# A No-Nonsense Guide to WRITING MATERIALS

## by ELT Writers Connected

**No Nonsense Guide to Writing**

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# Contents


6 | **Preface** **Jeremy Harmer**

8 | **Do I have what it takes?** **Mark Hancock**
What skills do ELT writers need to have?

15 | **Who can I write for?** **Simon Greenall**
Who's who in the world of publishing?
What material is suitable for different publishers?

22 | **How do I get noticed?** **Fiona Mauchline**
How can writers get 'known'?
How can they bring themselves to publishers' (and the public's) attention?

27 | **How do I write a successful sample?** **Damian Williams**
What are the key elements that will convince potential publishers?

31 | **Who will I work with?** **John Hughes**
Who do ELT writers collaborate with during the publishing process?

38 | **What do I need to know about contracts?** **Steve Elsworth**
Negotiating good contract terms is vital if writers are to be appropriately rewarded for the work they do.

44 | **How can I get paid for writing materials?** **Lindsay Clandfield**
Writers are paid in various different ways (fees, royalties etc). How does this work? What's the difference?

51 | **What about author tours and promotion?** **Antonia Clare**
What's it like giving a presentation in front of a whole lot of teachers?
What other kinds of meeting are there between writers and the teachers they serve?

58 | **What can go wrong?** **Rachael Roberts**
What can writers do when relationship with co-authors, publishers, etc. go wrong?

62 | **URLs**

# Introduction

The ***No-Nonsense Guide to Writing*** is an e-book for anyone who is interested in designing and writing materials for the learning and teaching of English as a foreign (or additional) language.

ELT (English language teaching writing) comes in many shapes and sizes. Some authors write or co-write coursebook series. Others produce workbooks to go with those coursebooks. Or perhaps they write language practice books, or graded readers or grammar books. They may write resource books for teachers, or books on aspects of teaching methodology. And increasingly they may write material for online delivery, or as part of mobile-learning Apps.

If you are thinking of writing anything like that (or if you have started writing but don't know where to place your work), then ***The No-Nonsense Guide to Writing*** is for you. As a look at the contents will demonstrate, there is advice here not only about the process of writing, but also on aspects of contracts and adequate remuneration. Other aspects of a writer's life are covered too, such as who you may collaborate with, and what it's like to give presentations about your work – and of course about what happens when things go wrong. You can find out, too, who produces and publishes ELT material in today's changing world – and how to produce a sample to persuade them to take an interest in your work.

And so, for all of you who want to become (or continue to be) writers of ELT material, this collection of articles provides a one-stop resource of information about what you need to be able to do, what to be careful about, and how to enjoy it.(And when you have looked at what is on offer here, you may want to ask to join the ELT Writers group on Facebook – where ***The No-Nonsense Guide to Writing*** was first suggested. We are happy to welcome new writers.)

We hope you will find this collection of articles useful.

**The authors**

# Preface

Like most young people coming into the field of English language teaching, I used to prepare my lessons a lot – when I started! (Actually I think planning is like an upside-down bell-shaped curve: you do it a lot at the beginning. You don't do it that much once you have experience and confidence. Later on, however, you start doing it more and more when your quality-control mechanism kicks in… but perhaps that's another story for another time).

Part of the fun of preparation back then was dreaming up situations and dialogues and stories to entertain and engage the students. This was, of course, so that lessons would 'flow' and would be enjoyable both for teacher and students. But it was also because, when you really get learners engaged and 'onside', their receptive learning becomes deeper and more powerful.

Most ELT writers start like that, I think. We try to come up with learning experiences that will really help students 'get' what it's all about, both with the English language, but also with how best to absorb it and learn it. That process – of trying to dream up 'wonderful' lessons – is, when deeply felt, the fire that fuels the creative force which so many of my professional ELT writing colleagues never lose. It is why the best of them are so successful and why teachers and students love what they do.

From those early preparations, it's not such a big step to share what you have done with colleagues – if they are interested, that is! And then with more colleagues, and then with more colleagues, and then…

And then, like so many before and since, I was working in a language school in the south of England and myself and a colleague decided we didn't like any of the advanced coursebooks on offer, so, with the certainty and passion of youth (and with a complete absence of humility – something of which I am now somewhat ashamed!) we decided we could do better ourselves. We started producing our own material. Luckily for us, we got (to use Fiona Mauchline's words in this e-book) 'noticed' and for me, at least, my professional life changed forever. So that after a few years of writing 'on the side' whilst at the same time teaching and training and things, I finally became a full-time writer.

It has been a mostly terrific journey so far. Learning the challenges of the job has been a wonderful process of continual discovery and re-discovery. Writing ELT, as the sadly departed Robert O'Neill used to insist, is a deeply creative business no less than any other kind of writing. As Mark Hancock demonstrates in his article

here, it has its imaginative and technical challenges; it has its moments of high excitement and its days of relentless, and sometimes unrewarding, labour. But, like all creative processes, it provides a heady sense of real achievement when things go well.

Best of all, for me and for the other authors who offer their expertise in this collection – and as John Hughes explains in his article – it has offered the chance to collaborate and co-create with other authors, with some amazingly creative editors and publishers, and, especially, with teachers from all over the world.

Teachers offer their feedback in readers' reports, in the advice they offer writers and publishers, and even better, when, as authors, we have a chance to interact with them face-to-face in the conferences and school visits that Antonia Clare talks about. These interactions are the life blood of what we do and for me, and for the other writers here, they make the whole thing worthwhile.

But for all of us who write ELT there are the bad times too, as Rachel Roberts points out. For when the relationship between publisher, writers and co-authors is good it is, in the words of the old nursery rhyme, very, very good, but when it is bad it is horrid. Caveat scriptor!

As a writer, you need to know who you are dealing with – which is why Simon Greenall's industry overview is so useful in this collection. You need to know what kind of remuneration you can expect – and anyone who is unsure of that should read Lindsay Clandfield's lucid explanation of how and in what ways you might get paid. And then, once you have absorbed all of this, you really, really need to keep your wits about you when you are offered a contract. You don't want to sign up for things you might regret later – something Steve Elsworth writes about with feeling. Read carefully!

So, as you prepare your sample material (having read Damian Williams' carefully argued descriptions in this book), all you need is creative genius, tactical nous, superb negotiating skills, the ability to wow an audience of teachers, and endless stamina. It's not too much to ask, surely!

**Jeremy Harmer**

# One Do I have what it takes to write?

Mark Hancock

You look at your coursebook and you think, "How hard can it be to write a few sentences with gaps in, or ask a few questions about a text?" The answer is, it's harder than you think! Just because you've used a coursebook, doesn't mean you can write one. Ironically, the simpler a book appears, the more skilfully it has been written. One of the greatest skills of the ELT writer is being able to make it look easy.

