

How to Get Published: - The 3 Key Components of Publication

HOW TO GET PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME—AND BEYOND



How do you go about getting published? What steps should you take? Where can you submit? And how does it all work?

I've created a three part blog:

1. How to think about the publication process
2. How to submit your work
3. A list of more than 100 publications where you can submit your work organized by type of work/ topic

I'm going to walk you through the three key steps you need to know about how to get published for the first time and I'm going to give you the tools to get your writing published.

Your voice and your vision are unique! It's important that you share them with the world. After all, we need new voices; voices speaking the truth; intimate voices; sensitive and thoughtful voices; women's voices; loud voices; voices that haven't been heard before; voices that rage and love, that whisper, think, speak and sing.

There are literally thousands of places that publish pieces of short writing both online and in print. This blog series will guide you through the process of publishing your work. If you want to publish your writing, start here! The first step to getting published is writing and publishing some shorter pieces, and this guide will walk you through that

PART ONE: BEFORE YOU PUBLISH YOUR WORK

Before you start to try to publish your work, it's very important that you understand the publication process and have a good relationship with your work. Don't rush into publication and don't make the mistake of thinking that publication is an indication of the quality of your work. It's important that you decouple the idea of your work's worthiness from its publication history!



How Hard Is It To Get Published?

It can definitely be a challenge, but don't get discouraged! There's lots of great work that never gets published. (I can't refer you to it because it hasn't gotten published, but imagine Emily Dickinson without her niece who happened to get her aunt's work published posthumously)

There's also lots of mediocre work that gets published, often to acclaim. (Just look at any anthology of popular 19th century poetry or, for that matter, most of the "best of" anthologies of recent years.) You can read more about a specific guide on how to publish a poetry book [here](#).

There's no simple one-to-one equation between publication record and a work's worthiness.

What that means is if you submit your work for publication, you need to be ready to face rejections.

And you need to decouple those rejections from your self worth or from the value of your writing!

If you need help getting published for the first time, I offer a variety of online and in-persona writing classes, [click here](#) to learn more!

How Long Does It Take To Get Published?

Learning how to get published can be a long process. When I started to send out my poems for publication, the first year, I got nothing but rejections.

Then, I started to get a few acceptances and they started to snowball. Publishers recognized my name and work and the very same pieces that had gotten nothing but rejections were now being accepted in publications from *The New Yorker* to *The American Scholar*.

Luckily, I hadn't equated rejections with unworthiness and stop sending those poems out for publications.

So don't give up! Your job as a writer is to do your part: to write the best work you can and to try to share it with the world.

Your job is NOT to win prizes or get lots of praise. If that happens, great. But that's not really why you write. And your job is also NOT to judge yourself or fall into the trap of self-doubt. Please take judgment and shame out of the picture. Let me say this again: your job as a writer and human is to shine your own best and brightest light in whatever spaces or corners or avenues that you can.

Keep showing up and shining a bit brighter. You do this by reading widely (great writers learn from reading), by listening deeply to yourself, by getting out of your own way, by trusting your voice, by working on your craft, by revising your work, by coming back to the process again and again. And by sharing what you have written.

Too often we make excuses for not sharing our work. Women don't send their work out for publication as often as men, and often stop sending their work out for publication more quickly after a few rejections than men. Read more about this [here](#).

Don't give up. Trust in your own work. Support your writing process, and keep going!

Writers get far more rejections than acceptances, so please understand that rejections are part of EVERY writers life! If you stick with it, you WILL see results!

Follow these steps for the best experience writing and publishing your work:

1. Enjoy and work on your writing for yourself and for its own sake before you think about publication. Even if you're writing something like an op-ed that is motivated by the desire to share your expertise and opinion with others, protect your the writing time/ process at first. Don't send out your work until you feel it's ready and you feel good about it, but also don't fall into the trap of thinking it needs to be "perfect"— after all, nothing is perfect!
2. Be sure to de-couple publication rejections/ successes from the value of your work.
3. Submit, resubmit, and resubmit your work until it finds a publication home. Don't let rejections stop you; keep sending your work out until it finds a home.
4. Don't let the publication process slow down your creation of new work. Keep on writing new work as you submit finished pieces!

