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You have a story to tell, and you want to see it print! You want to see in bookstores, you want to do author signings, you want to be a published author. Good news! Thousands of books are published, and one of them can be yours. Today we're going over the what it takes to get a book published

Disclaimers:

- There is no "right" way to get published, the stories of how people have gotten books published is as varied as the books published.
- This is about publishing an original book. Writing official stories using somebody else's character and world (Intellectual Property) is another conversation entirely.

## Big Takeaway

(If you learn nothing else today, remember this): **Publishers want you to make them money.**

That is why publishers publish books. That doesn't mean they don't love books as much as you and I, but if their books don't sell, they can't pay rent. That's why they take submissions, that's why they print books, and that's why they spend all that time promoting books: they want to make money.

## Publishing vs. Self-Publishing

If publishers just want to make money off of you, why don't you do it yourself? GOOD QUESTION

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to wide distribution</li><li>• Professional assistance in cover design, editing, and (theoretically) promotion</li><li>• Easier access to ancillary income streams: audiobooks, digital books, adaptations, etc.</li><li>• Professional experience selling books, they will be able to get your books into more hands than you as a one person team will ever be able to.</li><li>• You don't have to teach yourself the</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Less control of editorial, marketing</li><li>• Can't market and write book on your own schedule</li><li>• Publisher takes all sales until you reach a certain sales threshold</li><li>• You may not have control of ancillary rights such as: Audiobooks, Digital Books, Adaptations, Licensing</li><li>• If the book is not successful enough, you may not be able to publish spin-offs or sequels.</li></ul>

intricacies of every aspect of self-publishing. You just have to focus on writing and promoting. <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It may be a long time before you get the rights back.</li></ul>
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Now this presentation is assuming you want to work with a publisher, and aren't self-publishing. So lets talk about publishers...

## Publishers

- In order for your book to be picked up by a publisher, they have to have faith it will make money.
- In order to *keep* writing for that publisher, your book actually has to make money. (But let's focus on getting your book picked up)
- You contact a publisher to consider your book through their submission process, or through your agent.
- It depends on the publishers, but generally only small publishers have submission processes. Nine times out of ten, your agent will have to contact a publisher, or in the case of comic books, you'll have to track down an editor.

WARNING: Not all publishers are equal. Be careful of anything that seems to be good to be true. A good publisher will not charge you to publish your book. That is called a vanity press, and they will do nothing for you. Not sure about a publisher? Ask if you can contact their other authors to talk about their experience. If they deny you that, it's a bad sign.

## Agents

Agents: What they do, what they don't, do you need one?

- Agents represent you and your book to major publishers. Their job is to scout new books and present the best ones to publishers.
- They take a cut of the money the publisher pays to acquire the book. This is how they make their money.
- If you want to get published by a major publisher, you are going to need an agent.
- Agents negotiate contracts, deadlines, nitty-gritty details and act as the bad cop to the publisher so you don't have to.

But if you want an agent, (unless you are a celebrity for non-writing reasons) you're going to need to go through submissions.

More detail about literary agents (must-read): <http://www.sfw.org/real/>

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<sup>1</sup> Oh yeah, promoting is part of the job nowadays. If you don't want to promote your book, a publisher will find someone else who is.

List of literary Agents:

- [https://www.pw.org/literary\\_agents](https://www.pw.org/literary_agents)
- <http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/guide-to-literary-agents/literary-agent>

WARNING: NO AGENT SHOULD CHARGE FOR REPRESENTATION. A professional agent will only represent a book they can sell. If an agent tries to charge, they are likely trying to scam you. Your agent should be fighting for you, they should not be in the employ of a publisher.

## Submissions

JUST FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES

(If you can only take two things from this presentation, that is the second thing you take.)

You are an agent, you have to dig through the 500 submission emails to see if anything worth pitching has come in. You have written specific guidelines and posted them on your website so it's easy for you to sort through all these emails. Those guidelines also prevent you from getting computer viruses, and know exactly what email to send in response.

You open your email inbox, and you immediately see a dozen emails with the wrong subject line. Deleted. Those are 12 emails you no longer have to think about. Only 488 to go...

