a sixth sense who is on a journey where she learns to believe in herself. *The Crossover* (Aussie School Books) is about three kids who discover a wild crocodile in a stream while looking for a missing cat. They end a long mystery to do with missing reptile eggs which had been stolen from the zoo years earlier.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

How addictive the business of writing would be. I think I would burst if I couldn't write.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Write something everyday no matter what it is - even if it's just your immediate thoughts - so that words come out of your head and onto the paper. Once the rubbish is out you might find some real gems follow.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Taking so long to have the confidence to start sending my work out to competition and publishers.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Get your work as polished as you can and get it out there in the public arena -- no one is going to come knocking on your door if they don't know where you live and what you write.

I really need to tell you this

Don't get your family and friends to critique your work. They will be too kind. Find a group of writers you can trust and workshop with them. Make one of the rules be the honesty rule so that comments and feedback improve your work. Otherwise there's little point. Learn not to take any feedback personally. Your work will usually be better for it in the end.

Felicity Pulman



Award-winning author Felicity Pulman is currently writing a medieval crime series for teenagers, *The Janna Mysteries*, which indulges her love of reading and writing history and crime. Her *Shalott* trilogy explores her love of fantasy and the Arthurian legend. Felicity's timeslip novel *Ghost Boy* now forms the basis of a tour at Sydney's Quarantine Station. Learn more at www.felicitypulman.com.au

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Not to expect to be successful straight away. The craft of writing is something you learn with time and PRACTICE!

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Read your work aloud. If I think something isn't working properly, if it's not quite right, I read it aloud. It's astonishing what you can pick up when you can hear your words as well as see them.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Becoming impatient. Because our stories are so important to us, we assume that publishers will also give them priority. We need to remember there are heaps of other authors in a publisher's stable as well as us. Another thing to remember is that the whole process -- from acceptance to publication -- can take forever.

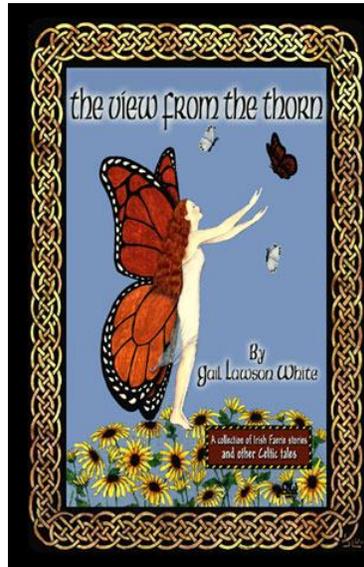
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Keep on trying! That is, keep on writing, keep on sending out work, keep on editing, especially if you get feedback, and keep faith in yourself.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Being an author is a rollercoaster ride -- there can be huge highs and huge lows -
- but holding your published novel in your hand makes up for just about everything!

Gail Lawson White



Celtic folk artist Gail Lawson White is the author and illustrator of *The View from the Thorn, a Collection of Irish Faerie Stories and Other Celtic Tales* that explores the realm of magic and miracles, the reality of myth, legend and history. Gail's website is www.gailspicsandtales.mysite.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Keep in mind that publishers publish. They don't necessarily publicize.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

From a variety of writer's magazines and online sources (like this one), I followed the advice on query letters and making submissions, keeping the letters short and following all submission guidelines.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

My biggest mistake was thinking that once my book was published, all I would have to do is kick back and write another book.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Don't make submissions to publishers who do not deal in your type of book. If you've written a poetry book, don't submit it to a publisher who has never published a poetry book. It's a waste of your time and theirs, and it sets you up for disappointment. Do some research into the types of books a publisher usually works with.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

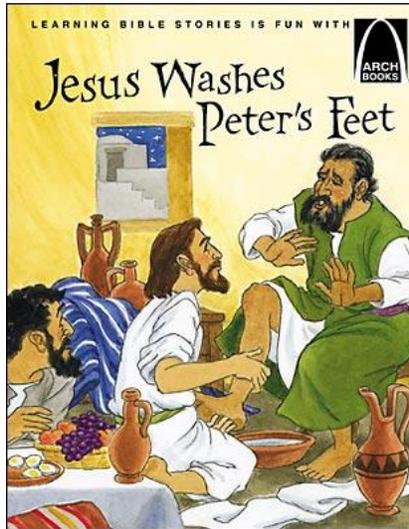
I thought I couldn't have been luckier. My book is a collection of poems for the young and young at heart with my own artwork. I knew finding a publisher who would even glance at poetry, much less accompanying pictures, would be slim at best. I did my homework, shopped around and found a few prospects. One in particular had published many, many books of poetry and children's books, and would even include some artwork. My book was accepted on the first submission.

What I wasn't prepared for was that the publisher has done absolutely nothing to publicize my book, apart from an initial mailing list that I provided. Yes, be prepared to schedule your own book signings or interviews, hunt up someone, anyone who will write and print a review, do anything you can think of to publicize your book on your own.

I started my own website where I post my art and poetry, as well as a description of the book with excerpts. I participate in local art shows where I can plug my book and have book signings at festivals with a related theme. I've made submissions to a variety of magazines that have published excerpts from my book. I submit to opportunities like this in hopes that someone, somewhere will check out my website and give my book a try. I never go anywhere without being armed with fliers if perchance I meet someone who might be interested.

If this sounds like an awful lot of "I's" you have to start thinking in the first person because you are the one who will undoubtedly have to do a lot of the work.

Glynis M. Belec



Glynis is an author, freelance writer, workshop leader and private tutor for children with learning challenges. Her motto, *insanibile cacothes scribendi* (an incurable passion to write) describes the desire of her heart. Her two children's books, published by Concordia Publishing, are available for purchase directly from her website www.inscribe.org/glynisbelec or by contacting Concordia Publishing at www.cph.org

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Writing is somewhat akin to becoming a great surgeon. You can't expect to be skilled and perform perfect surgery without first becoming trained in the craft. First you must hone your skills by discovering and taking advantage of educational opportunities. Next you need to surround yourself with like-minded souls and immerse yourself in the craft of writing. Then you need to practice, practice and practice some more and then acquire a strong backbone.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

"Cut it down by half and leave nothing out!" A lovely editor proffered this inspiring bit of advice many years ago and I still think about (and try to apply) it to this day.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Agreeing to interview Miss Canada 1980-something for a magazine article when I really wasn't the least bit interested in doing so. A writer needs to not only have some familiarity with what they write, but also the passion that ignites the spark which in turn, fuels the engine which eventually sets a reader's heart on fire.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Remember the Five P's of writing for children

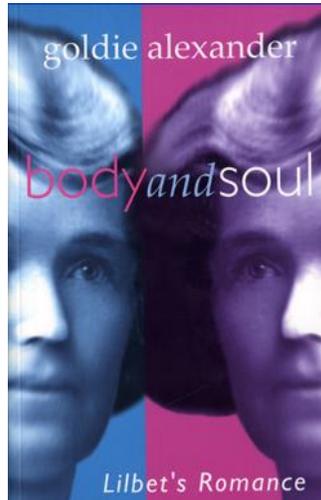
1. Prayer [lots of it!]
2. Persistence [keep at it]
3. Patience [your time will come]
4. Practice [if at first you don't succeed...]
5. Professionalism [maintain integrity and establish a reputation]

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Someone once told me that if I write from the heart I will touch other hearts. I really think this sage piece of advice is worth considering as you put finger to keyboard. What is it that you are passionate about? Do you like your target audience? It's no good writing for children if they annoy you or if you simply cannot relate to them on any level. All the head knowledge and book learning won't help you one iota if you cannot say that you truly love the little thumb suckers or skateboard twisters. Writing from the heart means that you can step inside the shoes of your audience and see life on their level. Learn the lingo. Find out what interests children. Don't preach. Don't even intentionally teach. If you want to weave a lesson into your story -- which invariably happens with a situation, plot and resolution, make sure you cut the lectures and overt adult finger wagging. Be subtle and brutally honest. Children know when something is not quite right. Do your homework and study the markets. What are editors looking for and which editor wants what manuscript? Know that writing for children is not easier than writing for the adult market. In fact it can be more challenging given the necessity of cutting out the fluff and having to pass through the scrutiny not only of the editor but of Grandma, Grandpa, Uncle, Aunt, Mom, Dad, librarian, teacher, and so on.

Consider all these things, clear away the clutter on your desk and then start pouring out your heart.

Goldie Alexander



In more than two decades as a freelance writer, Goldie has authored 60 books for adults and children of all ages and many short stories, articles and scripts. Her latest books include *Body and Soul* and *Shape-Shifters*. Find more information about Goldie and her books at www.goldiealexander.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

To read, rewrite, read aloud what I had written, join a workshop and persevere.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

To persevere. This is possibly the hardest thing to do as Dear Author rejections and banal or frankly stupid editorial comments can sour the soul. I had to believe that what I was writing was worth publishing.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

So many! And I keep making them. The biggest mistake is to think a story is ready to be sent out, only to find some months later that another edit is needed.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Read. Edit and re edit. And persevere. Competition is fierce and rejections hurt. You mightn't succeed until you cover your office wall with rejection slips.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Allow yourself to be disheartened when ideas come slowly, or you can't find time and space to write, or another rejection turns up. But go back to what you love. Unless you are passionate what you do, find another hobby.

Hope Marston



Hope Marston is the author of more than two dozen children's books, including My Little Book Collection of animal stories and the award-winning, *Isaac Johnson: From Slave to Stonecutter*. Two of her books were short-listed for the 2006 Charlotte Award. Picture books, photographic essays and junior biography are her forte. Her first historical novel for young adults, *Against the Tide: The Valor of Margaret Wilson*, was released this summer. When she is not reading, researching and writing, Hope enjoys making school presentations, presenting writing workshops, cooking, and walking her Bernese mountain dog. You can check her itinerary at her website: www.hopeirvinmarston.com

When I started writing, I wish someone had told me:

To invest in the Post-It company. Unfortunately, Post-Its hadn't been invented yet. Today I borrow many books through InterLibrary Loan. I never sit down to read without some Post-Its or flags in hand. When I come to something pertinent to my current project, or something unrelated that piques my interest, I slap on a Post-It or a flag. (Librarians take a dim view of readers who highlight passages with a pen. They don't appreciate dog-eared pages either. I know. I am a librarian by profession.) When my reading is finished, I type the marked passages if they're short or photocopy them if they're long. Then I document where this bit of wisdom originated.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

To write the piece that won't go away. When I began my writing career, finding something to write about was a challenge. Now I have so many ideas I will have to live to be 297 to complete them. Through the years I've considered many topics. The majority have been forgotten, but the ones that keep popping up in my mind are the ones I should develop.

This past summer my first historical novel, *Against the Tide: The Valor of Margaret Wilson* was published. I've wanted to write this story ever since I heard about Margaret Wilson through a book I was proofreading for a publishing company--about thirty years ago. Through the years I've thought about Margaret because her life as recorded on her grave marker touched my heart. It took a long time for the story to ripen until I could write it in a way it would touch others. I liken this thirty-year gestation period to the Glenmorangie Whiskey that has been maturing in barrels at the distillery since 1977. I declined to taste it, but I have a hunch any connoisseur of fine wines appreciates the difference three decades make.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I went to a POD (print on demand company) to have an award-winning book re-issued after the original publisher let it go out of print. Avoid POD like you would yellow fever or rattlesnakes.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Read and write every day! We don't take days off from eating and sleeping because we know that's injurious to our health. Taking off days from writing is injurious to our writing. If we want to develop our writing skills, we will practice every day. How long would it take a child to learn to walk if he only attempted it sporadically? Make time for what's important.