PART TWO: HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK FOR PUBLICATION

There are two ways to submit your work for publication:

1. Submit finished pieces
2. Submit queries for pieces you haven't written yet, but want to write.

Places that tend to publish more literary work—fiction, memoir, personal essays—usually accept finished pieces.

Places that publish more informative pieces—with reporting or how-to advice—often prefer a query and then accept pieces based on that query process. Look at the particular magazines/ journals you are interested in submitting to and see what they say about the submission process.



2) HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK FOR PUBLICATION

1. **Be clear** what kind of work you're writing: is it a how-to piece, a literary piece, an opinion piece on public issues, a personal growth piece? If you identify the kind of piece you're writing, you'll then be able to look for the kind of outlet that publishes that genre.
2. **Research appropriate outlets** for your work. In Part Three of this post, I've created a list of publications, some online some in print. Look through them. I've also listed other resources to help you find other publications not listed. Read a sample issue or two of the potential publications that publish the kind of work you're writing. For example, if you're writing a piece about personal growth a literary journal probably isn't the best fit for it. Even if you think that a magazine might be the perfect place to publish your piece, read an issue or two before you submit. You might realize that though in theory you are writing about a topic that the magazine might be interested in, your style or the format of your piece (length, personal voice, etc) might not be in keeping with what the magazine actually publishes.
3. **Make a list of places to submit your piece.** Make the list as long as possible so that if one editor doesn't want it, you can quickly send it to the next place on your list. Do this research up front to save time. Be sure to check the submissions information for the places you are submitting to. Write down specifics (editor name, address, specific recommendations) for each place. The online website Duotrope helps writers organize their submissions. You might try that. Many publications now accept multiple submissions, which means you can send the same piece to more than one publication at a time. I recommend sending a piece to five publications at a time, unless multiple submissions are specifically frowned upon.
4. **Write your cover letter.** See below for cover letter guidelines
5. **Submit (or multiple submit) your work** (each publication will have different email address/ submission form). Most publications want work submitted online these days. If you submit work through email, most publications don't want attachments. Paste your piece into the body of the email. (Again, Duotrope can help with this)
6. When you submit your work, **look and see what the acceptance time is.** Many publications don't even contact you with rejections so don't wait too long to get a rejection before submitting elsewhere. Check how long publications wait times are and then reach out to them if you haven't read back yet. Sometimes editors just need a reminder. If you still don't hear back, submit your piece somewhere else

When it comes to learning how to get published, most writers have far more rejections than acceptances, especially in the beginning. But as you head into the submission process, remember: don't take your acceptances or rejections personally. Keep going.

If you get an acceptance, celebrate! Congratulations! If you get a rejection, move on and send the piece off again.

COVER LETTER FOR JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS

When learning how to get published, writing your cover letter (whether it's a book, journal, magazine, etc) is very important. Below are two cover letters for journal/ magazine submissions.

The first is a cover letter for a finished piece of writing. The second is a query letter for journals.

I recommend having a standard cover letter that you can slightly modify for different publications.

Here's a standard form cover letter for journal submissions for completed pieces. Let the editor feel that there is a real, live, three-dimensional person behind your letter and your piece.

Your cover letter should be half a page to one page long at the most.



SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Dear Editors, [. If you can find the editor's name, wonderful. But if you can't, don't worry too much. Just write "Dear Editors"]

I enjoy reading X Magazine and especially enjoyed your recent article about xyz, which abc].

I've recently written a piece about xyz and think X magazine would be a perfect fit for it. (If you can make this more interesting, please do—for example, you might pose a question—for example: "What happens when a mama bear thinks you've taken her cubs? On a recent trip to Yosemite, I found out when...")

Then give a bio.

[Make your bio somewhat fun to read. It doesn't need to all be credentials. Talk about what you spend your time doing. For example, you could say, I've been leading nature hikes in National Parks for the past 15 years and have been awarded the Volunteer of the Year medal two years in a row.

Talk about your personal and professional accomplishments. If you don't have a publication history, talk about other professional accomplishments. Or talk about what you like to spend your time doing. Or talk about anything unusual about you. You might say, I just got back from a three day bread-making festival with my ten cousins...