'One of the greatest skills', I say. Because there are many skills involved, and many of them are overlooked by the casual observer, the teacher, the publisher, or the would-be writer. So in this chapter, I will attempt to provide a list of what these skills are. You can use this list to assess if you have what it takes to write. But I should point out before we start that you don't necessarily need them all. The skills you need depend on what kind of ELT book you're planning to write. It's a broad field, so let's begin with an overview of it.

## What is an ELT book?

There are many different types of ELT coursebooks, written for different age-groups, regions and specific purposes. Coursebooks usually come with a constellation of support material: teachers' books, workbooks, online material and so on. In addition, ELT materials include supplementary skills books, readers, methodology and reference books. Just to keep in mind the breadth of the field in one glance, take a look at the word cloud in Figure 1.

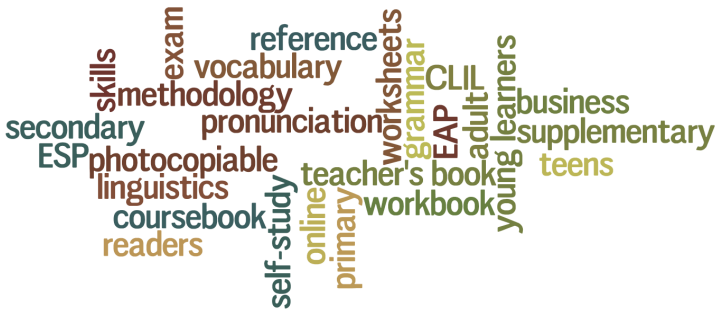


*Figure 1*

The skills you need depend very much on the kind of material you're writing. You may not have what it takes to write one kind of material, but then be very well-suited to another. The skills required also depend on how the material is being produced. For example, are you originating the concept or following a specification provided by a publisher? Are you working alone or in a team? Are you writing a stand-alone or part of a series? In this article, I will assume you will be writing some kind of coursebook, and if you are writing something else, or wish to specify the book more closely, you can tailor the skills list accordingly.

For now the message is, on the one hand, don't underestimate what it takes to be a writer, but on the other, don't despair if you have a deficit in some area of the skills list. Now, let's move on to look at this list...

## Do I need to be creative?

The answer is almost certainly going to be 'yes', but don't forget that creativity takes many forms. First of all, we will look at content – texts, images and so on. Creativity is often associated with being artistic, and some ELT writers are. Some produce their own artwork and write their own music, songs, poetry, dialogues and narrative. This is perhaps more common at primary level. There is also a certain art to writing chants, rhymes and other kinds of word-play, which are also often required.

As regards artwork, in coursebooks, this is mostly researched or commissioned, but writing an artwork brief is itself a creative act and may require an acute visual imagination to do well. As regards literature and texts and video more generally, these are also frequently researched, and this too requires creativity. You need to have some idea of what you're looking for, and to do it well, you need to stalk around the topic and not just pounce on the first idea that comes to mind.

You may then need to simplify and abridge texts, or adapt them to focus more on a given language point. This adaptation also requires some creativity to do well. Plus, if you're blending together information from multiple sources, you need to employ the journalist's skill of finding an angle on the story, and you need to recreate a plausible true-to-genre text. On the other hand, you may precisely be wanting to use authentic, unmodified text. This amplifies the trickiness of finding the right texts and exploiting them appropriately.

Turning now from content to pedagogical thrust, if you are originating your own concept, you have to have that concept, which requires considerable vision and initiative. Alternatively, you may be invited to submit a proposal for a loosely specified market. Here, you will probably need to conjure up some kind of 'unique selling point' – some feature that will characterise your material and make it a bit different from the rest. A third possibility is that you are required to write to specifications, or brief, provided by a publisher. In one way, the tighter the brief, the easier it is, because you don't have to face the vertigo of the empty page. However, in another way, it can get very tricky indeed. For instance, you may have to produce a motivating lesson that recycles certain grammar, previews certain vocabulary, provides practice of certain skills, and all within the context of a given topic, while avoiding certain taboos. The creativity required to combine multiple constraints of this kind with panache is quite considerable, and if you succeed, the result looks so effortless that everybody will say, 'I could have written that!'.

Finally, let's take a look at task design. It takes creativity to string all of your material together as a flowing and varied series of tasks both within and across lessons. You need to write tasks with just the right balance between simplicity and interest. You will also need to find ways to convey complex ideas in simple rubrics. And in some instances, task design may take you way beyond the skill set traditionally associated with ELT teaching. For instance it may take you into game design, traditional or digital.

Good ELT writing, then, will almost certainly require some of the creative skills mentioned above, but now let's move on to other kinds of skills.

## Do I need to be analytical?

Yes, you have to be analytical to a greater or lesser extent. If you are writing your own syllabus, you need to weave together multiple threads, often digesting weighty reference tools such as the Common European Framework of Reference, or Ministry of Education curricula, or specifications relating subject-specific content for CLIL material. You may also need to analyse large amounts of market research data, and if exam washback is important, you'll need to analyse the exams.

Even if you are given a ready-made syllabus to work with, there will probably be plenty of slack in it that you need to tighten up. You may also be required to check your material for level appropriateness as you go along, as well as perhaps making sure that the language included is corpus attested. If you are writing for learners from a single language background, you may need to analyse the contrasts between that language and English.

You may also need to include a focus on assessment in your material. For instance, you may have to write progress tests. Test item writing is easy to do badly, but difficult to do well. Does the item really test what it purports to test, and nothing else? Even if you are not actually writing tests, you will probably have to write test-like items for language and skills work on occasion, and these can be very tricky to get right.

Finally, you need to be analytical at the stage of editing yourself. You need to be able to constantly zoom in and pan out to keep a balance between the detail and the big picture. You will need to analyse and respond appropriately to feedback from readers and editors. And you will probably be expected to show due diligence at the proof reading stage.

## Do I need to be a good communicator?

Yes, you need to be a good communicator. This begins with empathy. You need to be able to imagine your audience and write with them in mind. This can be quite complex. For coursebooks, the students are in effect an audience within an audience. They are, on the one hand, learners of English and on the other,

human beings. You need to address both of these roles at once, creating material with pedagogic face-validity, and at the same time, general interest. The motivational spark of your work depends on how well you can connect to both of these audience roles.

As if this weren't enough, there will often be other audiences too – teachers, publishers, Ministries of Education and last but not least, the censors in countries where your book may be sold. You need to get the tone right for all of these readers too, because if they don't like it, students will never see it.

Apart from being a good communicator as a writer, you may also find it very useful as a collaborator. If you are in a team, you need to establish a working relationship. If you are working with a publisher, you need to negotiate effectively at the contract stage and throughout the writing. If you are doing market research, you need to coax useful information from your respondents. And finally, if you are promoting your own book, it is important to be a good presenter and make good use of internet and social media.

