

## CHAPTER 30

### GETTING THE STORY PUBLISHED

**D**R. SAMUEL JOHNSON remarked that "He is a fool who writes for anything save money," but, Dr. Johnson notwithstanding, there are other good reasons why the beginner in writing should try to get his stories into print.

It may be that the desire to earn money is the biggest force in actuating most of us to write articles for publication, but the factor of prestige which comes with successful writing should not be overlooked. The encouragement one gets from the sale of an article is the strongest stimulus to the beginner to write a second story. Beyond these personal reasons for trying to "place" one's stories, there is the larger reason that the material in the articles will never be made available and useful to other people if the articles do not get into print.

How to market one's articles after they are written is, then, as important a part of the writer's task as the construction of the story.

**Preparing copy:** The first essential in marketing a story is to have the manuscript in good form. All copy should be typewritten, double or triple spaced. Write only on one side of the paper and make a carbon copy for your own files.

In the upper left-hand corner of the first page of the manuscript place your name and address. In the upper right-hand corner, in figures, give the approximate number of words in the article. About a third of the way down the page place the title of the story, typed in capital letters, and centered, left to right. Below the title, write your name, also centered. Begin the story an inch or so below the name. Leave margins of an inch or more at each side and at the bottom of the page. It is well to place, below your address, the phrase "offered at your usual rates."

News stories are usually sent in by the writer without titles.

In a previous chapter on writing the news story, details as to news copy will be found.

At the top left-hand corner of the second and each succeeding page put one or two essential words from the title of the story as a clue to identify the page, and underneath, your name or initials. This should be flush with the left margin. Number the page at the top, in the center. Some writers repeat the entire title on each page, but that is not necessary. Indicate the end of the story in some way. Most writers do it this way: #####.

If a story is to be printed only after a certain date, a notice of this fact, in some such phrasing as "For release June 20," should be put above the title on the first page.

A story that is being syndicated, that is, offered to more than one publication at a time, should be so marked on the first page. The phrase, "Exclusive in your territory," is often used to indicate to the editor that the story is being offered to other editors but not in overlapping areas.

**Sending off the manuscript:** In mailing, send the manuscript flat, if it is a large one, or folded if it does not consist of many pages. Use a durable envelope addressed to the editor of the magazine.

With the manuscript enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope in which the article may be returned in case of rejection. If pictures or drawings accompany the article, put a piece of heavy cardboard into the envelope to prevent their being broken.

It is seldom necessary to write a letter to accompany the manuscript. When an article comes to an editor's desk, he knows without being told that it is sent to him as a contribution to his paper.

Sometimes, however, there are circumstances connected with the story which the editor should know. Such information may be put into a short letter, or it can be written in parentheses on the first page of the manuscript below the title.

**Markets for technical articles:** The best time to decide where one is going to send a story is before the story is written. In other words, stories should be very definitely planned and written for particular publications or types of publications.

Every magazine and newspaper has its own personality, its own

field of subject matter, its own circulation area, its own policies. A big part of the writer's task is to familiarize himself with as many magazines and newspapers as possible, studying them closely for the characteristics which distinguish them from other publications.

**Syndicates:** Syndicates do not constitute a particularly important market for free lance writers of technical stories because the bulk of their material is secured from regular writers and correspondents.

**Payment for articles:** What one is paid for a story depends largely upon the publication which accepts it. Payment ranges from nothing to as high as 30 cents or more a word—the latter very unusual, however. The national agricultural and women's magazines pay well. Many of them do not have a fixed rate of pay but adjust the recompense on the basis of the quality of the story, the prominence of the author, and the expense and difficulty involved in getting the story.

Most of the regional farm papers, however, have regular space rates ranging from a half cent to two or three cents a word. Others pay so much a line or a column inch.

It is the general rule among the women's magazines and national journals to pay for articles upon acceptance. Many of the state farm papers, however, do not pay for an article until it is published, and if it is never published the author receives nothing for his story.