If you have publications/ awards as a writer, list them!]

I hope you enjoy the piece, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Name



QUERY LETTER FOR MAGAZINE PUBLICATIONS (SAMPLE)

Your query letter should be half page to one page long. It should quickly lay out what you want to write about, with a good hook, and explain why this issue matters and you're the person to write the article. Here's a sample query letter:

Dear Editor name,

Launch right in with information about your piece. It can be good to start with a hook/question and to give some factual information as well.

For example you might write: What should you do if you find that you've stepped between a mama bear and her cubs? This might sound like an unlikely event, but in the past year, 20 % more people in Wyoming have reported having encounters with bears than in the previous year, and the conventional wisdom about what to do when you separate a mama from her cub often leads to greater risk factors.

I'd like to write a 1500 word article for X magazine that explains the new research into the best methods for dealing with mother bears and how this can help all of us understand and harness the maternal force not only in bears, but in all mammals. Etc.

Then give a sentence or two about why this article will help readers of X magazine.

Then give a bio that explains why you're the best person to write this article. Your credentials should in some way give you the authority to write this piece.

PART THREE: WHERE TO GET PUBLISHED:

Here is a list of places to get published.

Here are also some other resources that list publishing opportunities when learning how to get published:

Writer's Market: <https://www.amazon.com/Writers-Market-2020-Trusted-Published/dp/1440301220>(A book that is published each year with listings of publishing opportunities. There is also a Poet's Market, Novel and Short Story Writer's Market, and more)

Poets and Writers: https://www.pw.org/literary_magazinesPoets and Writers Magazine has an online listing of places to publish short work

Duotrope: <https://duotrope.com/>Online program that lists publication outlets and helps you organize your submissions. Free trial and then \$5 per month. This can be a helpful tool if you're going to submit work often

When you're looking for how to submit to a particular magazine/ publication, go to the "about" section. Most of the about sections should tell you how to submit. Make sure you follow the submissions guidelines for each individual publication.

If that submissions information is not on the about page, google the publication name and "submissions"; for example, if you google "The Home Forum submissions," you'll find what you're looking for.

Places you can publish your own work without any or with minimal editorial gatekeepers:

Medium: <https://medium.com/>You can publish directly yourself or submit your work to different collections within medium. Sometimes if you publish it directly yourself, it will be picked up by another collection.

Thrive Global: <https://thriveglobal.com/>
A place for essays about wellness, widely defined

Your Own Blog

I've organized these magazines by subject, but of course these aren't strict categories and there is a lot of overlap between magazines and subjects. Here are the categories (in this order).

- PERSONAL ESSAYS/ WOMEN'S ISSUES/ LIFE ISSUES—with a Man's Issues journal thrown in
- WRITING ABOUT PARENTING/ RELATIONSHIPS
- WRITING ABOUT HEALTH/ FOOD/ HEALING
- WRITING ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
- WRITING ABOUT SPIRITUALITY
- OP ED PIECES
- MORE LITERARY WRITING

PERSONAL ESSAYS/ WOMEN'S ISSUES/ LIFE ISSUES—with a Man's Issues journal thrown in

This is a list of places that accept personal essay pitches (although it talks about op-eds, these places are often likely to publish personal essays): <https://rethinkmedia.org/blog/millennial-guide-companion-where-pitch-your-op-ed>

BUST (<https://bust.com>): publishes personal essays and first-person reported articles in its feature well. Writers should query first-person pieces and keep in mind that the magazine publishes bimonthly.

Good Housekeeping—"Blessings" (www.goodhousekeeping.com): Blessings" is Good Housekeeping's back page personal essay. It seeks submissions about "a person or event that proved to be a blessing in your life." submit to: LMATHEWS at HEARST dot COM; When learning how to get published, this is a great resource for many topics.

Good Men Project (goodmenproject.com): "The Good Men Project® is a glimpse of what enlightened masculinity might look like in the 21st century," the press raved when we launched. We had set out to start an international conversation about what it means to be a good man in the 21st century.

Huffington Post (<https://www.huffpost.com/section/huffpost-personal>): "At HuffPost, we believe that personal stories can change the world. We want to help our readers better understand the news and the world around them, and we know storytelling is essential to our mission. If you want to be a part of HuffPost Personal, here's how you can pitch to us. All published contributions to this section are paid. A HuffPost Personal piece is original, authentic, compelling and told in the first person.