## What experience do I need?

If you are writing any kind of ELT classroom material, you will almost certainly need to draw on plenty of teaching experience. Without this, you will lack the instinct for what is doable and what will work well in the classroom. You will also need experience of meeting speakers of other languages and learning other languages yourself, as well as the kinds of difficulties which emerge in cross--linguistic and cross-cultural communication.

In addition to practical teaching experience, you will need to have done a certain amount of academic work. Einstein apparently said, 'If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough'. As ELT writers, our job is to explain language concepts simply, and this can't be done if we don't understand them well enough ourselves.

Previous writing experience is also very handy, although obviously you won't have it if you're just starting out. Through this previous experience, you hone your

writing instincts, but you also build up your reputation. If you have a well-known name, you are likely to reach a wider audience, both for yourself as a speaker for example, and for your books and materials. A big name should also be an additional bargaining chip if you are negotiating with a publisher. Admittedly, having a reputation is not a skill, but it's largely a result of skills, and is worth cultivating.

## So what skills will I need for my first/next writing job?

It's probably a useful exercise, at the start of a new writing project, to have a checklist of skills and tick off the ones that the project is likely to require. This will first of all help you decide if the job is something you are capable of alone or something you need to collaborate on. Secondly, it will help you decide if the job is worth doing in the first place. A job that requires a lot of skills but that pays poorly might need to be rejected or re-negotiated – either by reducing the required skill set or increasing the pay-off. So I will conclude with such a checklist, which will at the same time serve as a summary of the chapter.

## Writing Skills Checklist

***Creation***

- ☐ creating original artwork, music, songs, poetry, narrative
- ☐ creating original text, story-lines, word-play
- ☐ researching authentic music, visuals, video, texts, literature
- ☐ envisioning artwork and producing a brief
- ☐ adapting, simplifying and abridging text
- ☐ recreating true-to-genre text
- ☐ developing an 'angle' in a text
- ☐ creating an original concept
- ☐ developing a 'unique selling point'
- ☐ producing motivating lessons within multiple syllabus constraints
- ☐ combining tasks into a flowing sequence
- ☐ creating tasks that balance simplicity and interest
- ☐ designing more complex task types such as games

***Analysis***

- □ syllabus design
- □ digesting reference tools
- □ analysing market research data
- □ analysing target needs
- □ checking for level appropriateness
- □ analysing likely L1 interference
- □ providing progress tests and other assessment tools
- □ writing valid items for assessment
- □ coordinating close-up detail and the big picture
- □ analysing reader and editorial feedback
- □ proof reading

***Communication***

- □ empathy with envisaged audience or audiences
- □ coordinating multiple-audience appeal
- □ creating material with pedagogical face-validity
- □ providing motivational spark
- □ working within institutional constraints
- □ collaborating in a writing team
- □ negotiating with publisher and editorial team
- □ eliciting useful information from market research
- □ promoting your material in person and/or online

***Experience***

- □ drawing on teaching experience
- □ drawing on language learning experience
- □ drawing on experience with other languages and cultures
- □ digesting and applying ideas from previous academic study
- □ employing expertise from previous writing experience
- □ building and then drawing on your reputation in the field

# TWO Who can I write for?

Simon Greenall

Deciding who to write for depends very much on what type of writer you are or want to be. So here are some questions to identify the various types of ELT writers at work in the profession, and a final question with suggestions about how to get started.

Oh, and remember that this chapter is written from a very UK perspective, which is my background. There may be many other opportunities among US publishers for ELT writers, although much US published material is directed at its vast internal ESOL market.

## Will I earn lots of money?

Be ready to wait a long time, because the opportunities for a high-earning project are fewer and further apart these days.

You're probably looking at becoming a writer for one of the four major UK publishers, such as Oxford University Press, Pearson, Cambridge University Press and Macmillan, or for a significant international publisher which belongs to a group elsewhere in the world, such as Richmond, which is part of Santillana (Spain). Or you might find opportunities with a major local publisher, such as Novy Era in Poland, or Foreign Languages Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) in China, whose books are designed for the local markets and who tend not to export beyond the country of origin.

As the name suggests, Oxford University Press is a department of the celebrated university, and its revenue on book sales goes back into the University coffers. Its charitable status means that it has to reinvest some of this surplus (charities don't talk about profits) back into publishing projects which would otherwise attract little or no funding. OUP has offices and representatives all over the world.

The pre-eminence of both the University connection and the Oxford English Dictionary has given OUP an edge on the other publishers in terms of its educational authority and reputation.

Many writers who publish with OUP, the home of *Headway*, acknowledge the care and expertise of its editorial and marketing teams, and the success this brings. But although it's developing its own exams, which is now an essential requirement for the big ELT publishers, Oxford has some way to catch up with Pearson or the big daddy of internationally-recognised qualifications, Cambridge English.

Pearson is the largest educational publisher in the world, with the bulk of its revenues coming from Higher Education sales in the US. But it has been undergoing significant restructuring recently, and now brands itself as an educational services provider. Writing and publishing materials now belongs to a whole package which comprises custom-built courses, educational delivery modes, such as digital courses, as well as traditional classes, and end-of-course exams.

The problem is that, right now, few people really know how traditional or aspiring ELT writers will fit in to this new business model. It's likely that the days of the single author or small author team coursebook projects are over in Pearson and in other publishers, and that projects will be compartmentalised into multi-author teams and remunerated on a fee basis, not by royalties.

Cambridge University Press has a similar relationship to the University of Cambridge as OUP has with the University of Oxford. They published some ground-breaking titles, (*The Cambridge English Course*, *Interchange* and 'Murphy' aka *English Grammar in Use*), and had a similar reputation for quality in editing and successful marketing.

However, that care and a reliance on its backlist caused them to be laboriously slow in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2013 it joined forces with Cambridge Exams (UCLES, Cambridge ESOL are other names you may recognise) to form Cambridge English. This combination potentially makes Cambridge one of the most exciting publishers to work with in the future.

Cambridge English textbooks are now among the best and most carefully produced in the business and the exams (KET, PET, FCE, CAE, Proficiency, IELTS) are highly influential in maintaining the image of the UK in international education.

Macmillan is the phoenix publisher of ELT. It was very active in 1970s and 1980s, but sold its UK-based International ELT list in the 1990s and disappeared from international UK-based ELT, while keeping its branches which were especially successful, such as Macmillan Mexico. It then rose from the ashes in 1995, and acquired Heinemann ELT in 1998. Since then, it's been very successful in certain markets including Spain and Mexico, and nurtured a reputation as a publisher for the developing world in Africa , the Middle East and, most notably, China. Its profile today is similar to, but smaller than, the other big UK publishers.