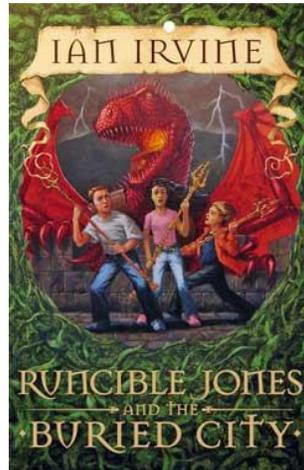
We develop our writing skills by writing, and we need daily practice. Writing gurus like Natalie Goldberg and Julia Cameron have books on writing prompts to help you if you don't know how to get started. I recommend them for getting your creative juices flowing if you don't already have a project in the making. But once you get involved with a topic, do your writing warm-ups by focusing on something pertinent to your current story.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

You will save yourself a lot of time and remorse if you document every source of information you use when researching, no matter the genre. My first published book was a career education book called *Trucks, Trucking and You*. The majority of my information came from three trucking magazines to which I subscribed. As I read them, I jotted down pertinent facts to be included in my book—with nary a thought to recording the source of this helpful information. When I sat down to write my first draft, I needed to go back and re-read the

information at its source. I spent hours pawing through my magazines trying to find those passages, sort of like a hound dog searching for a scent he'd lost in the woods. (Finding it was about as unpredictable.)

Ian Irvine



Ian is the author of ten fantasy novels (now published in 11 countries), a trilogy of eco-thrillers about climate change, and the first two books of the Runcible Jones children's fantasy quintet. His latest book is *Runcible Jones & The Buried City*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTt1eYG4LG4>.

He has also written four small fantasy novels for children (Scholastic Australia, 2008). His website is www.ian-irvine.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

How hard it was to discover how the writing and publishing system works. In publishing, it's really hard to find out anything about your books. That's why I wrote the article, "The Truth About Publishing", on my website.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Do more with your writing. Don't be content with flat, ordinary prose. Make the highs higher and the lows lower. Wring every ounce of drama you can out of your scenes, and make sure you have tension on every page.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Thinking that writing a short children's book would be much easier than writing one of my huge epic fantasy quartets. It wasn't. Writing the children's book was much harder.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Be persistent. It's not the most gifted writers who become successful -- it's the writers who are absolutely determined to master their craft no matter what it takes. I believe that if you have some writing talent, and you are determined to succeed even if it takes ten years, or twenty, you will get there.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

To become a successful children's writer you have to catch your readers' attention by the end of the first paragraph, and then hold it. If your readers get down two paragraphs and haven't found anything intriguing enough to make them want to read more, you've failed.

So start your story in the very first sentence, and by the end of the paragraph you need to have introduced a character who has a problem that he or she has to do something about. This arouses your readers' curiosity and concern: will the protagonist succeed or will she fail, and what happens then?

Go on from there, maintaining your readers' interest and concern by continually giving your protagonists difficulties, dangers to overcome, things to worry about, problems to solve, mysteries that arouse curiosity, and so forth, all the way to the end of the book.

Jackie Valent



Jackie Valent is a first-time author and spent her early career in the human resources field. Knowing what it is like to be ridiculed by others based on outward factors (she was the "fat kid" people picked on), she was inspired to write *Stinky the Bulldog*, a children's book about her dog Stinky who finds that those that are true friends love you for who you are. She has been featured in such national forums as DarynKagan.com, *Pink Magazine*, and has been featured in numerous TV, online, and print media. The book has been used in anti-bullying programs in schools as well as in diversity training sessions with companies such as Deloitte & Touche, the global financial services and consulting organization. Her book can be found on Amazon, Barnes and Noble stores, and on her website (www.stinkythebulldog.com).

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That working with illustrators can certainly be a challenge if they do not understand the business side of writing. I had a great illustrator that unfortunately did not have a great head for business and that compromised a long-term partnership.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

The best advice I ever got was from Carol Gardner of *Zelda Wisdom* fame. I went to visit with her in Portland and she shared her story with me and gave me several pieces of advice that I will always take with me. The first is that you need to keep at least 51% control in your company to ensure your vision remains intact. You know what you want to achieve with your book and do not let anyone

take that away. The second is that if you want to make a living at writing, you may need to license products in addition to producing books.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Not doing my homework before getting into an agreement with my illustrator over copyrights. Make sure you know what you are doing as it can cost you time, money, and hard feelings in the future if you don't.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Perseverance is the key. Know that people write things all the time and publishers are inundated with work. Don't give up if this is your dream! If the traditional publishing route isn't working for you, self-publish and get some publicity yourself and then go back and pitch publishers. There is definitely more than one way to skin a cat here!

I Really Need To Tell You This:

I never thought I'd write a book, but it has been the most wonderful journey of my life as I've been able to teach both children and adults about the value of diversity and acceptance of others. If your book is about making the world better in some way, don't give up...it will feed your soul and will touch others' hearts in ways you will never imagine!

Jennifer James

Jennifer James edits the Kids' Reading Room at the *Los Angeles Times*. Her first book, *The Mystery at Ravenswood* is published by Stargazer Press

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That American publishers and agents are so swamped with submissions that they don't read most of them. That is the conclusion that I came to after a year and a half of submitting through the slushpile.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Submit your manuscript outside of the United States. When I submitted my story to a small publishing company in Canada, it was immediately accepted. Probably because the owner actually read it.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Following the guidelines of publishing companies who demand exclusivity of three to six months -- in other words, I submitted my story to only one publisher at a time. Six months would go by of wasted time and then the rejection letter.

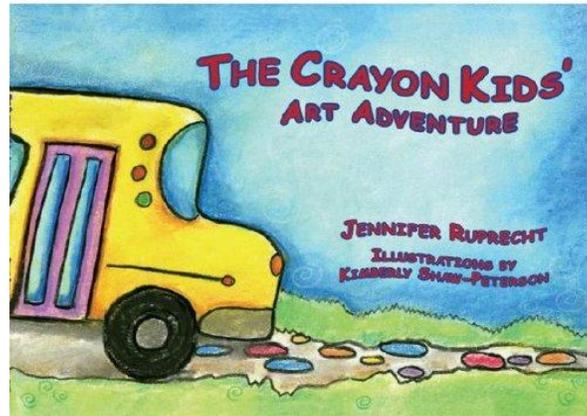
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

After you have written the book you were born to write, do not give up! Be creative in your ideas for getting the book published. Try things that others have not thought of. Think outside the box. Tap every possible contact you may already have.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Be as creative in your ideas of promoting your book as you were when you were writing it. This will give you an edge in your cover letters to publishers and agents. They will see you do not intend to sit there and do nothing while the publishing company does all the work in promoting.

Jennifer Ruprecht



Jennifer Ruprecht is the mother of three girls whose first book is *The Crayon Kids Art Adventure*, in which a group of children visit an art school where they learn that using their imagination and thinking outside the box will let them be anything they want to be.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Be patient! I had the idea for the book in my head and it only took 20 minutes to get it on paper. My book was finally published 2 years later. There's more to it than just the idea. All the art work, editing, financing, marketing and just waiting for the printing. Don't let it discourage you...keep on going! It will happen!

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Just get started. Just sit down and write the book. Get the ideas on paper and go from there.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Losing hope. When my first publisher filed for bankruptcy I thought my dream was over. Another opportunity came up and now I'm an author.

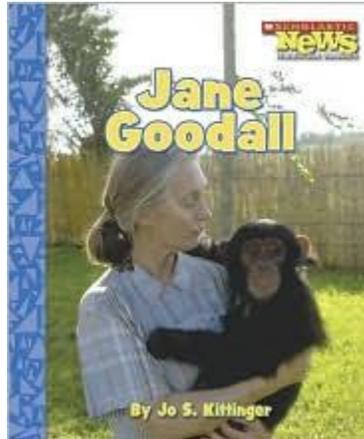
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Don't give up and surround yourself with supportive people who believe in you. There is no room for negative vibes when you're pursuing your dream.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Publishing your own book can be expensive. There are a lot of costs involved before, during and after the printing process. Start a fund now and you'll get there. Once you start selling your books it will all fall into place.

Jo S. Kittinger



Jo S. Kittinger, who resides in Alabama, is the author of 14 books, including her most recent, *Jane Goodall*, with Children's Press and *The House On Dirty-Third Street*, a picture book, which will be coming out from Peachtree Publishers. Jo also serves as a Regional Advisor for the Southern Breeze region (AL, MS, GA) of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. www.jokittinger.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

When I first started writing, all my stories seemed golden to me. Now I look back and see they were actually poorly written and deserved the standard rejection forms that appalled me at the time. So I wish someone had told me in those early days to hold onto a manuscript for a month or more, then re-read with a more critical eye, and polish, polish, polish before sending anything out to publishers.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

The best advice I ever got was back in the day when you had to lick the backs of stamps. On the matter of rejections, I was told by author Kersten R. Hamilton, to "cry a tear on a stamp and stick the manuscript back in the mail." She knew rejection was part of the publishing process and she encouraged me to have a submission strategy for each manuscript. When a rejection arrived from one publisher, you should already have a plan of where to send it next. But at the same time, she realized there was heartache in the process, thus allowing for that tear.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

The biggest mistake I ever made was failing to carefully document research for my first non-fiction book. When the publisher asked for verification of where particular facts came from, I had to slog my way through a stack of notebooks looking for each reference in my notes.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Every writer should keep a teachable attitude, realizing a writer can always grow and become better. Let constructive criticism and teaching always find the welcome mat outside the door of your mind. Too often, we become defensive when being told something negative about our work.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

I really need to tell you that you need a very thick skin and another source of income when entering this field. Rejection is so abundant and payment so small (even when you do make a sale), that the frail of spirit should not subject themselves to this madness, lest they splatter into ink spots on the floor.

Joann Mazzio



Joann writes: *“My very first book was published after 21 rejections. I came to writing after a career as an aeronautical engineer, and a math teacher. However, I began working when I was 14 years old. All the jobs I held have provided me with settings and characters for my books and stories.”* Joann’s website is: www.mazziojoann.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

How important it is that an author be clairvoyant enough to pick a young editor so he/she would not retire and leave me an orphan.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Revise, revise, revise. The highest praise I ever got was from a sophomore who wrote that *The One Who Came Back* was the first book she had read all the way through.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I waited too long to begin writing. I should have begun younger, but I didn't know I could write.

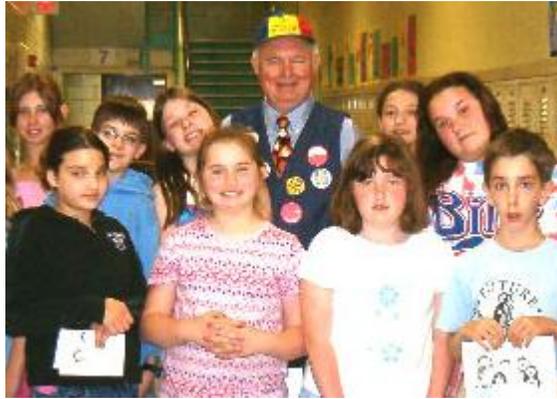
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Be born to a mother who is a prominent editor. And be stubborn about achieving your aims. Live real life. Create main characters who are beauticians and plumbers, and even lady leprechauns and not writers or wannabe writers. Readers want to relate to a world they know.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

In a long life, writing is the most consuming and demanding occupation I've ever had.

Joseph Sottile



Joseph “Silly” Sottile loves writing poems and stories for kids. He’s a frequent classroom visitor. Joe’s *Picture Poetry on Parade!* was on Booklocker.com’s best-seller list for several months. He was a winner of Writers & Books 2004 Poetry Booth Writing Contest. Joe has read poetry in many schools and on radio. Last spring he was featured on WHAM Channel 13’s “Bright Spot”—a poet with a passion for poetry! Joe was published in *Who’s Who in America* 2006. In August 2007, Joe had an essay published in *Chicken Soup for the Child’s Soul*. Joe has also won several writing contests, and he teaches writing workshops for kids in upstate New York. What’s the best thing about Joe? He has never forgotten what it is like to be a kid. Read his poetry and you will see that. For more info on Joe, visit <http://www.joe-sottile.com>

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

It takes almost a decade on the average to break into children's publishing! How determined are you?

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

"Follow your dream." This is common wisdom in the world of literature. Maybe it should be said, "Follow your dream wherever it will take you, and enjoy the journey."

