

How to Write For New Magazines as a Freelance Writer

Roughly 1,000 magazines are launched every year, according to Samir "Mr. Magazine" Husni, a magazine consultant and chair of the journalism department at the University of Mississippi. Nearly 20,000 consumer and trade publications exist in North America, according to the National Directory of Magazines. These statistics don't include many of the small, independent start-up magazines.

New magazines can be a goldmine to dig up freelance work. Editors of new magazines are eager to find freelance talent to write regularly or to pitch articles and column ideas for at least four to six issues in advance, depending on the magazine's frequency. New magazines can offer you, the freelance writer, an easier and quicker way to break into magazine writing.

I use various sources to uncover new magazines. My favorite is Ulrichsweb.com, an online directory of magazine serials. Before a magazine launches, the publisher or publishing company applies for an ISSN # and Ulrich's records the ISSN #, along with the publication's information, such as launch date, frequency, category, and contact information. Ulrichsweb.com is useful if you want to locate publications before they launch and before they publicly announce their debut via the newswires.

If you do not want to pay for a subscription to Ulrichsweb.com, you can use other free resources, such as MagazineLaunch.com and MrMagazine.com. These free resources track new magazine start-ups by researching the newswires and subscribing to press release services.

Writing for new magazines has some downsides. Firstly, circulation is usually at the low end and so is the magazine's exposure in the marketplace. Secondly, the pay rate usually isn't competitive with similar magazines. Thirdly, editors usually won't pay you until after they publish your piece, instead of paying you on acceptance. Fourthly, many new magazines fail within the first year and it is possible the magazine could fleece you.

HOW TO BREAK IN AND SELL YOUR ARTICLES

Whether the publication or website has writer's guidelines or not, your aim is to pitch your query letter, article idea, proposal, or full article to the editor. Most writers prefer writing a query letter and sending it to the editor. Follow this process:

1) Go to the publication's website. See if the website posts its writer's guidelines. If not, go to the Contact Us page. Contact the editor or the editorial director. On smaller start-up publications, contact the publisher as he usually plays dual roles. Request the publication's writer's guidelines. Make sure you address the editor or publisher by full name. Do not send an e-mail with "To Editor" as the subject. It will get deleted.

In addition to requesting writer's guidelines, I advise you to make a short sales pitch in your e-mail, and include a brief bio. under your name with any relevant qualifications and skills as a writer. If you have a website, include a link to it. If an editor sees your sales pitch, he may want to know more about what you can offer.

2) If the editor's response is they don't provide writer's guidelines, then you need to take a "marketing" approach. You'll need to craft a query letter and pitch your article idea (or your availability as a freelance writer).

3) If you can't break in, don't move on just yet! Mail (yes, snail mail!) the editor your business card and a brief letter about yourself, your qualifications, references, and where to find samples of your work online. Explain how using you as a freelance writer can increase readership for the publication. Explain some of the topics you can cover, who you can interview, and any exclusive information you can obtain regularly.

Many writers e-mail the editor their information to keep on file; however, I also find that mailing my correspondence to the editor gets results. You force the editor to read and touch your correspondence, and this increases the chances of him remembering who you are and what you can provide.

Convincing an editor to outsource work to you or accept your articles for publication has a lot to do with how well you pitch and present yourself and your ideas. This is why writing a near perfect query letter is vital to getting work.

About the Author

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