Marie Claire—“Love & Sex” (www.marieclaire.com): strong, literary writing and non-formulaic essays based on compelling personal stories about the ways that smart, empowered women are navigating relationships and romance, heartbreak and sexuality, partnership and singlehood.”

Modernloss.com: “Modern Loss is a place to share the unspeakably taboo, unbelievably hilarious, and unexpectedly beautiful terrain of navigating your life after a death. Beginners welcome

New York Times Magazine—“Lives” (<https://www.nytimes.com/column/lives>): Receiving 3,000 to 4,000 submissions a year for 52 Sunday slots, this competitive market is looking for the very best storytelling in the form of first-person narratives.: 850 words;

New York Times “Modern Love” (<https://www.nytimes.com/column/modern-love>): “The editors of Modern Love are interested in receiving deeply personal essays about contemporary relationships, marriage, dating, parenthood...any subject that might reasonably fit under the heading “Modern Love.”

New York Times “Rites of Passage” (A “Rite of Passage” can be something big or small, humorous or serious, but the best stories tend to be about a specific experience that had some lasting impact on your life. They are narrative in scope, which means you are telling us a (true) story.

Salon.com: Salon essays can be on any subject matter, but hot topics are families/parenting, sex and relationships, personal finance, body image and pop culture. Length: Varies, but roughly 1,500 words;

WRITING ABOUT PARENTING/ RELATIONSHIPS

The Boston Globe Magazine—“Connections”

(<https://www.bostonglobe.com/section/connections>): A Boston connection is not necessary, but essays for this column must offer a fresh perspective on a personal relationship, whether with a romantic partner, friend, family member or even an interesting exchange with a stranger.

Brain, Child (<https://www.brainchildmag.com>): The Magazine For Thinking Mothers “We focus on long form essays that range from 1,500 - 4,500 words. We are excited by great writing - and by both new and established writers.

CSMonitor.com <https://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/>

The-Home-Forum—“The Home Forum”: The Christian Science Monitor, an international news organization, publishes essays online in its section called The Home Forum. (All essays appear in print before they are posted online, so it's a dual format.) Specifically, it's looking for "first person, nonfiction explorations of how you responded to a place, a person, a situation or happenings in everyday life."

Full Grown People (<http://fullgrownpeople.com>): "On Tuesdays and Thursdays, FGP publishes essays that tackle those moments in life when you wonder, what's next?... The topics here run the whole gamut: romance, family, health, career, dealing with aging loved ones, and more.

Kveller.com <https://www.kveller.com/Focus> on Jewish parenting "To submit, please email submissions@kveller.com with "Submission" somewhere in the subject line.

LiteraryMama.com <http://www.literarymama.com/> The editors like thoughtful pieces with a distinctive voice; 500-7,000 word

Mom.me: "committed to creating a supportive community, and highlighting the joy and humor in parenting.

Motherwell Magazine: <https://motherwellmag.com/> Telling all sides of parenting
Mutha Magazine: <http://www.muthamagazine.com/> Thoughtful, wide ranging essays about motherhood and beyond

New York Times Parents: <https://parenting.nytimes.com/faq> articles to help parents make better decisions

On Parenting: Washington Post
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2018/02/15/on-parenting-submissions/> Real life stories of parenting

Scarry Mommy <https://www.scarymommy.com/> Scarry Mommy is one of the largest, most influential and trusted sources of entertainment and information for millennial moms online.

WRITING ABOUT HEALTH/ FOOD/ HEALING

AARP The Magazine (<https://www.aarp.org/magazine/>): The crucial ingredient in essays for AARP is that they must offer fresh insight into an aspect of life after 50.
Bellevue Literary Review (<https://blr.med.nyu.edu/>): "The Bellevue Literary Review, founded in 2000, was created as a forum for creatively exploring a broad array of issues in medicine and society, using fiction, nonfiction, and poetry to better understand the nuanced tensions that define our lives both in illness and in health.