When I was 5, a slow moving car ran over me on 142 Street in Queens. Although struck down and bloody, I had no broken bones or permanent injuries. In the ambulance, I kept asking Dad, “Am I going to die?” When I didn’t die, the idea of giving back to others started to germinate in my mind.

By the time I was in high school, I knew what I wanted to be: a teacher and a writer—a teacher by day and a writer by night. In sixth grade as a student, I was still mixing up the end of the alphabet. I was not good at memorizing facts or figures. I attended summer school twice to retake the math and science regents. I passed. Therefore, I received my treasured Regents Diploma, but nobody believed in me. My guidance counselor warned my father I might not be college material. My Dad asked two questions.

“Why do you want to teach?”

“It’s the only thing I want to do.” I answered. “I won’t be happy doing anything else.”

“What makes you think you have to be happy?”

I had no ready-made answer. I thought striving to be happy was like throwing a pebble into a warm pond, causing happy ripples for all aquatic life. Instead I felt like lightning hit nearby and seared in the sand these words—1) Dad questions whether you’re college material. 2) Dad doesn’t think happiness is important.

At my college orientation meeting, freshmen were asked, “Are you willing to pay the price of success?” I said, “Yes!” every time I attended classes, studied long hours, completed term papers, and skipped the next beer blast.

College was like being on the Viper at Darien Lake Amusement Park with twists, turns, and dips in my grade point average. I feared the Viper would splatter my college dreams on the sidewalk. My scramble to assimilate geology took me two tours of Geology 101. The rocks I had in my head the first time around weren’t the right rocks. I even made the wrong dean’s list once, but I dug in deeper and started using better studying techniques such as SQ3R—study, question, read, recite, and review. My grades improved.

But in college, new math should have been called “Let’s-Drive-Joe-Nuts-In-Math 102,” and I earned a generous “C.”

My persistence paid off. I graduated from college and landed a job with my first interview. Now I was teaching new math to sixth graders—different base systems—something that mystified me in college. As I opened up the textbook and saw superb graphics and clear examples, the wonderful world of bases came alive! Now math was fun.

For years I had one classroom rule posted, “Thou Shall Not Mock.” I promised my students that I wouldn’t mock them or say “Shut-up!” When my students completed their work, I encouraged them to read, write or play with words. Once, I caught a student sliding out of his chair with laughter at what he had written.

I asked, "What's so funny?" He said, "Your last name! But I don't want to mock you." "What about my name?" "When you move the letters around, it spells toilets."

The class roared. I turned red and said, "My father is a plumber. I am proud of him. He calls his own bathroom the library. I have written a couple poems about the bathroom. I'll bring them in."

I loved teaching reading and writing. Each year I read to my class some of the works of Judy Blume, Shel Silverstein, and other literary giants. Judy and Shel were their favorites. Yes, I shared their words so frequently that I felt on a first name basis. Forget the Dead Poets Society. We were charter members of the Mutual Admiration Society. Famous authors danced through our classroom leaving behind golden footprints.

Whenever I happen to meet former students, they ask two questions, "Are you still teaching *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and writing poetry?" They often told me our year together was their favorite or I was their favorite teacher. Through their kind words I realized I lit the light of learning in their minds.

A few months ago, I accidentally met Chris, a former student, at the airport. He was returning home from college. At first sight he asked, "Remember me?" "I do! What do you remember about fourth grade?" "I wrote a 1,000 word paper on how the skunk got its stripe." Then he added, "I'm majoring in Creative Writing. I'm going to write plays for a living. Thanks Mr. Sottile for getting me interested in writing. You've made a difference in my life. "

For thirty-three years I happily taught in the classroom, and found more and more time to write poetry with encouragement from my students.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I don't really believe in mistakes. It has been said, "There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from."

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Never give up!

I Really Need To Tell You This:

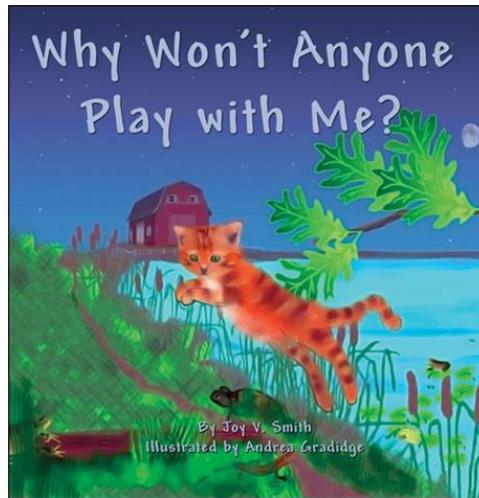
As a writer, I am one of the luckiest persons on the earth. I can take life's painful experiences and turn them into poems and essays that teach the world

something meaningful. When I have done that I feel better because the experience was not in vain, and it is no longer locked up in me. When I have wonderful experience, I can write about them too, and the joy expands sevenfold.

Writing also makes me a grateful human being. Melody Beattie has written this about gratitude, "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

I agree.

Joy V. Smith



Joy V. Smith writes fiction and non-fiction. Her non-fiction includes interviews, articles, and her book, *Building a Cool House for Hot Times without Scorching the Pocketbook*.

Her fiction includes SF & Fantasy and children's stories; contributions to magazines and anthologies; and her latest audiobook, *Sugar Time*. She lives in Florida with Xena, the warrior puppy. Joy has a blog that can be found at <http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

The work doesn't stop when you finish your book. Now you have to work on promotion. And keep writing!

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Start at the top when submitting, while being sure that your story or article is a good fit for the publication/publisher. (I've possibly read this in writing books, but I've heard it a number of times at writing panels at SF cons.)

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Submitting to two editors at the same time. I did that at least twice. Once I didn't look at my submissions record. I swear I didn't know it was out! And another time, I never heard back from an editor. (I do query.) I was fortunate that the editors were very nice when I asked to withdraw my manuscript.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Persevere.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Read books you enjoy--like the ones you want to write--and read a few writing books. They can inspire and teach you. And don't look for a formula! Come up with a new twist.

June Keir



June Keir is a children's writer whose love of adventure, kids and animals shines through in her writing. June is also a freelance proofreader and manuscript assessor. In her book *Megan's Journey*, everyone believes that Megan's parents died when she was a baby. When Megan receives a letter from someone claiming to be her mother, her world is turned upside down. Come with Megan on her amazing journey as she discovers a new family and faces the challenges of living in a different culture.

Go to www.junekeir-writer.com to read more about June and her books.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That the simplest looking contract was not necessarily the best deal for me.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Get your contract checked by an expert, no matter how simple and straightforward it appears to be.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Being too trusting, too keen to be published and not looking carefully into a new publisher's venture.

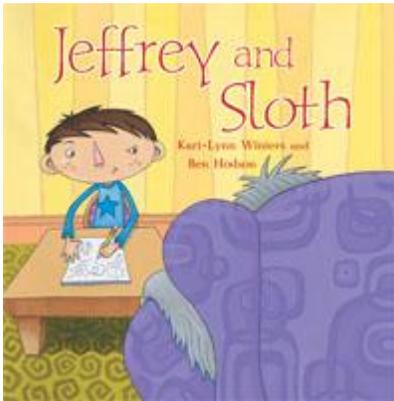
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Read, and study the craft of writing.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

When you, as a writer, have read much and have studied the craft of writing, you deserve to be treated with respect, to be taken seriously and to have your work considered for publication. Let another writer whose opinion you trust read your work before you send it to a publisher. Let your work rest for a while, then go back to it for a fresh look. And remember, when those rejections come, as come they will, perseverance pays!

Kari-Lynn Winters



Kari-Lynn Winters is the author of *Jeffrey and Sloth* (2007), a picture book about the daunting task of overcoming writer's block, and *The Meaning Maker*, a children's play about reading strategies which is currently being toured throughout the Lower Mainland. A graduate of Canada's National Theatre School, she is currently performing with a Vancouver children's theatre group, The Tickle Trunk Players.

Kari has taught a range of students in Canada and the United States, including pre-school, special education, primary, intermediate, high school, and now university teacher education.

Kari's website is www.kariwinters.com.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I wish someone had told me that it doesn't get any easier after you have published your first book. Once it is published you have to market yourself and your book like crazy. Also, the next manuscript you write may get rejected a number of times. The work doesn't end when you sign the contract.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Promote your manuscripts before they get published. For example, go to schools or libraries and read your story, perform it as a play, write it as a screenplay, etc. The more you can show that you are a good promoter, the more likely the publisher will give you a chance (it shows that you will be able to sell their books). Also, it gives you great feedback.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

The biggest mistake I ever made was when I did a favor for an acquaintance by promoting his illustrations. This acquaintance, although he said that he really wanted to illustrate for a publisher, changed his mind at the last minute. I felt embarrassed when the publisher came back to me, asking why I had suggested someone who wasn't interested and had wasted their time.

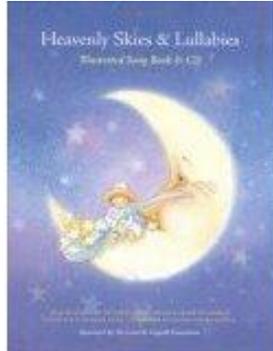
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

- 1) Write.
- 2) Enjoy the editing process and the suggestions given by others.
- 3) Send out.
- 4) Promote yourself and your work.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Talk to other authors (published and unpublished) about your book ideas. Believe me, they are not interested in stealing your ideas. You never know when they can get you that in that you are looking for. This happened to me.

Kathy Reilly Fallon



Dr. Kathy Reilly Fallon is a Board Certified Foot and Ankle Specialist in New York City, New York. She is Co-Founder and Chairwoman of the Heavenly Productions Foundation, whose mission is to help children in distress.

Kathy sang on the CD entitled "Heavenly Lullabies" which is dedicated to the Babies & Orphans of 9-11-01. All net proceeds from this CD go to the Twin Towers Orphan Fund. *Heavenly Skies & Lullabies* book & CD is the Foundation's second project to help children in need. Besides enjoying her work as a doctor and publishing medical articles, she loves to sing and spend time with her family and friends. For more information about the book and CD, visit www.cdbaby.com/heavenlylullabies2

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

The difficulty one has publishing a Children's Picture Book.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

To keep positive, believe in yourself, your dreams and your book.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I do not wish to look at them as mistakes, I look at them as stepping stones throughout my journey into the world of Children's Book writing.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Believe in yourself!

I *Really* Need To Tell You This:

When you decide to write your children's book, keep in mind there may be many steps into creating your masterpiece in children's writing. I believe it is important to copyright your work through the US Copyright office and if you cannot afford this, then do the "old man copyright" method.

Mail yourself a copy of your work with it postmarked, but do not open it. Once your work is copyrighted, have a professional children's book writer edit your work (ie. Gotham Writers Workshop). Also, joining the Society of Children's Book Writer's and Illustrators is a great way of joining a network for the exchange of knowledge between writers, illustrators, editors, publishers, agents, librarians, educators, booksellers and others involved with literature for young people.

Kara Benson



Kara writes: *The first proper book I got published was by accident. Living in Zimbabwe I had written heaps of emails to friends and family all over the globe, to let them know how my life was etc. Then I meet somebody at a party who gave me the email of her German publisher, who decided to turn my email-letters into a book, and that's how Letters from Zimbabwe and Briefe aus Simbabwe the German version, came to be published. It was simply luck. The second publisher I found by chance on the internet through a tip on the PIO newsletter, again it was simply luck. I had never been really looking for a publisher, which is probably the really hard and frustrating bit of the writing business.*

My other book The River That Saved Me - www.adventurebooksofseattle.com is set in Africa mostly and many of my experiences have gone into it, as my publisher gave me just a few aspects of what they were looking for in the books they wanted. This gives me almost a total freedom to write what I want, while knowing my book will be published, which is great. Again, this is a very fortunate circumstance. On the other hand I have written a YA novel years ago, starting from 1000 words I did for an assignment in my writing course. I liked these words and a few scenes I had written so much that I carried on with the story until I had written over 65000 words some years later!!! Sheer discipline to finish the damn book kept me going. Check out my web site www.karabenson.info if you like and drop me a line on the email if I can be of any assistance.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

To undergo some sort of professional training first, when I started writing short children's stories just for fun years ago. The professional writing course has helped me immensely, gave me the tools of the trade and established my confidence to seriously give it go as soon as I had some time to spare on my hands.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Most important: learning never ends! Followed by: do what makes your heart sing! Polish your work endlessly, well almost. Make your characters come alive, spend much time on your character files and really give them the traits you will later need in the story. Give your characters their skills well in advance before they will use them. When all is said and done, do something else for a week or even better two or three weeks and then come back to your printed book! You'll be amazed how much you see now that definitely needs some further work or polishing.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Not to start writing sooner in my life.