Macmillan has had a notable success with *One Stop English*, the first financially successful large scale digital venture by a UK ELT publisher, and where many writers began their careers. *One Stop English* is shortly to be rebranded and relaunched, more information to follow. Macmillan is owned by the Holzbrinck group, a huge German corporation, and like Pearson, but unlike Oxford and Cambridge, is subject to the support and sympathy (or otherwise) of its public shareholders.

The other significant publishers are well worth finding out more about. Richmond/Santillana are strong in Spanish speaking countries, and are publishing top quality ELT courses. It may be that Richmond is more similar to the traditional publishers of twenty years ago in content and style than any of the others. Among the market-specific publishers, Novy Era in Poland are owned by the Finnish group Sanoma, and are making inroads into the Polish market. FLTRP in China is constantly on the look-out for new writers, and while the unit price may be low, the unit sales can be impressive.

## Can I write about my special skill or interest?

All the big publishers used to be open to unsolicited manuscripts, both for student material and teachers' recipe books. But the three-or five-year plan, responsibilities towards shareholders, and the numbing effect of globalisation on original and creative thinking has meant that they take fewer risks these days, and even the prestigious teachers' handbook series, which help sell both the reputation of the publisher and the revenue-raising coursebooks, may be considered to be loss leaders.

But the opportunities for this kind of publishing have waxed and waned over the past thirty or so years. During periods of corporate acquisition and expansion, the big fish eat the little fish, and your brilliant idea may be hard to place in the five-year plan of one of the big publishers. But then gradually the small fish appear again and build their own lists.

So what's niche? It could be a wacky but great idea which works in class. It could be a series of creative and fun lesson plans. It could be a teacher's handbook full of recipes. Or it could simply refer to a niche publisher, who has picked up the business for which the bigger ones cannot justify the investment.

There are some smaller publishers who are willing to take a chance on something which comes directly from the classroom. So if you're this kind of writer, the smaller publishers may be the right ones for you.

Delta Publishing does Business English, EAP and Exams, and has a good reputation for being a quality publisher to work with. Check out their author list and their representation in different parts of the world.

Garnet Education has acquired a fine reputation for focusing on EAP, and also has some business English and exam titles.

Express Publishing is based in Greece and has a very extensive list of all types of ELT materials, including main courses for all age groups, grammar and skills.

Helbling is based in Austria. It has an impressive world-wide list of distributors and agents. Its reputation among ELT writers has been consistently very positive.

A relative newcomer is The Round, which is developing a list of quirky but indispensable handbooks for teachers reminiscent of the seminal Cambridge University Press list of the 1970s and 1980s. It's very writer-friendly and operates on a different financial arrangement to other publishers, which has so far proved very successful.

You may also come across Cengage/Heinle/National Geographic. At the time of writing the ELT branch of this group is undergoing substantial reorganisation, and those writers who have written for them are receiving regular updates on its

US bankruptcy application and how its royalty-based writers are being added to its creditors. The rumour is that it will reappear as a viable company to work with, but it's worth advising a note of caution at the moment.

## I just enjoy writing

So do you fancy yourself as a journalist? Have a look at the EL Gazette, especially if you're in a part of the world where something in ELT is happening which might interest a global audience. The EL Gazette is the go-to monthly newspaper for the global ELT profession for the past thirty years. It's always well-informed and consistently readable, even when the topic is not part of your specialism.

You might also find opportunities on the Guardian Education site, which is always worth keeping an eye on to keep up with the latest developments.

How about articles for magazines and journals? *English Teaching Professional* (ETp) is published monthly and is without question one of the most accessible and teacher-friendly magazines. This would be a great place to find out if you enjoy writing, because you'll be expertly mentored by the editors.

*Modern English Teacher* has a proven track record of over thirty years producing high quality articles published in a quarterly magazine. Its reputation for quality writing and publishing values is similar to that of ETp.

And if you're doing, or have just done, a DELTA or an MA, don't forget the *English Language Teaching Journal.* This is a peer-reviewed journal aimed at the more academic end of ELT, but has a place for practical, albeit thoroughly researched, articles. Very good for your CV!

## I don't know where to start

Then you'll be like many established writers … where do we go next? This is not to discourage you, but you do need to be aware that in 2012 – 2014 the traditional ELT publishing business has undergone significant restructuring.

In the future, ELT writers are likely to be working for educational service providers such as Kaplan, Benesse, Apollo Global, Laureate and Pearson. These multi-national corporations offer educational services, including ELT, to higher education institutions whose courses are taught in English and which outsource its English language instruction. The focus is on higher education and exam-oriented language support, and the scope for author-led inspiration and creativity will be greatly reduced. The skills expected will be the ability to follow a very strict brief and blueprint, and to meet the deadlines – probably at the expense of quality.

The other gradual change will be that the delivery mode will be digital rather than traditional print, and issues such as adaptive learning/analytics will become increasingly important.

Nevertheless, there's no reason for despair. For custom-made courses, especially those guided by analytics, there's a chance there will be even greater opportunities for writers today than in the past, even though the financial rewards will be reduced.

It's important to remember that two-thirds of the world still doesn't have satisfactory internet connections. Traditional print coursebooks will still continue to be used in most countries, and most teachers will treasure the practical or theoretical teachers' handbooks. Traditional print will continue to have a tactile appeal which engages both the intellect and the emotions of students and teachers.

If you're an aspiring writer, you may have one more question.

## How do I get started?

You could send unsolicited samples of your ideas to any of the publishers above. But most of them have three- or five-year plans, for which they've already begun to commission writers. If you do decide to do this, send an outline, the chapter/unit headings and a sample unit. But don't send the whole manuscript because all publishers have market feedback and will need to adapt your brilliant ideas into something they can sell.

Remember that whatever you'd like to write, it has to suit lots of other teachers too. So try to make your ideas broadly attractive to teachers who share your experience but to others as well. If you come from a General English background for adult/young adult learners in Italy, you need to be aware that teachers in the Gulf or East Asia may not share your enthusiasm or commitment to your ideas. Have a good look at the publishers' lists of titles to see what they're most interested in.

But the best way to get started is to network … Use social media to find out what's going on, and to create an online presence for yourself. Take part in webinars and write your own blog about your teaching. If you've got a generous employer or deep pockets, go to workshops, seminars and conferences, especially national (eg TESOL Spain) or international conferences, (eg IATEFL UK or TESOL US). If you've got the courage to do a workshop or a presentation, then it's very common for people to come up to you afterwards and suggest some writing work. Go round the book exhibitions and tell publishers that you're prepared to read manuscripts and write reports, or to pilot new material. If you're reliable, then sooner or later, they're likely to come back to you with ideas for your own writing projects. And then you're on your way …

So these are a few ideas which might help you find out if ELT writing suits you or where you might go for a change of scenery. For a full list of UK ELT publishers, have a look at the British Council site.

