

Twelve Things Children's Book Writers Should Do:

By Kathy Temean & Anita Nolan

- 1) **Read, Read, Read!** Read all sorts of books, including award-winners. When you find a good book, read it again, this time as a writer, and consider why it's appealing.
- 2) Check out the **Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators** website and the website of your state SCBWI chapter. Consider becoming a member. There are two national conferences a year, plus many state conferences and workshops. www.scbwi.org lists links to state chapters. (the NJ SCBWI conference is in June, the SE PA conference is in September.)
- 3) **Develop a writing routine.** Successful writers set aside time to write. The more you write, the better your writing skills will become.
- 4) **Network.** Subscribe to on-line list serves and critique groups. Attend conferences. Ask questions and share what you find out.
- 5) **Write your own story—forget industry trends.** By the time you have a vampire manuscript written, vampires will be over and werewolves, or faeries, or chicklit, will be the rage.
- 6) **Find a writer's group.** It's difficult to see problems with your own story. You need a group of people who will give you honest opinions on your work (this is in addition to your mother.) You might find critique groups at conferences, a writing class, online, or through SCBWI chapters. Sometimes there are group critiques at SCBWI conferences.
- 7) **Develop a thick skin.** Be prepared to take criticism. Learn how to accept rejection.
- 8) **Do Your Homework.** Children's magazines, trade and educational publishers have very different needs. Understand your market, and find out what publishers might be interested in what you write.
- 9) **Don't rush to be published.** Never, never, send your manuscript out until it's been revised—several times. Have it critiqued by a critique partner first.
- 10) **Be professional.** Format your manuscript properly. Check submission policies. Does the editor/agent want an email query or to receive it by snail mail? Do they want to receive pages of your manuscript with the query? Write a one page, compelling cover letter and always include a SASE with your manuscript.
- 11) **Work on getting published,** even before your manuscript is completed. Consider submitting articles to magazines, or try online websites or small newsletters.
- 12) **Be patient.** If you're serious about writing, you need realistic expectations about the time and effort it takes. Good writing is challenging. Getting published is challenging. It rarely comes easily or quickly. Don't give up.

About the authors:

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