



July 2010

Must You “Write What You Know”?

Of all the rules of writing that people pass on to others, the one that tends to be thrust on new writers is, “Write what you know.” This rule suggests limiting creative output to subject matter of which writers are already familiar.

An intimate familiarity with a subject may make it easier for new writers to come up with the words they’re looking for; the problem, however, is that this rule essentially limits writers. You should write both what you know and what interests you. With adequate research and hard work, you can write convincingly about anything you wish.

Friends Don't Let Friends Edit

So a friend asks you if you’d like them to edit the book you’ve written, what should you say? Having a friend edit your work has its pros and cons. One of the most obvious advantages of having a friend edit your work is that they likely won’t charge you very much money (if any at all). A consideration that should factor into your decision is whether or not your friend will be honest with you about the quality of your work and will give you the criticism that you need to let your work be all that it can be.

A professional editor is familiar with spelling and style conventions, as well as the publishing process and book market, which can take some of the guesswork out of revising your book. Ultimately, whether you ask a friend to edit your book or leave it to a professional is up to you. Should you have any questions about the editorial needs of your particular project, feel free to ask an Ardith representative.

Prizes for self-published books

Of course it's nice to sell lots of copies of your book and have your hard work recognised by readers who love what you've written, but who doesn't love winning a prize? There are a number of awards open to self-published books, in every category from business to comic books. Here are some to check out:

Writer's Digest International Self-Published Book Awards.

www.writersdigest.com

Deadline in mid-May every year. Grand prize is \$3,000 and promotion in *Writer's Digest* and *Publishers Weekly* magazines, distribution deal with Atlas Books. Entry fee \$125.

William Saroyan International Prize for Writing. Deadline in January. For work that celebrates "exuberant humanism." Self-published books are eligible as long as they are available for purchase by the public. Administered by Stanford University Libraries. www-sul.Stanford.edu/saroyan/faq.html Entry fee \$50.

IPPY Awards (Independent Publisher). www.independentpublisher.com Deadline in March. Regional competitions including Eastern and Western Canada. Entry fee \$85 per category; \$45 extra for regional categories.

Axiom Business Book Awards. Deadline in January. English-language business books intended for the American market. www.axiomawards.com Entry fee \$75–\$95 per title, depending on when it's submitted.

Gene Day Award for Canadian Self-Publishing. Honours comic book creators who self-publish their work. The prize is a \$500 bursary. Deadline in February. Open to Canadian citizens currently resident in Canada. No language restrictions. <http://joeshusterawards.com/>

The Pearson Prize Teen Choice Awards. Founded to get different kinds of books into public school classrooms and administered by a student jury at Lester B. Pearson High School in Montreal. Deadline in May. www.PearsonPrize.org No entry fee.

Ardith's Notebook is a monthly newsletter for writers and self publishers.

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Our mailing address is:
520 Princess Avenue. London, Ontario, N6B 2B8

Our telephone:
1-877-288-0114

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