- Submission guidelines are not optional, and you need to follow them.
- You have spent lord knows how long on this book, the last thing you want to do is ruin your chances by not saving your sample in the right format.
- If they say don't send attachments, don't send attachments. They will delete those emails right away.
- If they say they only want 10 pages, only send 10 pages. Sending 20 doesn't show creativity or dedication. It shows you don't know how to follow directions. (Which is a bad sign if you want to work with them over the course of your writing career).

Now off of my soapbox into nitty-gritty details.

- What you need to submit:
  - If writing fiction: query letter, pitch/summary, complete edited novel (by you or a freelance editor)
  - If writing non-fiction: query letter, Pitch/summary, and unless you are a certified expert in your subject, sample chapters
  - For comics: pitch/summary, Finished sample pages, character designs
- Submission guidelines vary from publisher to publisher. Make sure to read them carefully. Some publishers may want a pdf, some may want a link to a cloud hosted document, some may not want to even read your book at all until they respond.

# Submissions Components

I could spend all day going over how to nail each part of the submission. But we're just going over a few, and then dig into loglines.

## Query Letters

- Query letters (or query emails more likely) are how you contact agents and publishers.
- As always, follow submission guidelines, as certain organizations may want different things from their query letters.
- This is the first sample of your writing that agents or publishers are going to read, so you gotta make it good.
- Remember: this person's rent depends on you being professional and having a sellable book. Your letter needs to reflect this.
- Generally Query letters are 3 paragraphs:
  - 1. Title, genre, wordcount of book, and why you thought the book would be relevant to the agent
  - 2. Summarize what your story is about. This is your logline (We'll get more in-depth about this later.).
  - 3. About you, why you're a professional, your awards and credibility. (This should be around 2 sentences)

Resource links for query letters:

- <https://nybookeditors.com/2015/12/how-to-write-a-darn-good-query-letter/>

## Loglines/Pitches

- Now we come to the workshop part of this presentation! The logline. In order to publish your book, you're going to need to summarize in 3 sentences. No more (but less is fine).
- Why 3 sentences to sum up your whole book with all of its complex themes and wonderful characters?
- You will not be able to talk to every person in every bookstore to tell them why your book is great. The people selling the book for you at the publisher, at the distributor, wherever are going to need to be able to sum it quickly so people will part with their hard-earned money to buy it.
- It's tough to do, but that's why we have some exercises to help you wrap your heads around loglines and able to integrate them in your query letters!

## Exercise 1: Guess the Movie from the logline

*Guess the movie:* A young man is transported to the past where he must reunite his parents before he and his future are no more.

*Answer:* Back to the Future

*Guess the Story:* A listless and alienated teenager decides to help his new friend win the class presidency in their small western high school, while he must deal with his bizarre family life back home.

*Answer:* Napoleon Dynamite

Logline Examples: Star Wars: A New Hope

Luke Skywalker, a spirited farm boy, joins rebel forces to save Princess Leia from the evil Darth Vader, and the galaxy from the Empire's planet-destroying Death Star.

## Exercise 2: Make your own logline

Use the below template to make your logline! You can use an existing story from comics, movies, etc., or your own story.

Sample Template: **When [INCITING INCIDENT OCCURS], a [SPECIFIC PROTAGONIST] must [OBJECTIVE], or else [STAKES].**

After finding out he's a wizard, Harry Potter must go to wizarding school and uncover the secrets of the sorcerer's stone, or else its significant power will fall into the hands of evil.

After going on a date with Ramona Flowers, Scott Pilgrim must defeat her seven evil exes and deal with his personal demons, or risk losing her forever.

Logline resources:

<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/write-compelling-logline-examples/>

<http://noamkroll.com/an-easy-guide-to-writing-the-perfect-logline-why-its-as-important-as-your-sc reenplay/>

(While these are sources for pitching a screenplay, the same mechanics apply for pitching a book)

Have any quick questions? Shoot me an email at [jdboucher0@gmail.com](mailto:jdboucher0@gmail.com)!