But so far, we have been talking about writing for someone else. Yet there are now increasing opportunities in self-publishing. Which is another story …

# Three How do I get noticed?

Fiona Mauchline

So you want to join the ranks of ELT writers, you've read all the relevant chapters in this book and you think you have what it takes. You know who the main players are on the publishing field. You are prepared for the setbacks and less glamorous aspects of the job and are chomping at the bit. But how can you get publishers to notice you? Simply sending a proposal is no good. You know that publishers are rarely interested in being approached. You know that nowadays they hardly ever pick up unsolicited proposals. But you also know they DO look for new writers. So the big question now is 'How do I get my name out there?' The bottom line is do just that – get your name out 'there', 'there' being two worlds: the 'real' one and the online one.

## What are my real-world options for getting noticed?

They are at the end of a bus, train, or plane ride – or car, if you can afford the petrol on an ELT salary. Sometimes they're by phone, post or email. Essentially, you have three options:

***Articles***

Writing an article is a good starting point. And compared with the two options below, it's cheaper and less time-consuming respectively. You might try sending your article to an IATEFL SIG (Special Interest Group) for their newsletter, if it's suitable for their area of interest, or you could try to get published in IATEFL's magazine *Voices.* Many national or regional teachers' associations also have newbie-friendly newsletters. There's also the *International House Journal, English Language Teaching Journal* (ELTJ) and *English Teaching Professional* (ETp), although a backlog of articles may mean that it takes a while for your article to actually appear. I started my writing career by writing two articles, and was then invited by a reader to give a presentation at a conference.

***Conferences***

Conferences are the ideal place to meet people (peers, publishers), network, and become a familiar face. If you can give a presentation, even better. If you can give a presentation well, one that is engaging, that teachers learn from and that showcases you as a charismatic professional, hey, you're in there. Hopefully. Charisma will still need to be backed up by hard work. People talk about IATEFL UK and TESOL US, but it may be better to start at a regional or national conference. IATEFL UK and TESOL US are huge so it's harder to stand out as a newbie. Either find out what's on in your region or country or, if you can pay your way, check out other national events in neighbouring countries. I found that once I'd written my articles and been invited to a conference, the next stage fell into place.

***Teachers' Associations***

If you want to meet people and get into the ELT scene fairly quickly, and/or you are keen to volunteer and help spread new ideas other than just your own, becoming active in teachers' associations is also an option. I organised the annual conference for a teachers' association for about four years, and although exhausting, time-consuming at certain times of year and not without stress, it was probably the single most influential thing I've done in my professional life. It was enriching both in terms of who my friends are today (as in 'real' friends) and how I met the people who became my initial contacts in the world of publishing. As far as the 'general public' are concerned, you'll stay behind the scenes, unless you become president, but your name will certainly percolate to the places you need for writing work, and you'll prove your capacity for hard work and your dedication.

Whilst developing your presence in The Real World is somewhere between useful and essential, it can only happen at certain times of year. Plus, this is the 21st century, baby! You also need to 'work' the net.

## What are my online options for getting noticed?

There is an inherent problem with the Internet and networking, and that is it's in constant flux – what's true today could be Oh So Yesterday tomorrow. A few years ago it was Yahoo Groups. Then it was Twitter; Facebook was for Kids at Kollege, LinkedIn was for the Serious in Suits. As I write, Twitter and hashtags are passé but maybe about to make a comeback. Blogs were in, then out, and are

wandering in again. LinkedIn is becoming everyone's back-up and Facebook is THE place for the online ELT community. So the first thing you HAVE to do is get yourself up to speed. You don't absolutely need a Twitter account, an Instagram account, a LinkedIn account etc, but aim to be fairly present on whatever the dominant thing is. Right now, that probably means Facebook.

Another keyword at the moment is belong, as in 'belong to something'. Twitter started being about individuals but the hashtag created groups – #eltchat, #eltpics, #breltchat etc. This 'community' trend migrated to Facebook, and the Facebook group is the pivot around which we (currently) revolve. And evolve. So join groups – but see the note below on walking into a new staffroom, just in case.

***Volunteering***

There are plenty of ways you can volunteer from the comfort of your sofa. Look out for opportunities like the Virtual Round Table, or similar online conferences (keep an eye on Facebook or Twitter). Alternatively, you can volunteer to help out with or moderate one of the ELT chats, like #eltchat (Twitter) or BRELT (Facebook). You can become an ELTpics contributor or help with any number of Facebook groups. This book has been written by a group of volunteers who 'met' online!

***Blogs***

Rather than leap in with your own blog, it's probably advisable to offer guest posts first, and build your reputation that way. If readers like your stuff, and you blog for various others – individuals or associations – they'll be begging you to start your own blog before long. Maybe. Watch out with blogs, though – it's hard to keep them going and blog regularly, blogs go in and out of fashion, and if your traffic doesn't hit record heights, it can get depressing. At the moment, readers are far less likely to comment than they used to be, which makes blogging less satisfying, less 'learning-orientated' for the writer.

***Social networks***

Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are all useful social networks, if you can strike a balance. It's important to have a presence whereby you seem human, rather than a blog-post-publicity-department, but without posting every detail of your waking day. Be yourself, but not too much: a new haircut is one thing, every millimetre of its growth is another. Cats and kids are cute, but every day of their life is wearisome. It's like anything else – learn to acknowledge, learn to share, learn to speak, learn to shut up. Be professional but approachable. Observe the rules of the game.

***Writer-orientated sites***

There are a number of new sites you might be interested in, where you can offer your services, pick up tips, get advice and maybe get put in touch with publishers on the look-out for writers, or at least for reviewers, readers etc. Try the IATEFL MaWSIG and ELT Teacher 2 Writer, in particular.

## Is there anything else I need to think about before I launch myself out there??

***1 Standing out from the crowd***

There are a lot of twenty-somethings in ELT and many are keen and/or ambitious. There are far fewer forty-somethings (or late thirty-somethings) but they're often in teacher training and have a lot of experience, both with students and teachers. If they've been in one country for an extended period, they're also familiar with a particular market. If you're in the former demographic group, you will have to work pretty hard, and it may take a while before you 'stand out', but don't give up. Get more experience, get involved in stuff and keep your name out there.

***2 Listen and learn***

If you walk into a huge staffroom as a new member of staff, and announce that you have something to say that everyone needs to listen to and that you're sure they'll be blown away by it, the teachers there will look at you for half a second and get back to their coffee, conversation or class prep. You know that. Getting your name out there works the same. It's a social act. It's about getting to know people, being friendly and willing to share, listen, learn, take an interest, volunteer and show your worth rather than boasting about how great you and your ideas are… This may sound blindingly obvious but you'd be surprised how many people don't take it into account.