Bon Appetit "Healthy-ish Essay" (<https://www.bonappetit.com/healthyish/essay>): "We're interested in profiles with a timely hook, trend stories that dig deeper, opinion pieces and personal essays that surprise us, reported stories with a voice and a point of view"

MindBodyGreen: <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/> Short pieces about healing, health, healthy lifestyle

Psychology Today: focused on psychology by writers in the field and some personal stories of healing <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/writers-guidelines>

Themighty.com (www.themighty.com) digital health community created to empower and connect people facing health challenges and disabilities.

Shape -- "Real Life" (www.shape.com): "Real Life" essays go beyond writing about fitness -- there must be lots of personal insight.

WRITING ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Here are two places that list publications that focus on the environment:

- <https://www.ecolitbooks.com/resources/literary-outlets-for-environmental-writing/>
- <https://www.asle.org/research-write/literary-journals/>

Appalachia Journal: <https://www.outdoors.org/trip-ideas-tips-resources/appalachia> longest running outdoors magazine, published by the AMC.

Ecotone (<https://ecotonemagazine.org>): "Founded at the University of North Carolina Wilmington in 2005, the award-winning magazine features writing and art that reimagine place, and our authors interpret this charge expansively."

Flyway Magazine (<https://flyway.org>): Journal of Writing and Environment: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and visual art. Learn how to get published. "Due to the increasing number of submissions through Submittable,

The Fourth River: A Journal of Natural and Place-Based Writing (<https://www.thefourthriver.com>): "The Fourth River is the literary journal of Chatham University's MFA Program. We welcome submissions of creative writing that explore the relationship between humans and their environments, both natural and built, urban, rural or wild."

Orion Magazine (orionmagazine.org): Nature, Culture, and Place; Open 4/15-6/15; "The editorial impulse of Orion lies at the nexus of ecology and the human experience."

WRITING ABOUT SPIRITUALITY

Aish.com (<https://www.aish.com>): Essays for Aish should be dramatic first-person accounts that convey Jewish wisdom in a positive manner.

Commonweal: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/> Liberal, Catholic, well respected journal of opinion.

Lion's Roar: <https://www.lionsroar.com/> Buddhist Wisdom essays and more about Buddhist practice, sometimes widely defined.

Mindful Magazine: <https://www.mindful.org/magazine/> Glossy magazine devoted to mindfulness

Ruminate Magazine: <https://www.ruminatemagazine.com/>Contemplative pieces that help you slow down

Spirituality & Health (<https://spiritualityhealth.com>): Both its front-of-book section and its feature well run first-person essays on occasion, such as a recent article that discussed how a woman's spiritual heart was kicked open after she adopted a stray cat. Topics can vary widely, but "should fall under the umbrella of health and spirituality,"

Tiferet Journal (<http://tiferetjournal.com>): Fostering Peace Through Literature and Art "The mission of our magazine, then, is to help reveal Spirit, in all its manifestations, through the Written Word.

Tiny Buddha: <https://tinybuddha.com/> personal essays about healing, positive life changes. Submissions only open periodically

Tikkun <https://www.tikkun.org/magazine> Jewish/ Interfaith journal of spirituality and progressive politics

Tricycle Magazine: <https://tricycle.org/> Buddhist Wisdom and more.

Wisdom Daily goals <http://thewisdomdaily.com/about/Help> people address the biggest questions we face both as individuals and a society; Lift people out of the mind-numbing polarization that typify most public debate and spiritual teaching

OP ED PIECES

Almost all newspapers, from large to small, accept op ed pieces. The Op Ed project has great resources to find publications and to write and submit op-ed pieces.

<https://www.theopedproject.org/submission-information>

This is another good list: <https://rethinkmedia.org/blog/millennial-guide-companion-where-pitch-your-op-ed>

Don't forget you can also write op ed pieces for smaller local papers. They always need pieces.

Cognoscenti at wbur.org (<https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti>):

"Cognoscenti features opinions, perspectives and essays from some of New England's best and brightest thinkers. We publish commentaries on politics, culture, sports, law, medicine, innovation, religion, media, parenting and style.

