



January 2012

New year, new book: keeping your resolutions

How many times have you promised yourself on January 1st, “This year, I’m going to write a book!” Maybe you want to record your life story to help others learn from your experiences; maybe you have a blockbuster of a novel percolating in your brain; maybe you want to turn those stories that your grandchildren love into books for other children to enjoy... Somehow, though, those good intentions just never seem to turn into action.

Make this your year to have your work published! Here’s how to get started!

Don’t worry about special equipment or organizing a writing desk: just sit down at your kitchen table with a pad and a pen, or open up a Word file on your computer, and let the words fall on the page. Nobody writes a perfect first draft: very little of this first version will probably survive into the final book, but you’ve made a beginning and that’s actually the hardest part.

Some writers use an outline, mapping the entire structure of the book before they start filling in the details. If you have a blank wall, you can use Post-It notes to build the bones of your story, or use a notebook with a few pages for each chapter’s plot developments, characters, and so on.

If it’s non-fiction you’ve resolved to write, perhaps a look at your favourite era in history or a biography of someone you admire, your first step will be research. Don’t stop at your computer, easy though that is: after all, it’s a book you’re writing and not a computer

program or a website, so libraries, archives, local history societies, and where possible, conversations with live people, will supply the important little details that you'll need to paint an interesting picture of your chosen subject.

There's no day like today to begin writing your book, and if you need help along the way, the friendly people at Ardith will be happy to point you in the right direction.

New Year's resolutions: promotion and marketing

Was one of your New Year's resolutions to promote the book that you published last year? Here are some tips to get you motivated:

- Listen. Before you dive into social media and flood the Internet with posts and tweets, spend some time learning from the influencers. Once you get the lay of the land, start commenting and providing feedback. Make sure to provide tips and advice to your followers and try to be judicious about self-promotion. Many suggest that only one out of every three posts should be about you.
 - Schedule. Just like your writing sessions needed to be scheduled, so too does social media. Use tools that let you post on numerous networks at once, such as [Hootsuite](#) or [Tweetdeck](#). Many websites also let you schedule tweets so that you don't have to sit in front of the computer all day.
 - Write. You probably thought your writing was done when your book went to print. While most of the heavy lifting was done at that time, it is still important to keep yourself, and your book, relevant to both the media and readers. Has there been a recent event in the news that you can comment on? Write a press release promoting your expertise and send it to radio producers. Is there anything from your book that could be turned into an interesting blog post? Consider starting your own blog or asking to be a guest contributor on someone else's.
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Writing science fiction

There are a few good books on writing science fiction, including Orson Scott Card's classic *How to Write Science Fiction & Fantasy*. Below, however, are a few key pointers to get you started:

- The essence of science fiction is instilling a sense of wonder: the stories ask, “What if?” They produce awe in readers by presenting situations where science and technology have an impact on humanity to a degree not (yet?) seen in real life. It is therefore important to know what’s been done before. Be sure to read the genre widely.
- To get story ideas, keep abreast of the new and experimental in the real world: read magazines, listen to podcasts, and watch documentaries that cover groundbreaking subjects of science and technology. From there, ask, “What if?” Take it to the extreme and apply these new frontiers to believable human situations—for better or for worse.
- It makes perfect sense to mix the wondrous with the mundane. What impact would a new and devastating technology have on a quiet rural town? What will happen to the moon when corporations finally have large enough “cosmic” R&D and marketing budgets?
- Familiarize yourself with well-established subgenres/themes, including space opera, time travel, and military, social, and hard science fiction. Each have specific expectations and traditions. Avoid writing a space opera that is simply another *Star Wars*; have an understanding of munitions, tactics, and maneuvers if you’re writing military stories; and if your story is based on hard science, be sure to do your research and be accurate—and include a lot of data!

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