***3 Do your homework***

You need an idea. Just being in ELT for X years isn't really enough. And if you simply rehash someone else's idea, you'll get spotted. Quickly, if not instantly. Incorporating or building on someone else's idea is fine, as long as you credit it, but be original. How do you know no-one has ever had the same thought before (and published it)? Easy, do your homework. And do it well. Otherwise you could get your name out there for all the wrong reasons.

***4 Specialise***

It's a good idea to become known for a particular aspect or area of ELT, and somehow be different from others who focus on the same area. It's not a prerequisite, but it helps. Think of some ELT writers you know and you'll see what I mean – the film-in-ELT man, the digital literacies woman, the unplugged pair, the grammar couple, the motivating-pre-schoolers girl, the lexis guy…. You may end up being multi-talented and able to turn your hand to all sorts of things, but to get your name out there it helps to have a particular something people are interested in. Funnily enough, though, some of us start with an area of interest (in my case unplugged teaching, the erstwhile Dogme) but somewhere along the line become associated with something else (in my case again, teens and personalisation / motivation). But that's positive and it's good to go with it. Still, you do need to find a starting point, so have a look at who's doing what – and find something else. Be The (X) Guy/Girl.

## So what does it boil down to?

**B**e, do and have. Be known for something, be generous, be present. Do loads of stuff, do as much as you can, do it differently. Have ideas, have patience, have a ball.

# FAQ How do I write a successful sample?

Damian Williams

By now, you should have a fairly clear idea about a) whether you have what it takes to write, and b) who you can write for. So what comes next? Well, if you're being considered for a writing project, the publisher will ask you to complete a sample for the project being proposed, whether it's a book, resource pack or digital platform. Good, reliable writers are difficult for publishers to find and keep hold of. This means that whenever they begin a project with a new writer, they are taking a considerable risk (especially as the world of publishing is morphing into new, previously unexplored formats). Asking you to provide a sample is therefore a vital step for the publisher. It's a way for them to see if you can write to a brief, and to see what sorts of ideas you can come up with – and if they're the same kinds of ideas the publisher has for the project. It's also a chance for you to test the waters and find out if the project is right for you.

## How do I find out what they want?

Once you agree to write a sample for a project, the publisher will send you a brief. Depending on the size and type of project, this will usually be one or two pages long, and may include some or all of the following information:

- Overview / General description of the project
- Organisation of the material
- Target market – who exactly it's for
- What to include in the sample – how much material, what kinds of exercises
- Key features – what the underlying theme of the material should be
- Key selling points, or the USP of the product – the features which set it apart from its competitors and which the sample should include
- The fee for writing the sample (if offered)
- Due date – when you need to send the sample in by

The brief is likely to be very specific in places about what to include (i.e. number/type of exercises) and what type of material it is. It's worth going through the brief carefully and highlighting key information about who it's aimed at, what the underlying theme is and the types of activities to include. Keep this nearby and in your line of sight while you write the sample (I like to pin it up on the wall in front of me, above the monitor), as it's important that you fulfil the requirements of the brief.

## How long should I spend on it?

To a great extent, the answer to this will depend on the size of the sample required. Obviously a whole-unit sample will take longer than a couple of activities, but it's worth keeping in mind that this is your chance to show off what you can do. It's an opportunity for you to showcase your writing ability, so it's likely that you'll spend longer on this than you will on a similar part of the actual project if your sample is accepted. Don't be afraid to go back and rewrite things as often as you need to until you have something you can be proud of.

## What should I include and what should I leave out?

It may sound obvious, but the key words here are follow the brief. Most often, good writing is about being able to provide exactly what teachers and learners want, not about you sharing activities that have worked particularly well for you in certain situations in the past. One of the most common reasons samples get rejected is because they fail to provide all the things asked for in the brief. Opting to include things you think would work 'better', or one or two of your favourite activities that have worked well in the past, is not a recipe for success.

When a publisher provides a brief, it's a bit like a shopping list, based on their research into what teachers and learners want. If you can provide the things on the shopping list, then they'll come back to you next time they need things.

This doesn't mean you can't be creative and go that extra mile, and there are two ways in which you can do this. Firstly, the publisher might ask for something a little vague e.g. 'an activity to provide a communicative purpose for using the past simple'. This is where you can come up with something new and motivating. Another way in which you can provide that something 'extra' is by doing exactly that. Suppose the brief asks for a certain type of exercise, and you have two great ideas, why not provide both as alternative options? This shows that you're willing to include the editor in the decision-making process when it comes to organising content.

## What if I don't like parts of the brief?

This is a key issue, and if your sample is successful, something which you are likely to face regularly. There are several reasons why you might not like parts of the brief. Perhaps it's asking for something which goes against your views on methodology (e.g. a translation exercise, repetition, etc.). However, it's worth remembering that the publisher has years of experience of the target market, and they are likely to have a much clearer idea of what teachers and learners want than you do. One of the purposes of the sample is for publishers to find out how well you deal with these challenges.

If your sample is accepted and you are taken on, you'll then have plenty of opportunities to suggest different ways of doing things, and you'll be surprised at how open and amenable most editors are to well-argued adaptations to the brief. But until you get your foot in the door, it's worth putting your beliefs on hold to a certain extent until you have the opportunity to argue your case properly.

That said, don't forget that writing a sample is also an opportunity for you to decide whether the project is something you want to be involved in and put your name to. Once you start a writing project, you'll be spending many hours absorbed and involved in it, and if you find at the brief stage that you disagree with a lot of what's involved, perhaps the project isn't right for you.

## Should I get paid for it?

The big publishers will usually offer to pay you for a sample, though if successful, this may be included in the final fee for the project. It's worth asking if a fee is offered, especially if your sample isn't successful.

## What if my sample is turned down?

There are many reasons why a sample might not get accepted. I've outlined some of these above, the main one being that the writer didn't follow the brief. But just because your sample isn't accepted, it in no way means that it wasn't 'any good'. It could just be that there were a lot of potential writers offering samples, and someone else's just happened to fit the requirements slightly better than yours. It might be that yours was as good as others, but another writer has more experience of working in the target sector and was seen as a 'safer bet'.

Whatever the reason, it's a good idea to ask for feedback as to why it wasn't accepted, as most editors will be happy to do this, and take the comments on board next time round. It's likely that the publisher will keep you in mind for the next similar project if you just missed out this time.

Whatever happens, don't give up. Think of it as a learning experience and move on. Almost every successful writer has had to persevere in this way before achieving any amount of success. If it's what you really want to do, it's likely the right opportunity will come along in the end.

# FIve Who will I work with?

John Hughes

Although most ELT coursebooks carry the name(s) of the author(s) on the front cover, the creation and production of a course with all its supplementary components is actually the work of a team. This chapter looks at the roles of the members of that team, and each is presented in the order that you are likely to work with them on a project. I've defined roles and responsibilities in relation to the writer and given tips on ways of working with each person. (Note: With smaller projects like worksheets, fewer people may be involved, but much of the advice will still apply.)

