

Writing for Children
The (unofficial) Rules of the Game
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1. Write what you know or what you love. (authentic detail, passion)
2. Show don't tell.
3. Editors are looking for "voice."
4. Consistent point of view is important.
5. Learn appropriate length for different genres and stick to them.
6. The author does not choose an illustrator for his/her work. The editor likes to pick the illustrator. Do not send in illustrations with your manuscript unless you are both a professional illustrator and author. Quality photographs with magazine articles are the exception
7. Remember that as much as we love our words and our pictures, the bottom line is the bottom line. Editors may still be primarily interested in quality literature, but the marketing department is interested in profit.
8. An agent is not necessary to sell a book in the children's market.
9. Behave professionally.
 - a. Polish your manuscript before submitting it.
 - b. Submit your manuscript in a professional format.
 - c. Do not send your manuscript in fancy envelopes, with gifts, on colored paper, or in unusual fonts.
 - d. Allow editors sufficient time (at least 3 months) to review your ms.
 - e. Then you may submit a status letter.
 - f. Do not call an editor unless you have developed a relationship with them or you have not gotten a response to your status letter (after one month).
10. If you send your manuscript to more than one publisher at a time, mention that in your cover letter.
11. If you are given suggestions for revisions on a rejection, it is generally acceptable to revise and resend it to that editor.
12. Study publishers and submit your manuscript only to appropriate houses.
13. Certain sections of book contracts may be slightly negotiable, others are not.
New authors have very little clout with which to negotiate. A literary lawyer can help you understand and negotiate your contract, but beware if they aren't very familiar with the children's literature field, they may make you think you should push on points you really shouldn't.
14. Be willing to work with an editor on revisions. Editors remember authors/illustrators who are difficult to work with and talk among themselves.
15. Always enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with all correspondence with a publisher, whether a ms submission, query letter or status letter.
16. You can send query letters, rather than finished manuscripts, when writing non-fiction.
17. Research must be extensive and verified with non-fiction. Include bibliography with submission and keep track of your sources in case they ask.
18. It is easier to break into publishing with non-fiction than with fiction.
19. Read, read, read.
20. Write, write, write, rewrite until it shines.