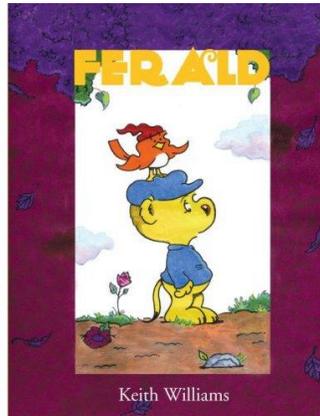
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Finish the book you're working on, it hones your skills, working ethics and discipline. If you haven't the 'sitting' power (literally) then you're better off doing something else. Having said that, writing is a creative process and I have found that there are days, when you're just one walking writer's block and nothing flows. On such days I only write rubbish and found it more useful to get other work done, so I'd be free to write once the magic flows again.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Be realistic about yourself and your talent. For myself, I know I'm not the century's greatest literary discovery and will not make it to great fame, but that doesn't worry me one bit as I WRITE FOR FUN! Being realistic gives you realistic goals and you might find your market niche easier. Just keep writing ...

Keith Williams



Keith writes: *I was born in New Rochelle and grew up in Mount Vernon, New York. I have been drawing and making up stories for as long as I can remember. Creating new characters, whether it's animals, people, monsters or aliens—nothing beats turning a blank piece of paper into art. I also like to paint from time to time, watercolor has always been of favorite of mine.* Keith's website is www.ferald.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I wish someone had told how difficult it was going to be, at finding the right publisher for my book. Some publishers were not interested in my cartoon style illustrations. And for some, either they wanted my characters without the text or the text without the characters. However, it all worked itself out in the end.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Never fear rejection. It is upon rejection that you are giving time to tweak your writing or/and illustrations for the better.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Thinking that my book would sell itself without promoting it.

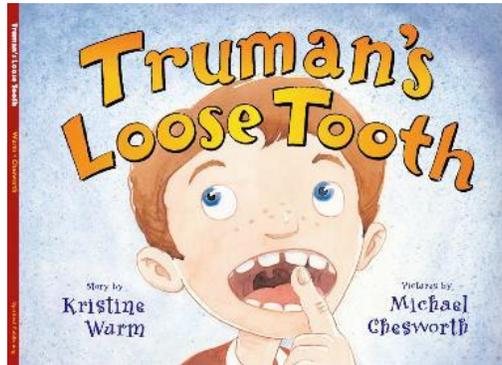
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

You need to have patience and an understanding of promoting yourself and your book in a creative way. I personally like to promote my book and my characters online. Whether it's on T-shirts or posters, I like to take my characters beyond just being in a book.

I really need to tell you this

It's great being both the writer and illustrator of a book. I like the idea of creating the characters, their voice and the world that they live in.

Kristine Wurm



Kristine Wurm, MS, LPC, is a Licensed Professional Counselor whose children's picture book is *Truman's Loose Tooth* (Spirited Publishing, LLC). Her stories focus on common childhood experiences that teach on lessons that are valuable throughout life. Find out more at www.spiritedpublishing.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I wish someone had told me when I began to think of writing a book to write about any part of a story that comes to you. As you develop your idea and story more fully, add that into the appropriate sequence. You will then be able to connect these events and ideas into a complete story with no writer's block. I only sit down to write when I have something to write about.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

The best advice I ever got was to read some books about getting a book published. There's so much that you need to understand about publishing before you write a story that should be made into a book that people will want to read.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

The biggest mistake I ever made was to not network enough with other authors & publishers regarding beneficial promotional ideas for those with very limited financial resources.

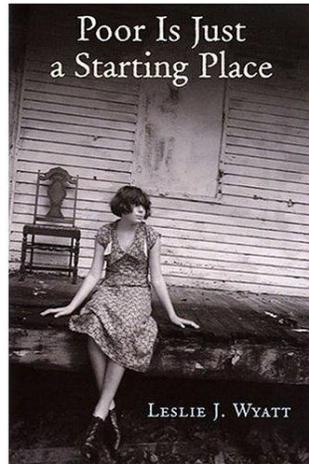
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

This depends on how you define success. For me, it was writing a story that I feel proud of and completely satisfied with.

I really need to tell you this

You really can pursue anything you can imagine. So much of success is dependent on perseverance.

Leslie J. Wyatt



Leslie J. Wyatt is a freelance writer for children and adults, having more than ninety articles and stories accepted for publication. A two-time graduate of the Institute for Children's Literature, member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators as well as the Missouri Writer's Guild, Leslie's publishing credits range from her historical fiction novel for middlegraders -- *Poor Is Just a Starting Place* (Holiday House Inc.) -- and worldwide children's magazines such as *Highlights for Children* and *Cricket*, to adult magazines including *Children's Writer*, *Working Writer*, and *Homeschool Enrichment*. In addition, her work appears in various anthologies including *Cup of Comfort for Courage*. Leslie conducts school author visits and writing workshops where she offers a variety of writing related sessions. She has also been a featured speaker at the annual SCBWI conference for Missouri at St. Peters. School visit, workshop, and speaking information can be found on her website at www.lesliejwyatt.com.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

On my computer I have a document titled *Things I Have Learned the Hard Way*. Under the category of "Book Signing" here's one thing I wish someone had told me: Make sure to find out the terms under which you will be selling.

This may seem like a no-brainer to the business-minded out there, but it never occurred to me to double-check store policy when I set up a certain book signing, assuming it would be like other signings I'd done. Never assume! I arrived with my box of books (they didn't stock them), and arranged my table. Only then did I discover--in a rather off-hand manner I might add--that the store policy for sales of books they don't stock was a percentage of the cover price. Aaargh. I not only

did not make a penny on books sold, by the time they got their cut, I ended up losing money on every sale!

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

"Never let the sun go down on a rejected manuscript."

Know when you send your creation out where you'll send it next in the event it returns to you in a rejected state. This advice, shared by a former instructor has been invaluable in countering rejection depression and helping me maintain writing momentum.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Using transcripts when writing an interview based article. Call it ignorance on my part, but I didn't realize that this is not considered primary source information, or at least not the type of primary source material the editor had in mind. I guess even though you're reading the horse's words, it's not the same thing as hearing the horse say it.

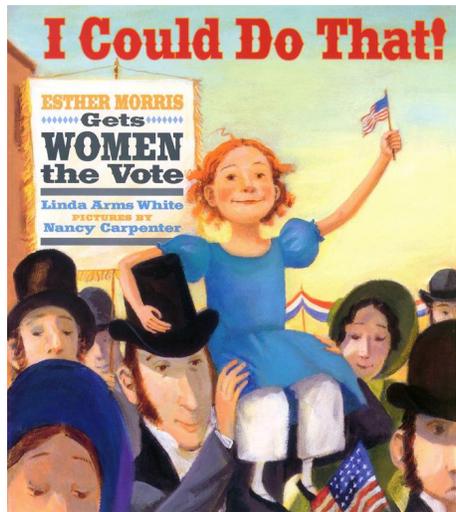
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

KEEP WRITING. Every day. Even when you think what you've written stinks. Sometimes it does, but you can fix that in the revision stages. However, if you give up because you get a rejection, are in the long-drawn out "muddle" of your novel, or any of the thousand and one pitfalls along the way, then you'll never get any further on your journey as a writer.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Be who you are and write from that place. Don't try to write about things you're not interested in just because there's a market--(unless, of course, you're starving)--if you write what you're passionate about and be true to who you are inside, it will come through to your readers. There's something magical about that exchange.

Linda Arms White



Linda Arms White began writing when her youngest child went to school fulltime. Her picture books, *Too Many Pumpkins* (Holiday House) and *Comes A Wind* (DK INK), have been recognized with awards such as: ABA Pick of the List Book, Children's Choice Book, Troll Book Club selection, Amazon.com's 10 Most Recommended Halloween Books three years in a row, NYPL's Best 100 Books for Reading and Sharing, Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best Children's Book, Children's Literature Choice featured book, World Book Encyclopedia Supplement feature, and two Colorado Author's League Top Hand Awards.

I Could Do That (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), won a prestigious Christopher Award given to film, TV, and books that affirm the highest values of the human spirit. It has also been awarded as a Junior Library Guild selection, starred reviews in *School Library Journal* and *Booklist*, a Bank Street Book College Children's Book Committees' monthly pick, an Oppenheim Toy Foundation Gold Book Award, named a Booklinks Lasting Connections Book, and a *Booklist* Notable Book and Amelia Bloomer Book by the American Library Association, Oppenheim Toy Foundation Gold Book Award, and many others. Holiday House has just purchased her manuscript *Too Many Turkeys*.

White, a popular speaker and teacher, is co-owner of Children's Authors' Bootcamp (www.wemakewriters.com). She and her husband are the parents of four grown children, grandparents of four, and live in a rustic lodge they designed and built in the Colorado mountains.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Verbs are the powerhouses of your writing. Use "was" and other forms of "to be" only when necessary. Precise, active verbs add layers of meaning that enrich and deepen the story. Example: rather than WALK, words like SCAMPER, LUMBER, and TRUDGE give insight into the character's physicality and state of mind in addition to locomotion.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Use color coding for many different purposes. It's particularly useful to beginning writers to see how much of their story is description, action, and dialogue. Those should occur in fairly equal amounts in the story, unless it is a picture book which needs much less description. As beginners, we tend to describe too much, tell too much.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

My mother had a friend whose son worked at Putnam and agreed to read my picture book. I managed to squeeze my cover letter onto one page by narrowing the margins and shrinking the font. I then was able to tell him everything I knew about the subject matter, where I got the idea, and what the story would mean to kids. I doubt he ever got to the manuscript.

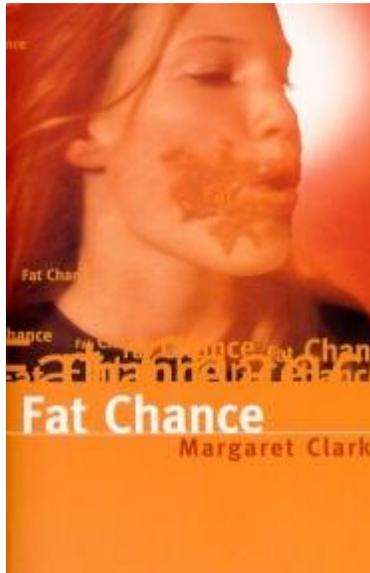
The most important thing a writer can do to gain success is:

Have persistence, patience, and perseverance.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Find the heart of your story, the thing that makes you love it. Make sure that doesn't get lost as you write. It will move your reader, too.

Margaret Clark



Since 1987, multiple-award winning author Margaret Clark has written 130 books for teenagers and children published by Penguin, Random House and Scholastic. She uses humor to tackle relationships, friendships, and social issues. Her books have proven enormously popular with young readers around the world.

She has worked as a primary teacher, pre-school director, university lecturer and alcohol and drug educator with the Victorian Health Department. These various jobs have given her great insight into the lives of children and teenagers. She has a B.Ed (Honors), a Masters degree in Education, and a Doctorate in Education.

Find out more at www.margaretclark.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

To draft and re-draft and not hand in the first draft. (I've driven a number of editors nutty).