Note that the majority of the chapter focuses on the first people you meet in the process such as Publishing manager, your co-author(s) and your editor because these are your key contacts. You will have less contact with, for example, the designer and audio producer but it's important to know what these people do and how to effectively communicate your ideas to them.

## The publishing manager or commissioning editor

This person has a very senior position at the publisher. They are responsible for commissioning publications and are judged on their successes or failures. It's a job with pressure, and the writer will need to show they can deliver the materials. Writers with a book proposal need to send it to this person. However, in modern publishing, it's more common for the publishing manager or commissioning editor to approach writers and ask them to submit a sample based on a brief .

Early contact with this person might resemble an extended job interview or audition. You'll have to submit professional-looking work of a high standard and demonstrate that you can deliver materials according to a brief by a deadline. It also goes without saying that the publishing manager is more likely to offer you a contract if you seem personable; prima donnas are probably less appealing.

Once you're offered the chance to write materials, you'll be offered a contract by this person. This means that he/she is the person you'll discuss or negotiate any

issues with before signing. The publishing manager/commissioning editor will also continue to oversee the progress of the publication and may contact you from time to time to check progress.

## Development and content editor

This person is your main contact on any course book project. An effective editor will know how to bring out the best in your materials by asking the right questions, knowing when to leave the material as it is and when to push it in a new direction. Here are some of the most important skills that an editor needs:

- An eye for detail and the ability to check work consistently
- A sound grasp of up-to-date ELT methodology and language awareness
- The ability to place oneself in the teacher's and learner's mind
- Recognising when it is and isn't necessary to make changes
- A strong visual awareness of how a book will look and the design elements

Missing from this list, but deserving particular attention is communicative skills. The reason communication skills are so key is that the writer-editor relationship is unequal and sometimes uneasy in terms of giving and receiving – you produce the work, your editor produces feedback.

Good communication can pre-empt many difficulties that can potentially arise. So it's useful to establish patterns of working together from the outset. Many editors have been trained in different ways or have developed their own systems so different editors may have different ways of doing things. Similarly, a good editor will spend some time finding out how you would like to approach the writing process. Here are some areas which you should probably discuss and agree upon in the early stages:

- When will each part of the writing be sent in? (usually at the end of every unit)
- How quickly will the editor return the work with comments?
- How will the editor's comments be presented? As a separate document? By inserting comments into the material itself?
- If the writer doesn't agree with a suggested change, how should this be resolved? By phone? By email?

- If the editor makes a small change (for example, to a rubric), does the writer need to be asked first?
- Should the writer expect editorial comments (or praise) on parts that work well, or only expect comments on things that need changing?

Some editor-writer relationships can stumble and make the project a miserable experience on both sides if these points are not communicated from the outset. That aside, the majority of writers and editors go on to build good partnerships and remain in touch as colleagues or friends long after one project has ended. In fact, once you have found an editor you like working with, it's always worth trying to suggest that person's name to a publisher for your next project.

## Co-author(s)

It's rare in the modern world of publishing to see a course book or series with only one author's name on it. Co-authoring is far more common and requires the authors to work well together. There are of course famous examples of course books written by married couples (e.g. *Headway*, by John and Liz Soars, OUP) or by two teaching colleagues who get on well (e.g. *Outcomes*, by Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley, Cengage).

However, increasingly it is the publisher who brings the author teams together. In part, the modular nature of course book writing means that different parts of a book can be assigned to different authors so it's possible to be part of a co-author team where each writer is responsible for certain units or sections of the book. Ideally, these co-authors will email their work to each other and give feedback alongside that of the editors. Note that this co-author feedback-giving stage can be tricky, especially if one of you has less experience as a published author. If you feel something is wrong with the other author's material, you might feel uncomfortable saying so, but you need to! Remember that both your names will be on the cover, so teachers will hold you accountable for ALL the units in the book, not just the ones you wrote.

As a general rule for giving feedback to a co-author, apply the same skills you would when giving feedback to a student or teacher-trainee. Give positive praise

where you can and be honest about parts you don't think will work. Also remember to be constructive; it isn't helpful to say you don't like something unless you give suggestions as to how it might be improved.

## Authors of supplementary components

At the start of your writing career, you are most likely to write supplementary components such as the workbook or teacher's book for a more established coursebook writer. Nowadays, because deadlines are so tight, publishing managers will often find other authors to write these materials. In such cases, you won't necessarily have much (or even any) contact with the main coursebook authors. Even if they read your manuscript for the teacher's book or workbook and give comments, or you have a question or query about the material in the main course book, the communication is likely to be through your editor.

## Readers

During the writing of a course book, publishers will usually ask a few teachers to read each unit at around the second draft stage and give feedback. These 'readers' are normally teachers with plenty of experience in the area of ELT you are writing for. Once the feedback is sent, the publisher might show you all their comments or they will collate all the readers' feedback and summarise it. Note that different readers will often offer quite diverse comments, so the feedback has to be treated carefully. None of it should radically alter the content as a whole. In general, the readers are anonymous so you won't know who wrote the feedback.

## Designer

When writing your materials, you'll need to write notes about the design or layout of something you want to appear in a certain way. It's the job of the designer(s) to make it happen on the page. If you want to include artwork and car-

toons, then an illustrator will be commissioned, in which case you'll have to write notes or even draw a simple sketch to indicate what you want.

If you're writing a workbook or teacher's book, or other supplementary material, you are unlikely ever to meet your designer (or illustrator) and usually your development/content editor will pass on any queries from the designer for you to clarify. Give as much detail as you can to the designer in order to help him/her make your material look great. The designer will also be in charge of developing the whole style and look of the coursebook series. Early on in the writing process, the publisher will give the designer one unit to make a sample design for the coursebook. The workbook and teacher's book will relate to this design. If your component includes photos or illustrations you can pass on your comments about these to your editor who will add this to other feedback for the designer, photo researcher or illustrator. The coursebook authors will have some input on the design but most decision-making about the look of the book will be taken by the publisher working directly with the designer.

## Photo-researcher

**P**hotos are a key part of any modern course materials. In some cases you might have found the perfect photo but normally you'll need to write a description of the kind of photo you want. Even if you do find a perfect photo, there may be reasons why that particular one cannot be used. The job of finding all these images falls to a photo-researcher. This person will try to find a selection of possible images to choose from. Again, you probably won't meet this person face-to-face so your written instructions on what a photo should show need to be as clear as possible.

## Permissions

**W**hen you use or adapt texts taken from authentic sources such as newspapers or books, you will need to get permission from the original author or publisher. Publishers will have a 'Permissions' department or person, who is

responsible for contacting the sources. If you plan to use or adapt materials based on authentic sources, you will need to provide details of the source and a copy of the original text. You send these to your editor, who will pass them on to Permissions. Probably the only time you will hear from Permissions is when you haven't supplied what they need!