OpenDemocracy <https://www.opendemocracy.net/> "free thinking for the world"

Slate <https://slate.com/up> to date pieces about the contemporary world

Truthout <https://truthout.org/independent>, progressive news

Women's E news: <https://womensenews.org/>

MORE LITERARY WRITING

There are thousands of places that publish literary pieces. Here are a few; these tend to be slightly more competitive, but they are a good place

The Antioch Review (<http://review.antiochcollege.edu/guidelines>): "Our audience is made up of educated citizens, often professional people,

Brevity (brevitymag.com) Very short essays/ fiction 750 words max. Also publishes a blog about writing, craft, etc.

Believer (believermag.com): Nonfiction: journalism, essays, interviews, comics, poetry;

Catapult <https://catapult.co/> essays, reviews, and more

Catamaran Literary Reader (<https://catamaranliteraryreader.com>) : quarterly literature and visual arts journal; fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, fine art; "Themes we are especially interested in include the environment, the artistic spirit, personal freedom, and creative ideas.

Hippocampus (www.hippocampusmagazine.com): Creative nonfiction (online only): memoir excerpts, personal essays, reviews, interviews, craft articles; Memoir excerpts and personal essays 4,000 words max

Lithub: <https://lithub.com/> central site for literary culture, essays, etc.

Longreads: <https://longreads.com/> "The best longform stories on the web"

Mid-American Review (<https://casit.bgsu.edu/midamericanreview/>): Bowling Green State University; poetry, fiction, nonfiction, translations, reviews; "Intensive examination and getting below the surface of the subject is of primary consideration"

Ninth Letter (ninthletter.com): Ninth Letter is a collaborative arts and literary project produced by the Creative Writing Program and School of Art & Design at the University of Illinois

Millions: <https://themillions.com/> online magazine covering books, art and culture

Narrative (<https://www.narrativemagazine.com>): "Since 2003 Narrative has been at the forefront of a new kind of library—a global meeting place, if you will, where readers and writers meet."

Narratively (<https://narratively.com>): Human stories, boldly told. "Narratively.com is a digital publication that looks beyond the news headlines and clickbait, focusing instead on ordinary people with extraordinary stories."

Pangyrus <https://www.pangyrus.com/about-us/> Boston/ Cambridge based literary magazine.

Phoebe Journal (phoebejournal.com): poetry, fiction, nonfiction, visual art; open for print issue later summer to early fall, for online mid-winter to early spring; also has writing contests

Ploughshares (pshares.org): "quality literature" fiction and nonfiction; Based at Emerson College; 6/1-1/15; journal and also Solo series (longer pieces); also has Emerging Writers Contest

TheRumpus.net: This literary website seeks writers who are passionate and emotional about the topics they are covering.

Solstice (<https://solsticelitmag.org>): A Magazine of Diverse Voices. Tri-quarterly. "We welcome experimental or traditional pieces of fiction, nonfiction or poetry, and also photography. Nonfiction for us includes the essay as well as memoir. We also consider excerpts from novels or nonfiction books, especially if the piece can stand alone. Controversial topics are fine with us."

The Sun Magazine—"Essays, Memoirs, and True Stories"

(<https://www.thesunmagazine.org/sections/essays-memoirs-true-stories>): Each issue of this magazine runs a number of literary essays.

Under the Gum Tree (www.underthegumtree.com): Creative nonfiction; We believe in the power of sharing a story without shame. Too much of the human experience gets hidden behind constructed facades based on what we perceive the world expects from us. Stop hiding. Live a story. Tell it without shame.

THE THREE PILLARS OF PUBLICATION

— ENCOURAGEMENT —

Learning how to get published and getting your writing published for the first time can seem like a daunting task, but consistency and determination are key!

Remember to enjoy your writing work whether you're getting published or not.

Don't take rejections personally. Submit as many times as you can. Just keep going!

If you follow these steps and keep at it, you will have success. If you get stuck, please reach out with questions and get the support you need.

Also, please reach out to me if you have any questions. You can reach me through the contact form on my website: www.nadiacolburn.com. I do my best to answer each message I get.

If you need help getting your writing published, check out my online and in-person writing classes. I also offer individualized coaching.

And if you want more free resources for writers, including a free e-book with the seven essential steps to write with more ease and power, mindful meditations for writers and more, explore my free resource library at www.nadiacolburn.com