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Be true to yourself, write from your own view point and with your own voice and personality. Be prepared to take criticism and act on it - editors have more experience than you do when you're starting out.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Getting a reputation as a ditzzy commercially-driven writer when maybe I should have written a few more deep and meaningful literary works. Then again ... maybe not.

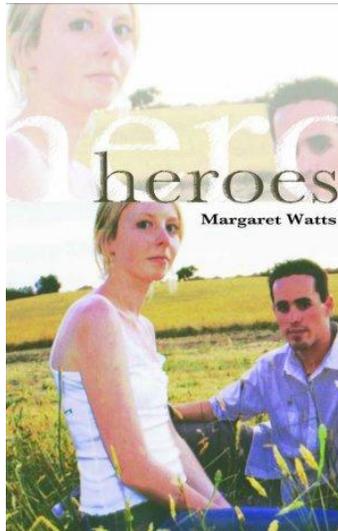
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Keep writing, listen to criticism and try to improve.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

I need to tell you that you can make a very good living as an author if you work very hard, write books that children want to read and have a unique style.

Margaret Watts



Australian author Margaret Watts' books include *Not Worms* (Blake Education), *Heroes* (Lothian), *Guardians of the Garden* (Macmillan), *Poppa's Punch* (Blake Education) and *Georgie Fills The Gap* (Barrie Publishing).

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

To print out a hard copy of everything I wrote and read it aloud.

How often I have been embarrassed by clumsy constructions I didn't notice when reading from the computer screen, but which were so obvious when printed on paper; obvious and easily fixed.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Never give up.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Rushing stories to publishers before they had finished evolving.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Be persistent.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Writing is an addiction that leads to bouts of depression and delight.

Marianne Mitchell



Marianne Mitchell has been writing for children since 1991. She has published nine books for young readers and hundreds of magazine stories. Her most recent book is an anthology of short stories, *Windows of Gold*, available through her web site: www.MarianneMitchell.net.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Write a great read-aloud chapter. If you write novels or chapter books, you will no doubt want to read a selection to a group. That passage should be interesting enough to hook the listeners' attention, leave them wanting to know more of the story, but not give away the ending. And it should be short enough (500-700 words) so no one gets bored or squirmy.

Fortunately, in my book *Finding Zola*, I had a great short chapter early on, a scene where my main character has a visit from her father who is now a ghost. It's spooky, builds on the conflict, and establishes her feelings toward her dad.

You will need to set up the scene with a few very brief comments to your audience before you start to read. And sometimes, in order to keep your reading smooth and focused, you may have to skip a few words or phrases in your reading that would call for further explanation, for example diversions or sidetrack comments. I've heard famous authors do this in their readings and nothing was lost.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

It's always a good idea to read your work aloud to yourself to check for flow and clarity. But it's especially important to create a passage that you will enjoy reading aloud to a group again and again. You'll leave them shouting for more! more!

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

In my book, *Firebug*, I forgot to create a good read-aloud passage, making it hard to hook listeners in the same way. Since it's a mystery, I am hard-pressed to find sections that don't give away too many clues or require too much background explanation.

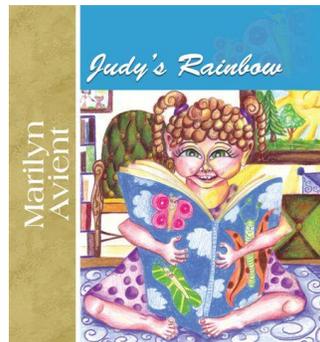
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Believe in yourself. You will get your ego clobbered in a thousand ways so you must be like one of those punchy plastic clowns and BOING right back up!

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Read! Read! Read!

Marilyn Avient



Marilyn writes: *Being a very sensitive child in a good family, I suffered from depression all my life as a result of 3 normal (no abuse of any kind) life happenings in my early childhood. During my adult years I was a medical lab technologist, a top salesperson for Avon, and a realtor's assistant. In my mid 30's I suffered a total collapse and ended up in hospital a total of 15 weeks over the next couple of years. This experience made me work on my past and go to the deepest recesses of myself searching for answers. Over many years I found them and learned many wonderful life lessons. I am bipolar and am on medication probably for the rest of my life but I have chosen to live well and to never be a victim to my condition or anything else. I am a public speaker and give presentations to inspire others to do the same. I have written an autobiographical book for adults as my basis of my talks. I am married to a wonderful man, have 3 grown up children and 5 grandchildren and 2 puppies. I am a happy woman. There are many self-help books for adults but not as many for children so my two books -- Judy's Rainbow and A Lesson For Neddy -- are about life lessons.*

Marilyn's website is www.marilynavient.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I wish someone had told me to think big. When I first wrote these books I was just doing it for my grandchildren without any thought of getting them published. I knew I needed illustrations and I had no idea where to find a person to do them. So I gave up and did nothing with them.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

To take a risk and put yourself out there. As soon as you truly commit to something magic will begin to happen. When you decide to believe in yourself--even if it is for the first time--and then try your hardest, everything clicks into place. If you don't take the risk it is guaranteed that nothing will happen.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I let Fear rule my life and so I never dared to get my books published in case no one would buy them. With that attitude it is quite likely that no one would. I was afraid that for someone to reject my books--because they were such a labor of love to me--would be a personal rejection of me. Fear kept me sitting in limbo for a very long time. There I sat day after day, month after month with Fear by my side and believe me, he is not good company. Now that I have pushed him aside and am going for the gusto he has gotten the hint and has moved on--at least that is what he tries to make me think. Being a never-give-up kind of guy Fear still shows up once in a while but now I just tell him to get a life and go bother someone else. I must always remember that Fear is only as powerful as I allow him to be.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

I believe the most important thing you can do as a writer to achieve success is to write with your heart and promote with your head. Get some good people in your court who know how to do the things that you don't and then pay attention. It is amazing what you can learn when you get out of your ego and just acknowledge someone else's wisdom and expertise.

I thought that by being the author it was all about me. Well the insides of the book are mine but nobody cares about the content unless it can be of benefit to them. You have to step out of yourself and make it about the reader. The front cover has to literally call to the readers, who in this case would be children, but it also has to appeal to the grown ups who are buying the books for them. It also has to be priced just right---not so low that it appears to be a dud, but not so high that it is unaffordable to the majority of the buyers.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

One of the most exciting things I have done is to dust off my manuscripts for my books and just put them out there for publication! Sounds easy but it was huge for me. I have learned through firsthand experience that when you commit to doing something big, you have to let the Universe know what you need to make it

happen. I have found from personal experience that if I just speak from my heart and state what I NEED somehow it always arrives at my "doorstep." It is a "build it and they will come" concept and so put your books out there and know that everything will happen exactly as it is supposed to. I have put my heart into my books but it was my head that told me to take them off the shelf and find a publisher. (When used properly the heart and head make a wonderful team.) Because I asked for help the name of 1st World Publishing literally fell in my lap and they have been wonderful to work with. I asked the publisher for help with the illustrations and a wonderful magic-making woman came into my life. She brought my books to life and every time I see them I feel a joy unlike any other. I have no marketing experience and no idea about websites so I put the word out there and found a website producing company who does marketing as well. My request was answered in a 2 for 1 package. I have no idea what I would have done with out these wonderful people who have come into my life. These books are my babies and no matter who buys them or who doesn't, nothing can change that. No one can take away the fact that I have stepped way outside of my comfort zone and I really like the view from here. I have all the right people behind me and I now have faith in myself. Any way I look at it I am a success; a profound success. And so can you be.

Marlene Rattigan



Marlene Rattigan is an Early Childhood Teacher, a Teacher of English as a Second Language, a writer, public speaker and formerly an accredited fitness leader/aerobics instructor with the Australian Fitness Accreditation Council. She developed Kidz-Fiz-Biz, the classes, as a result of an interest in motor development in children. Now the program is in book and audio form so that teachers, therapists and parents throughout the world can have access to a user-friendly music and movement program that spans the curriculum.

Her books include *Kidz-Fiz-Biz - Learning Through Drama, Dance And Song*
Marlene's website is www.kidzfizbiz.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

How to create audio CDs using other people's music, as CDs accompany my books. I had to learn through trial and error, through eating humble pie and asking anyone remotely connected with the industry how to go about it. From each contact I discovered another piece of the jigsaw until finally it all came together.

Firstly, be aware that the maximum a CD will contain is 80 minutes of recording, although you rarely see a CD with that much on it. Decide on your wish list of tracks and go from there.

Secondly, get in touch with the copyright holder for each track of music to ask for permission to use their track and to negotiate the copyright fee. Be aware there are two fees involved -- one for the original writer/s of the music and one for the performance of that track. If you use work that's out of copyright (usually 50 years) you will only pay one fee, the performance fee.

All your tracks for copying must be on CD. Cassette quality is not good enough.

Accept that you may not be able to use all the tracks you want to.

The mechanical licensing (for the original writers of the music) can be handled by the copyright association in your country when you have gained sound recording copyright permission and licenses. This organization will then give you the relevant licenses (or not, as the case may be) and charge the fees.

You are now free to go to the studio to have your master recorded. Use a highly reputable studio for this purpose and an equally reputable studio for the replication process. You will need to have had CD labels designed. Have this done by the same person who designs your book cover so it will match. Spend the money and get it done professionally.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

From my dear friend Tania Mol, author of a book on industrial health and safety. She told me to focus on my mission and to get myself out of the equation. I had been feeling bogged down and discouraged with the enormity of my task as my book involved producing CDs, writing the text and matching them with pictures, then self-publishing. She said when she was at that point in her publishing journey, she sat looking at all these case studies on her computer and wondering why she was putting herself through all this pain. Then the epiphany came that she was doing it "for all the dead people", those who had died needlessly in preventable industrial accidents. She knew her book would bring their stories to light to prevent further accidents. The answer for me was then obvious. I was doing it for the children who would benefit from my program. I had to just get on with it. Focusing on the mission and not myself made it much easier.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Doubting myself. This puts the brakes on. You can only achieve by getting out there and doing whatever it takes, irrespective of the outcomes. "Feel the fear and do it anyway" comes to mind. Marianne Williamson's poem also comes to mind - "...you do not serve the world by shrinking..." Self-doubt is a form of shrinking. Getting out there is not self-aggrandizement; it's not arrogance. It is ensuring your message gets told. My advice is, "Just do it."

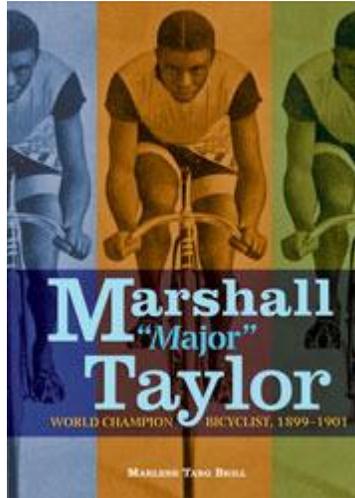
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Have integrity. When your intention is for the common good, rather than for yourself, your success is assured and the money will come as a result of that success. (A good dose of marketing helps too!)

I Really Need To Tell You This:

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." Calvin Coolidge
The message is - never give up.