There is no general rule which will apply to trade publications, but probably most of them pay for articles and news material sent in, after publication. Some of the leading engineering magazines pay on acceptance, but a good many others pay after publication.

An author should hear from a story which he has submitted to a magazine within three weeks. If by that time he has not received back the manuscript nor heard from the editor, he is justified in writing the editor a courteous note of inquiry about his manuscript, requesting its prompt return if it is not to be used.

**If at first you don't succeed:** There are half a hundred reasons, other than lack of merit, why editors reject manuscripts. A writer has no ground for discouragement if his story is rejected by the first editor to whom it is sent. The editor may be well stocked

with manuscripts, he may have recently bought a story similar to the one you sent in, your story may not fit in with the policy of the magazine, it may be too long or too short, it may be too local or not local enough—for any of these or many other reasons it may be unsuited to the magazine to which it is sent.

The printed slip of rejection with its “rejection does not imply lack of merit, but this has been found unsuited to our present needs,” does not necessarily mean anything else than exactly what it says. The manuscript should be put into another envelope and sent off to another editor. It is not fair, so to speak, to a story in which you have faith, to give it less than four or five chances for publication.

**Records of stories:** The writer who sends out more than an occasional story should use business methods in keeping track of his articles. First, of course, he should keep at least one carbon copy of his article. Second, in a ledger or a card file, he should keep a record of his stories. When a story is sent out an entry can be made in the ledger or a card filled out, giving the title of the story, the magazine to which it is sent, and the date. If the story is sold, the date and amount can be entered. If it comes back and is sent out again a second entry can be made.

**Some advice for beginner:** The beginning writer along technical lines will find it easiest to write, and likewise to sell, stories in his or her own special field. This will be true generally, though there is always a chance that the beginner may sell one or more stories anywhere.

The beginner will find that the stories easiest to sell are, first, those which have news value. These will be stories of a meeting, a convention, or results of an experiment recently completed. Or they may be stories of new structures built, of new construction completed, of a store or factory modernized, of successful new equipment or devices of any kind.

A second tip as to what an editor will buy is that he likes stories which have specific information along with news quality, even if there is no spot news element in the facts involved. Much of the material in this text is devoted to discussion of this very point.

A third suggestion to a beginner is that he is most likely to

succeed with short articles at first. Brief articles, often of anywhere from two to six paragraphs or from 100 up to 500 words, will sell much more readily than a longer feature article, no matter how well the feature is written. One reason is that the preference today in many magazines is for short articles. Another is that the editor usually arranges in advance for the writing of the long articles, and he prefers that they be written by someone who is an authority on the subject or by a writer upon whom he knows he can depend for adequate covering of the topic.

A fourth tip is to get and send in the story that an editor would not be likely to get in the usual course of events or one that will not be handled by the staff or a regular contributor. To illustrate, an important agricultural story in a state will be covered by one of the editorial staff of the state farm paper. But a writer can often send this story to the editor of a farm paper in an adjoining state who will be glad to get it, for he had not arranged to have it covered.

Finally, the beginner will have best success in selling to farm papers, trade papers, and magazines in special fields which run many articles of news or of news-experience type and which also use a wide variety of stories based on or accompanied by pictures. The beginner will not have much luck at first in selling to national general magazines, to women's magazines of large circulation, or to the more technical and more professional magazines and journals.

For writers who wish guidance in selling stories, the book, *The Writer's Market*, published by *The Writer's Digest*, 22 East 12th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, is the standard reference. This contains lists of 2,500 markets, with addresses, types of material wanted, and probably pay. It is revised frequently. The cost is \$3.00.

Another handy volume is *Photo-Markets*, edited by John P. Lyons. This lists and classifies about 2,000 different publications. It contains information both on photographic needs and on type of material used. Rates or prices paid for material is given for many of these. It is published by *Photo Markets*, Exchange Place, Hanover, Pennsylvania, and the current edition sells for 50 cents.