Marlene Targ Brill



Marlene is an award-winning author of 65 books--including historical fiction for primary and middle-grade readers and nonfiction for all age readers--and a speaker about writing. Most recent titles include: *Marshall "Major" Taylor: World Champion Bicyclist*, a middle-grade biography of the most famous world and African-American athlete and bicyclist of 1900; and *Barack Obama: Working to Make a Difference*, the only middle-grade biography of Illinois's U.S. Senator and presidential candidate. Find more information about Marlene at www.marlenetargbrill.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

To take various levels of rejection letters seriously. In the beginning, if an editor wrote a letter about what needed changing, I just moved on to the next publisher. I didn't realize the time and energy--and possible interest--it took to write these letters with so many submissions that editors receive. I think I missed a lot of opportunities by not taking greater advantage of those early connections. Now I write thank you notes for kind rejections and target editors who give personal rejections as contacts to receive my future ideas/proposals/manuscripts.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Believe in yourself and never give up. But also don't be so married to your words and ideas that you can't accept constructive criticism and change your initial offerings.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

The biggest mistake was not following up on suggestions an editor made and sending the rewritten manuscript back to that same publishing house.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

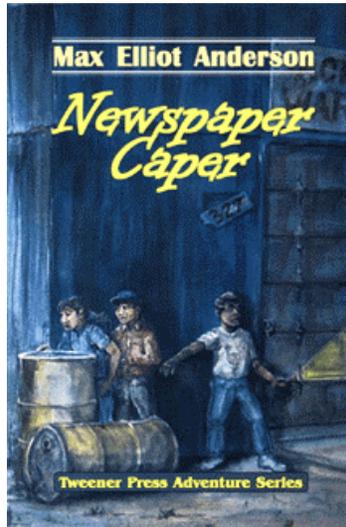
Keep reading, writing, and sending out material to help yourself and your writing grow.

To keep my spirits up and myself on the road to success in the face of rejection, I join a writer's support group. And I always send out at least five or six of one title at one time. That way, if I get one rejection, I can have a smidgeon of hope that maybe, just maybe, one of the other four or five editors might want my offering.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

I really need to reinforce how rules and pearls of wisdom from "experts" are nice, but you have to trust your gut. Each publisher and editor is different, with different likes, dislikes, and preferences for connecting with prospective authors. Do your research but follow your inclinations, albeit in a respectful, professional way.

Max Elliot Anderson



As someone who grew up a reluctant reader, Max Elliot Anderson sensed the need for action-adventures and mysteries for readers 8 - 13, especially boys.

Using his extensive experience in the production of motion pictures, videos, and television commercials, Mr. Anderson brings the same visual excitement and heart-pounding action to his stories. Each book has completely different characters, setting, and plot.

Seven books are published, with an additional twenty-eight manuscripts completed. Young readers have reported that reading one of his books is like being in an exciting or scary movie.

His website is <http://www.maxbooks.9k.com>

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

It would have been good to have some kind of an idea how long it would take to get established, build a platform, and achieve better name recognition. But, at the same time, that could have been too discouraging and one might give up too soon.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

I think having an understanding of how much marketing and promotion an author actually has to do. This was impressed upon me by other writers and through

online writer's groups. Still, it's a lot more than you think, and something that has to be done on a regular basis.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Maybe I should have started sooner. I didn't begin writing until I was 55, in late 2001. So much has changed in publishing since then, and I may have had a more solid footing five to ten years earlier. My story is a little unique in that I grew up hating to read. Now I write for other boys 8 - 13 who may be experiencing those same issues today. Every year it gets more and more difficult for new people to break in I believe.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Never give up, no matter what. If you have the desire to succeed, no one should be allowed to get in the way. Develop your unique voice. Look for opportunities in the market where your writing would fit. As they say in business, find a need and fill it.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Agents have now assumed much of the manuscript sifting responsibilities that publishers used to do. An agent gets much faster responses from publishers than the individual author. Agents are in touch with many editors, and they keep up with these people. A publisher will often give more attention to an agented submission than one from an author.

About a year ago, before I signed with my agent, I had the opportunity to meet with the top acquisitions editor at a publishing house. I could hardly see this editor for all the submissions in several tall stacks on his desk. He also had a narrow path to his desk with a lot more submissions stacked against his walls. If you keep that image in your mind, you get an idea what you're up against when you send material to a publisher.

Molly Blaisdell



Molly Blaisdell, plumber to potter, toy maker to chemist, has always had an insatiable curiosity. The author of 23 easy readers and an upcoming picture book, *Rembrandt And The Boy Who Drew Dogs*, Molly has the pleasant task each day of following her passion and doing what she loves. She grew up in Texas and now lives in the wilds of Woodinville, Washington with her husband Tim and four children. Her website is www.mollyblaisdell.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

To treat my writing like a business, to create a business plan and to set apart some space in my house for an office. I wish that someone had told me to set goals, create a website, and value the time spent networking. I wish someone had told me to respect even the smallest steps in my writing journey and to see each step as an honorable and worthy one. I also wish someone would have told me to avoid people who did not support my vision and then encouraged me to surround myself with people who were behind me 100 percent.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

To be patient because it would take 10 years to become an established children's writer.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Being too shy to attend national conferences for children's writers.

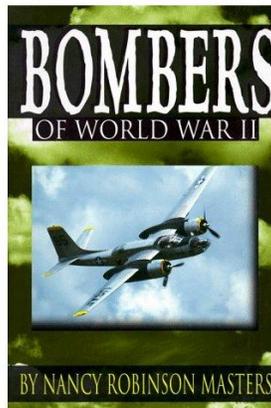
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Invest time in the writing -- consider reading books, taking courses and spending time rewriting as an investment in your business. Writers need to respect the work that they do: to give time and honor (writing for kids is important) to learning their craft.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Don't spam the market with submissions, but ALWAYS take time to target your submissions to specific editors, agents and houses.

Nancy Robinson Masters



Nancy is the author of 20 books, including award-winning books for children. Her more than 3,000 feature articles have appeared in a variety of publications. Nancy's writing has taken her around the world including traveling with the National Science Foundation in Antarctica. In addition to her work with schools, Nancy also presents programs and workshops for businesses, civic organizations, and religious groups. Her self-published picture books, *The Fabulous Flying Flag Farm* and *The Horrible Homemade Halloween Costume*, have each sold more than 20,000 copies along with sales of more than 100,000 copies combined of books published by major publishers including Scholastic and Capstone Press. <http://nancyrobinsonmasters.com>

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

I wish someone had told me with my very first book not to spend a lot of time sitting in bookstores autographing where you are surrounded by thousands of other books competing for their purchase. I did not know I needed to make sure my contract allowed me to purchase author copies at a discount and sell them other places where there is no competition. No competition not only means more sales, but it also means I get to keep the profit in these locations--not the store. For example, I sold more Halloween Costume books in a costume supply store in two hours than I did in two days in a bookstore...and I got to keep all the profit because the costume store used me and my book to attract customers. If ego is your goal, bookstore signing is the way to go. If earning money to keep you writing is your goal, use your time to get the maximum return on your investment. I call it "think outside the book."

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

"Don't let someone who never made a take-off keep you grounded. Only listen to those who have." When I began taking flying lessons, people who didn't know how to fly were constantly questioning me as to why I would do it. The same thing happened when I began writing with a goal of becoming published--people who had never tried, or who had been unsuccessful told me all the reasons why I couldn't do it. When I stopped listening to those who wanted to keep me grounded, I took off and became a licensed pilot. When I stopped listening to those who had not been published and started learning from those who had, I took off as a published author.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Believing my friends and family would all buy my books.

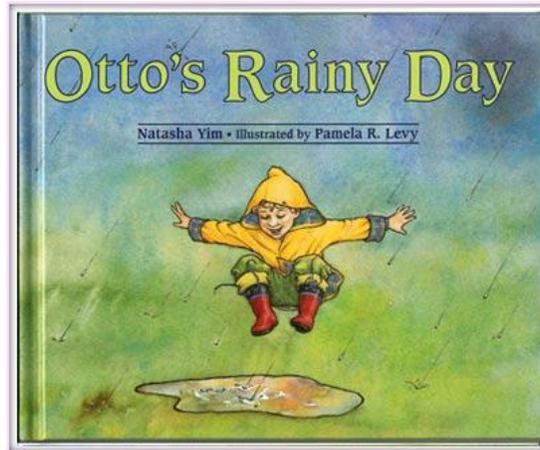
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Build a readership and build relationships by writing what sells and selling what you write. Never put anything out with your name on it that includes mistakes, poor writing, or things you will wish you hadn't said. It will come back to bite you.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

If you self-publish, you MUST use professional editors, artists and designers to produce your book. If it doesn't LOOK good, LOOK right, it isn't going to sell, no matter how wonderful the words.

Natasha Yim



Natasha writes: *I have written non-fiction articles for local and regional newspapers and magazines. My picture book, Otto's Rainy Day was published in 2000 by Charlesbridge Publishing and was selected as a Kids' Pick of the Lists that year. Two of my 10-min. plays were chosen and produced by Mendocino Community College in 2005 & 2007 as part of their New Plays Festival. Another 10 min. play, co-written with Paul Kubin, was performed at Ukiah Players Theater in June, 2007. I have also sold a non-fiction article to Highlights for Children magazine. You can find out more about me on my website: www.natashayim.com*

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That writers have to do their own marketing. I just assumed that publishers did that sort of thing, and when my first book came out, I only arranged one booksigning in my small town. Over the last few years, I've learned to be a little more shameless in promoting my book.

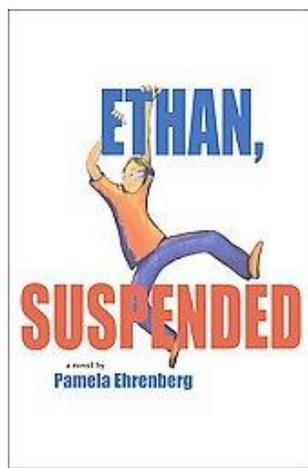
The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Not doing enough to promote my first book. I only did one book signing, and I should have arranged for more book readings in bookstores in the surrounding communities as well as locations I can easily travel to in a day, looked for ways to promote the book on local T.V. and radio stations, and scheduled school visits. None of which I knew how to do then, but I've learned a lot about publicity and marketing in the last few years.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Be persistent, and don't give up! Many famous, successful writers were rejected numerous times. Edit, edit, edit, get tons of feedback, do your market research, and most important -- send your work out. Manuscripts don't get published if they're collecting dust in a drawer.

Pamela Ehrenberg



Pamela writes: *Ethan, Suspended* is about an eighth-grader who moves in with his grandparents and becomes the only white student in his junior high. It received a starred review in *Booklist*, which was a cause for much celebrating. I've just submitted novel #2 and am working on #3. You can read more (including writing tips, a discussion guide for the book, and more) on my website, www.pamelaehrenberg.com Ethan also has his own website: www.myspace.com/ethansuspended I'm an educator in Washington, D.C., where I live with my husband Eric and two-year-old daughter Talia. I enjoy speaking at schools, libraries, and anywhere else readers and writers come together; please feel free to contact me at PMehrenberg@pamelaehrenberg.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That there's no magic formula for becoming a published author--there's no one story that if you could only stumble upon it, your career and your fortune would be made. For every J. K. Rowling, there are about a hundred billion other published authors--I never realized how many until my first book came out and I began the thrilling and agonizing process of checking its ranking on Amazon.com. But all of those authors got where they are the same way: by working hard, day after day, on their books, even on days when they didn't know what to write and they thought they might put their time to better use. And then by sending the book out when it was ready. It's that simple and that difficult at the same time.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

From a college professor reading one of my short stories: "This sounds like the first chapter of a young people's novel." I had never thought about writing for young people or writing a novel, but that statement freed me from the expectation that I had to write the sort of literary short stories that everyone I knew seemed to be writing. It was my first awareness that I had my own voice and my own audience I was writing for, and that my task was to find them.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Letting my first novel (the forever-unpublished "Cheeseburgers and Other Hazards of Sixth Grade") drag on for too many years, absorbing every bit of feedback from every well-meaning person in my extended circle of family and friends. I was like that character in *The Plague* who spends the entire novel revising and re-revising a single sentence in search of perfection. I realize now that perfection isn't possible--in fact, in the copy of *Ethan, Suspended* that I use for readings, I've marked lightly in pencil the places where I now think a word or phrase should be slightly different. Perfection isn't the goal; completion is--and there's a difference between revisions that are needed to bring your story to completion and those that take you further from your vision or send you in circles. Meaningful, productive revision is now my favorite part of the process, and the best resources I've found on this topic are on the website of the science fiction writer Holly Lisle (www.hollylisle.com).

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

To write every day, regardless of how inspired (or not) you are feeling. Having a regular critique group is a terrific motivator for this--sure, their feedback on my writing is invaluable, but even better is the knowledge that five or six people will show up at my home and ask, "So, what have you written this month?" Stephen King phrased it as "apply a** to chair," and I think that says it pretty well. Just showing up puts you infinitely closer to your goal.

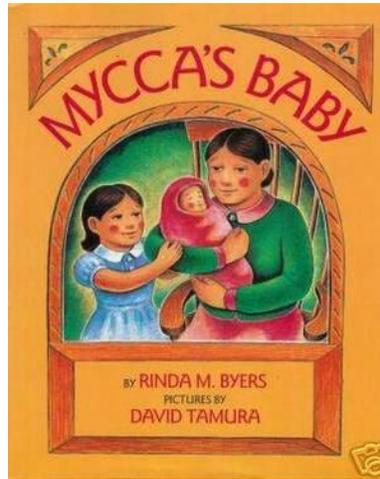
I Really Need To Tell You This:

Well, two things. The first is to keep at it. In my writing group, I was the first one to get published, but my friends and colleagues are writing books that are at least as good--some much better. So I can only imagine how many other wonderful books around the country and around the world have not yet found their publishing home. Assuming that you've told a good story and revised enough for that story to shine through, it seems like making the leap from unpublished writer to published author has less to do with what you've written than with your belief in

the book, your willingness to take risks, and your confidence to keep sending out your work.

The second thing is for when that contract arrives (and it will!). I've just learned recently that it's OK to get an agent after a contract is already on the table--and with or without an agent, publishers expect you to negotiate. When my contract arrived, it felt like the moment I'd been waiting for my whole life, and I was anxious to sign and return it before anyone could change their minds or tell me it had all been a dream. Now I realize many areas of the contract I could have improved upon--and while some of them are small, negotiating would have been the beginning of taking myself seriously as a professional--that's a mindset that I've had to grow into.

Rinda M. Byers



Rinda M. Byers writes picture books and early middle grade books for children as well as poetry for adults and children. She also writes nonfiction essays for adults and blogs on rindawriter, her blog, at <http://www.xanga.com/rindawriter>

She is the author of *Mycca's Baby*, a picture story book, published by Orchard Books, now out of print, but available online at Alibris and other online booksellers.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

That editors and publishers can make mistakes: Publishing a book is a team process, and good publishing teams include the author fully in that process. My book was published with mistakes that I would have caught, had I been given the chance to see the book before it went to print. Although the book got good reviews, the mistakes were still there for all to see in public because the publishing team was not up to snuff. That was a painful experience for me.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Keep your creative writing process private until it's time to sell your work. Then make sure that only reputable people, like editors and agents and maybe a very few trusted friends, see the work that you are trying to sell. Nurture and shelter yourself and your writing with privacy.

It will be easier for you to find your own unique voice and to withstand the pressures of publicity when your work gets published if you do that.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

To get far too involved socially with writers' groups. That was a big mistake because the social involvement, often pleasant as it was, took me out of my private writing room and took my attention off my own work and my own career. It also made me start to rely on others instead of myself when writing and that delayed important lessons for me as a writer that I badly needed to learn alone in my own private writing space.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Shakespeare said it better than I can: "To thine own self be true."

Don't follow the crowd when you write. Everyone can follow a format and write within a genre, but a writer who can achieve a unique style and voice within a format, within a genre, is rare and very special indeed.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Talent does matter.

You need persistence, discipline, and grim determination as well as craft and skill, but, in the long run, you need talent, too, at least a speck of it.

Much as I love learning about physics theory, I have no math talent. Zero. None. That's why I'm not a physicist.

Ruth O'Neil

Ruth O'Neil is a freelance writer. She has been published in hundreds of magazine articles. She homeschools her three children and is in the process of building a publishing company with a fellow writer. Two of Ruth's books are *Noah's Ark*, a chapter book for kids age 6-9 and a devotional entitled *From Three Different Paths* which she wrote with two of her friends.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Keep everything organized.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Let something sit for a while and then go back to it. Also, don't be afraid to check on articles that have been sent. Things get lost in the mail, cyberspace and on an editor's desk. Many times when I have checked on something, it ended up being accepted.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Sending the same article to the same editor twice - hence the reason I got myself and my writing organized. It was quite embarrassing!

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Success is a broad term. I look at success for myself is just touching a reader - making them laugh or cry. I don't look at success as necessarily the amount of money I make.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Organization is the key to productive writing. Writers really need to keep track of their submissions. I have a system using a journal, cross-referenced with index cards. I can easily see what is out. I can see how many times something has been rejected, telling me that particular article may need work. I can see how long it has been since I sent an article and if I should have heard back by now. Also, don't underestimate the value of reprints. They may not pay as much as

first rights, but if one editor liked an article or story, there is a good chance someone else will, giving you another paycheck.

Ruth Radlauer

Ruth Radlauer has been author and co-author of over 200 books geared for schools and libraries. She served as editor of the Elk Grove Division of Children's Press, then of Chicago. As a staff of one, and from her home in La Habra Heights, CA, she edited over 150 books with the help of a freelance Art Director.

Ed Radlauer, known for his books designed for reluctant readers, was her main co-author until his death in 2003. Other co-authors included scientists who collaborated to create the Radlauer Geo Books, *Volcanoes*, *Reefs*, *Earthquakes* and others.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Don't expect your publisher to live up to all items in your contract. Whereas they promised to inform the author by registered mail if a title is going out of print, I have yet to receive this courtesy.

As a result, I don't have some of my titles to keep. When I got wiser, I started putting away a stash of several copies of each new book as it was published.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Get everything in black and white, that is a signed contract, even if, and especially if, you are very good friends with the publisher. Good friends do not always communicate clearly with each other and sometimes assume too much.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

I did three rewrites on a long book without a contract. Authors Guild advised me not to do this again.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Spend time in the library and bookstore to see what is current. Have faith in oneself. Be persistent. Fifteen rejects are nothing. Plan a submission program and try not to let the sun set on a rejected manuscript.

If any editor offers suggestions, pounce on them and resubmit.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Professionalism will pay off. Learn correct manuscript form and follow directions in guidelines to the letter.

Learn about query and cover letters and how to write a proposal. (CBI offers *Author to Editor*, an excellent book about these techniques.)

Attend writers' days, meet the editor, and other sharing conferences offered by your area's regional SCBWI.

Ruth Spiro



Ruth Spiro is the author of *Lester Fizz: Bubble Gum Artist*. Her articles and essays have appeared in *FamilyFun*, *Child*, *Woman's World* and *Chicago Parent*. She lives in Illinois with her husband, two daughters, a sock-stealing puppy and an eleven year-old goldfish. Learn how to blow a bubble-inside-a-bubble at www.ruthspiro.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

When I started, I wish someone had told me about the wonderful network of children's writers who, now that I know about them, seem to be around every corner, eager to help. Everyone I've met in this business is encouraging, helpful, and willing to share what they've learned. The sooner a writer plugs herself into this network, the better!

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

The best advice I ever got was to join a critique group. They've become a crucial "reality check" for my writing.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

The biggest mistake I ever made was not researching an editor before I met him at a conference. I knew he'd be there, I planned to introduce myself and have a

chat, but then I learned he had absolutely no interest in the genre I write. Now, I make myself a little "cheat sheet" so I can speak intelligently!

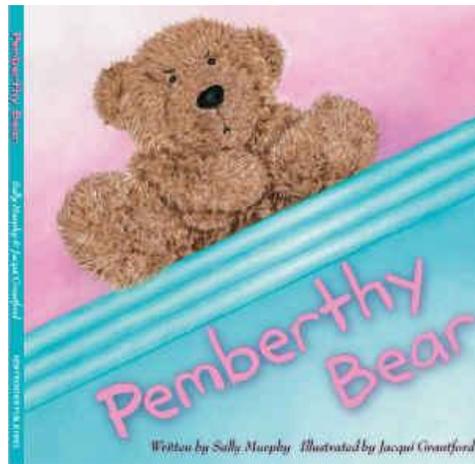
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Get out from behind your desk, and meet as many people in the publishing business as you can! Writing is a solitary process, but if you want to improve the odds of selling your work, you must find ways to meet the people who can help you. Attend writers' conferences, book signings by authors whom you admire, lectures, book fairs, etc. These are the connections that will help get your manuscripts out of the slush pile. Don't be pushy, but don't be shy, either.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Be nice to everyone you meet! You never know when your paths will cross again. (That includes fellow writers; if you want help, you must be willing to offer it, too.)

Sally Murphy



Sally Murphy is an Australian author, reviewer and general crazy lady. She lives in a small country town with her husband, six kids and a dog. She has had nineteen books published, including the picture books *The Floatingest Frog* (New Frontier, 2004) and *Pemberthy Bear* (New Frontier, 2006), chapter books and educational titles. You can visit her online at www.sallymurphy.net

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Don't do it! Of course, I would have done it anyway, but perhaps if I'd known how hard it would be to break in, I would have been less hurt by the early rejections.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Not to take rejection personally, and not to give up. Rejections are not rejections of you as a person, and often are not even a reflection of the standard of your work - they are simply a fact of life in an industry where so many people want to be involved and budgets are limited.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Sending work out that really wasn't ready. In the early days I really didn't read enough or study the market enough and so my submissions were underbaked and ill-targeted.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Read. A lot.

You need to spend as much time reading as you do writing -- and probably even more. Mostly, you need to read new release books in the genre you are writing in. You need to read as a writer -- observing how the author has crafted the book and learning from that.

You should also take the time to read books and articles about writing and the business of writing, but don't spend so much time learning how to write that you actually forget to write.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

You **MUST** study the market. Don't write your book then send it off thinking any publisher will do -- because they'll absolutely love it and will send a contract by return mail.

You must know which publishers publish what kinds of books, and you must study their submission guidelines, then tailor your submission accordingly. Follow those guidelines -- if they say no unsolicited submissions, they mean it. If they ask for a synopsis, or a profile or anything else, they mean it. And they mean it for you the same as any other writer.

You also need to get to know other writers, in person or online. Don't get to know them because you think they'll help you get your book published, get to know them because you can learn from them, can share the highs and lows with them, can become friends.

Also, learn from rejection. If your book is rejected, send it out again. But if it's rejected repeatedly, perhaps you need to revise it, or revise your submission. Get feedback from a critique group. Rewrite and rewrite (you should have done this before you started sending it out, but it's never too late to revise)

Sara Francis Fujimura



Sara Francis Fujimura is an author from Arizona. She writes regularly for regional and national markets. Her work for children has appeared in such magazines as *Girls' Life*, *Scholastic's Science World*, *Appleseeds*, *Learning Through History*, *New Moon*, and *Current Health*, among others. Sara's work for adults has appeared in such diverse magazines as *Raising Arizona Kids*, *The World Health Organization's Perspectives in Health*, *Woman's Day*, *Homeland Security Today*, *Dance Spirit*, *VegFamily*, and *East West*, among others. Sara is currently revising her young adult historical fiction novel *Whispers From The Desert* which won 2nd place in SmartWriters.com's 2007 Write It Now! Competition. She is also shopping around a bilingual (Japanese/English) picture book and a YA contemporary fiction novel set in Japan. See Sara's website at: www.sarafujimura.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Children's book writing is not for the impatient or those with fragile egos.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Try magazine writing. You'll hone your craft, learn how to work with editors, gain professional clout, and make some money, all at the same time. My magazine work keeps my writing business in the black. It pays for all of my conference-related expenses, buys critique opportunities with editors, keeps my printer full of paper and ink, and pays for all the SASEs I send out with my novel manuscripts.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Writing without a contract. Every time I break this rule, it bites me in the behind. Now each magazine article I take on must have a word count, due date, publish date, rights bought, and pay rate spelled out in a contract. If I have good relationship with an editor, I will take the same information in email form.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Don't give up! Look for other ways to soothe your bruised ego. A paycheck, a few contributor's copies, and a byline in a magazine can be a healing salve after receiving yet another rejection letter from a children's book publisher.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

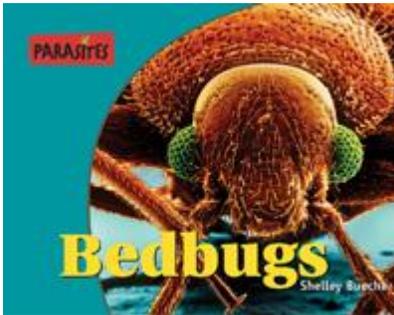
#1—See a hole, fill it in.

I've received several magazine assignments by politely pointing out to an editor that they've missed a key point or overlooked a certain demographic of their readership. Don't be shy about creating opportunities for yourself.

#2—Write about what you DON'T know too.

I didn't know beans about nano-technology, but it didn't stop me from researching, writing, and receiving a large paycheck for an article about it. If you've honed your interview skills, you can write about pretty much anything.

Shelley Bueche



Shelley Bueche is a published nonfiction children's writer in Austin, Texas. She enjoys writing about animals, parenting and other Texas travel. She has a background in library science and research. For more information on her background, visit: www.ShelleyBueche.com.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Keep trying and never give up! Contact publishing houses and editors on a regular basis, don't be afraid of making a nuisance of yourself.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Good writing skills will find an audience.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Writing and hiring a photographer without a contract beforehand.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Read everything possible within the genre you are wanting to write/writing for. Write everyday, about anything, just be sure to take pen to paper (or ahem, fingers to keyboard).

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Don't be discouraged and become hard on yourself, you can be your own worst enemy. Rejections happen to everyone regardless of their talent!

Sherryl Clark



Sherryl Clark has more than 30 children's books published in Australia, the US and UK. Her verse novel *Farm Kid* won the 2005 NSW Premier's Literary Award. Her website is at www.sherrylclark.com, and she also has a poetry website at www.poetry4kids.net. She teaches creative writing at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia, and was a guest speaker at the Pima Writers' Workshop in Tucson, AZ, in 2007.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

The differences between trade publishers and educational publishers, and how they work, e.g. educational publishers commission books, they publish series and classroom materials. I also wanted to know what book packagers do. Outside of trade publishing, there are many opportunities for writers to get experience, publishing credits and learn more about the industry.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Write lots of stories - don't just write one and then rewrite it to death! The more you write, the more ideas you will have. They spark off each other and keep your brain ticking over - but only if you keep working at it.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Giving up on a novel because of one bad critique. I should have asked for another opinion and constructive advice, instead of tossing the manuscript aside.

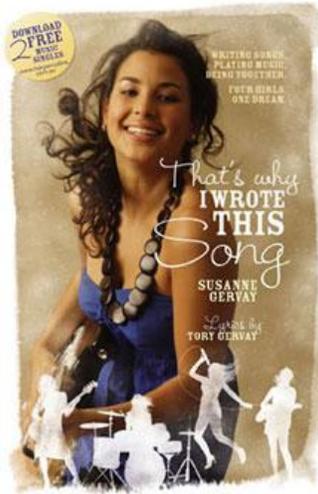
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Read like a writer. I learn something new every time I read a book, simply by enjoying the story first, then looking at what I liked best and trying to work out how the writer achieved it.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Don't give up - don't give up writing, don't give up reading widely, don't give up dreaming, don't give up taking every opportunity to improve your skills, don't give up jotting down every idea that ever occurs to you (no matter how silly it seems), don't give up believing that one day you'll achieve what you want, don't give up wanting to be the best writer you can be.

Susanne Gervay



Susanne Gervay is an award winning children's and YA author and co-Regional Advisor SCBWI, Australia and NZ, is on the board of the NSW Writers Centre, heads the Sydney Children's Writers & Illustrators Network at The Hughenden. Her books include "I Am Jack", a best selling rite-of-passage book on school bullying and 'Butterflies', Outstanding Youth Literature on Disability (IBBY). Her latest YA book, 'That's Why I Wrote This Song' breaks new ground in its integration of music, film, text with downloadable songs and video clip on www.sgervay.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Establish a writers' group with writers that I trust. Then seriously edit my work. Make sure it's as good as I can get it before I send it off. Have the courage to actually listen to editorial comments, and then accept those that I believe enhance my writing. Have an open mind and don't let ego make you argue your case. Writers who refuse to edit and rework their writing, even if they are talented, will have little chance of being published. It's about creating your best writing.

I wish I'd checked to see what publishers are publishing, if they are open to submissions, what sort of work are they looking for. I should have joined writing associations and learned about the industry before jumping in, so that I'd send my work to the right publishers at the right time. In that way, so much of my disappointment would have been avoided.

Not to worry about the publishing the work until all the writing, rewriting, thinking and rethinking are complete. Publishing is a business and different to the purity of writing.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Get support from other writers because they understand the emotional roller coaster of the journey. Then you can have funny times, creative times and consolation for sad times.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

To throw away my manuscript because the publisher said it didn't work. Then when the publisher asked to re-look at the original manuscript I said it was gone. Used as scrap paper beside the telephone.

Equal to this was when I didn't back up my novel, and yes. The computer crashed and I lost my book.

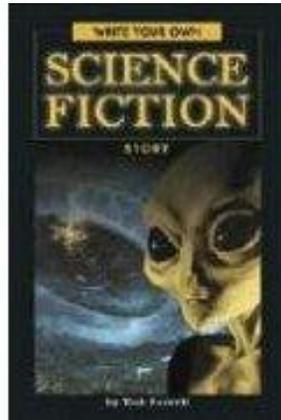
The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

To become part of the writing community and participate in the workshops, festivals, networks, readings.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Have the courage to continue, even when you receive a rejection. Have the courage to read the comments a publisher/editor makes, even if they hurt. Have the courage to write and even if you don't achieve publication with a major publisher, be part of the creative life and be proud that you pursued your creativity. Be proud that you have written. There are other ways to get your work out there with ezines, smaller magazines, writer's networks and the opportunities offered through the internet.

Tish Farrell



Tish writes: *I grew up in rural Shropshire, England too many years ago. Always a slow starter writing-wise (I was waiting for stories arrive fully formed), it was running away to Africa when I was 39 that got me started. Suddenly I had a cause. I found that African children had few storybooks with African heroes; little that reflected their real lives. I began writing contemporary stories for the African English Literature market, and was thrilled beyond measure when my first novel, Jessicah the Mountain Slayer and picture book Flame Tree Market won prizes at the 1996 Zimbabwe Book Fair. I then went on to write Sea Running for Macmillan Education and Joe Sabuni P.I for Heinemann. These last two adventure stories were intended for young adult African readership, but I think any young people interested in Africa would enjoy them. I've also written African stories for Spider, Cricket and Cicada magazines. After eight years in Africa I now live back in Shropshire in an ancient medieval town with a ruined priory. I'm still writing about Africa, but also do a column on creative writing for SCBWI Britain's newsletter.*

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Don't wait for inspiration to strike. Best-selling books do not arrive in Planet Brain like aliens from outer space. Becoming a writer is a life-long quest that starts on the day you actively seek out stories and your passion burns with tales to be told. Only then can you set yourself the task of learning how to tell them in the most affecting and truthful way. Write not to be published, but for some shining horizon beyond this - the children who will one day read and love your work.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Don't be scared of your imagination. Lock your internal critic in the wardrobe while you let rip with first drafts. Let him out later to do some ruthless editing.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Submitting my first chapters to an editor/critique group before I've written a complete first draft. It knocks you off course, and stops the flow.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Re-write, re-write, re-write; edit, edit, edit; read, read, read.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

Find whatever means possible to get inside your characters' skins: see, feel, think from behind their eyes; even your worst baddies. Pit your heroes' weaknesses against their opponents' strengths; give your heroes the hardest time; show them failing and striving on their own terms; head always for a resonant resolution if not a resoundingly happy end.

Tom Skinner



With *Round Fish Square Bowl*, new author Tom Skinner has produced something very special – an autobiographical children’s picture book. A former postman with a degree in journalism, he has dramatically changed his life to pursue his desire to write fun, bright and colorful books with strong, positive messages for his readers. For more information, visit www.tomtombbooks.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

Follow your heart over your head. It's a harder organ to control but it makes the best decisions.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Never be afraid to ask for advice, and, build a good team around you so the journey isn't lonely.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Believing my 'fame' would be instant and prolonged - instead of slow and protracted!

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Be true to yourself. Don't follow fads or fashions and avoid falling in love with someone else's success as this is an industry of constant innovation, if someone else is doing it there's no room for imitation.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

The industry is extremely competitive. It's full of talented professionals, only some of whom have had that extra slice of luck required.

Be persistent. Be prepared for the rejections and the myriad frustrations. Keep a level head at all times but follow your heart as well.

Most importantly though, do this for nobody else except yourself. It's a tough road to follow but an incredible achievement once traveled.

Victoria Hanley



Victoria Hanley enjoys beating the odds and encouraging others to go for it too; she believes it's never too early or too late to get going on a book. Published in over 25 countries and 10 languages, her books have won awards at home and abroad. Her first nonfiction book: *Where the Wild Ink Flows: A Grownup's Guide to Writing for Teens*, will be published in 2008 by Cottonwood Press. For more info, visit: www.victoriahanley.com

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

This may sound backwards, but I'm thankful I knew as little as I did when I got started, because I think I would have been daunted and discouraged if I'd studied the business side of publishing before getting published. Yes, it's important to learn enough about the industry to understand how to approach agents and publishers, but I think it's even more important to focus on the story you're telling and the writer within.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

Relax, and enjoy the ride.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

For a while I forgot to relax.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

Open yourself up to honest feedback from people who know what they're talking about. Then listen to your intuition as closely as you listen to criticism.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

The moments when you feel like quitting; the moments when you feel as if everything you've written is drivel; the moments when you draw a complete blank about what comes next in your story: those are the moments when coals are about to become diamonds.

Vijayalakshmi Chary

Born in India, Vijayalakshmi Chary immigrated to America at the age of two. Her passion for writing children's stories has evolved from teaching and coaching children in various activities including gymnastics, classroom activities and creative competitions. She derives much of her inspiration from her interactions with her two children and their friends.

Ms. Chary's stories have been published in *Highlights for Children*, *Ladybug Magazine*, *Hopscotch for Girls*, *Kahani*, *Boys' Life*, *Dolphin Log*, *Our Little Friend*, *Whimsy* and *Skipping Stones*. One of her stories was a finalist in the Half Price Book Bedtime Story contest and was published in *Once Upon A Bedtime*, released by Half Price Books. She is also a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

When I Started, I Wish Someone Had Told Me:

To think in scenes rather than in words. Describing emotions, actions, settings within a scene works for me far better than wrestling with words within a sentence. It allows me to present the whole story rather than fragments. It also allows me to stand apart from my writing to see if the piece gels well.

The Best Advice I Ever Got Was:

To read a thousand books in the genre that I want to write. Although I haven't read a thousand, I read an armful of book every week. Not only do I read the genre I am interested in but I re-read it to analyze characterization, conflict, language and resolution.

The Biggest Mistake I Ever Made Was:

Thinking that I could write a polished article or the final draft of a picture book within a month to send out to publishers. A month is not enough time to write a first draft and the following drafts. I also need to time to put away the story for a while and take it off my mind. When I come back to re-read it, I often catch any inconsistencies and begin new revisions. These revisions smooth out the action and tighten the language.

The Most Important Thing A Writer Can Do To Achieve Success Is:

To put his/her heart and soul into it. If you have writing children's stories as one of the top goals on your mind, story ideas, characters, fresh angles, conflicts and resolutions will come to you. Opportunities to improve and learn the art of children's writing will present themselves. These opportunities will sharpen your learning curve.

I Really Need To Tell You This:

In order to write pieces for children, you need to respect children and their world today. Accept and understand their joys, woes, frustrations, and anger. Allow yourself to be a child again and re-live your memories to celebrate childhood. Observe how published authors convey this understanding in their writing. Children's stories are not mere words strung together but emotion and understanding intertwined with colorful language.