## Copy Editors

Unlike the content editor, a copy editor is responsible for checking for consistency, typos, errors and anything unclear. They are often brought in at the later stages when the main content is fixed and agreed, as having this fresh pair of eyes look over the material helps to spot any final problems. Usually the copy editor will make the corrections and you will only be contacted if there is a significant issue outstanding.

## Audio / video producers

Once your course book is being prepared for publication, the time comes to record any accompanying audio or video content. How much involvement you have will depend on the publisher. Coursebook authors are often asked to go to the studio, but authors of other components are unlikely to attend recordings. The editor will have prepared your audio or video script for the recording but you will need to advise on certain aspects of it. This means you will work with the producer who is in charge of the recording or filming. The producer might ask for clarification or if something is not being recorded in a way you anticipated, then you will need to tell the producer.

## Sales / marketing team

Most of your contact with the sales and marketing team will come once the book is published and they may ask you to give presentations promoting the book.

However, early on the writing process, the marketing department will want to plan publicity, so they might meet you to discuss the key features of the course. Course book authors might be invited on research visits to schools and classrooms with marketing people in order to find out what kinds of materials the markets require.

## Software developers

As more and more ELT writing is for digital products, it's highly likely that writers will have greater contact with software developers and designers in the future. At present, if you are writing content that will appear in some kind of digital format, for example on a learning platform, then the person in charge of the software will want you to write or present your work in a certain way which is compatible with the format of the software. However, correspondence and comments from people in charge of the technical side will normally be mediated via your editor.

So as you can see from this short introduction, writing and publishing an ELT course book is far from being the work of one or two people. It requires the skills and talents of a large team. The author needs to make use of, and benefit from all the people in that team in order to bring both success and the enjoyment that comes from working with a group of people on a creative process.

# Six What do I need to know about contracts?

Steve Elsworth

The first time you get to write a book, frankly you can't believe your luck. It's a magical experience, like falling in love. You're finally there with your publisher--to-be. Your eyes meet, you rush towards each other, just-sign-this-piece-of-paper, and you're ready to begin your new life.

Eagle-eyed observers will have spotted the slight, possible flaw in the new romance – the piece of paper, two years down the line, turns out to have teeth. And you wish you hadn't signed it. But it's too late.

I've made lots of mistakes negotiating contracts. This chapter could be called *Contract Cockups: the number of times I got it wrong*. But you learn each time, and if you're smart, you make sure it doesn't happen in the next contract. Here are a few of the guidelines I have developed for self-survival.

## If you don't read every word of your contract, prepare to get screwed

Yes, I know – contracts are boring, and we're creative. We don't do that sort of thing. Your publisher, also, is an extremely nice person – they always are. It seems, somehow, a little grubby to be pawing through the relationship before it's even started.

It helps if you disassociate the contract from the person you're dealing with. Your publisher isn't all that interested in contracts, either. She is given a pro forma, told that's the norm, and that's what the author has to sign. She's much more interested in producing the book.

The contract, however, has been honed over the years by Devious In-house Lawyers. It's their job, not to produce a document that is fairly balanced to all sides, but to protect the financial interests of the publishing house. They've had lots of practice, there's a general mandate from the Board to

drive down costs at all levels, and, to be honest, they're occasionally not above trying a trick or two, just to see if they can get away with it. It's a legal document: watch out for small print.

Probably the most remunerative thing you can do as an author is to sit down and read the contract word by word, especially any clauses that include the word "rights" or have a number attached to them. Pay special attention to any schedules at the end. If my experience is anything to go by, the hairs on the back of your neck start rising around the first few paragraphs – that's when you start to realise why scrutinising your contract is so important.

## You can change a contract before you sign it, but never afterwards

A draft contract is a negotiable arrangement – you can usually change it. Once you've done your read-through, make a list of the problematic paragraphs, and send a polite note to your publisher. Tone is important here. You're not a spoilt kid, or a whiner. This is two professionals, having an intelligent conversation about future working practices. Send in a written list, and get a written response. If anything is agreed verbally, confirm it by email. "Just to check I understood our conversation yesterday, we agreed..." It's essential to make sure you get it all in writing, or different interpretations will arise afterwards.

A draft contract is usually a publisher's first pitch. It's always worth asking for more money (the worst they can do is to say no). And be logical: "The fee strikes me as rather low, given the timeframe..." "The royalty offered is not as much as in the past, and I've calculated the number of hours involved..." "The fee offered is not enough to cover the work needed, as I will have to cut my teaching hours for this..." Remember, once it's signed, you can't change it. If Clause 6 says you have to do teacher training in Outer Mongolia for six months for free, you have to do it. It's a written agreement. Get it right before you sign it.

## Send the contract to the Society of Authors

**P**ublishers have Devious In-house Lawyers; we have superheroes. If you join the Society of Authors, they will read the contract for you before you sign it. Every time. They're not all lawyers, but they're really smart and have lots of experience at reading contracts. It's £95 a year, £68 if you're under 35. They deal with UK publishers, so if your contract is with a UK firm, they're really helpful. The SoA have saved my bacon so many times, I could open a butcher's shop.

All my experience is with UK publishers and the SoA – I've asked around, but can't find any similar organisations in other countries.

## Always ask for time to think

**N**ever agree terms around a meeting table. Say you need some time to check the details, and you'll get back to them. It gives you time to go over the agreement with someone else, or just to have a think. I still regret a throw-away concession I made twenty years ago. That reminds me...

## Never drink alcohol when you're discussing terms

**I**t's water for you. Sparkling, possibly.

## Watch out for pre-contract agreements

**P**re-contract agreements are often sent out when you're asked to do a sample. They look innocuous, usually two pages long, not nearly as intimidating as a contract. But don't be fooled. They are contracts. If you agree to them, you

commit to the terms – and you often set a precedent that will be carried through into the main contract.

Or, worse, if you sign your rights away to the sample, you give the publisher the ability to turn you down for the main contract, steal your ideas, and ask someone else to write them. This is a difficult one – you're desperate to get the work, and you want to win the sample competition. On the other hand, you don't want your ideas to be pinched. I usually refuse the fee for the sample, and get a written agreement from the publisher that the copyright remains mine and the work won't be used if I don't get the job. Fees for samples are often insultingly low, anyway – work it out. Turns out to be about £1.50 an hour.

## Remember to keep it confidential

**M**ost contracts have confidentiality clauses, which means you can't disclose the terms to other authors, even though the publishers can pass the details around in-house. Even if they don't have non-disclosure clauses, the publisher will expect you to keep mum. It's not fair, but that's the way it works. Some authors do talk to each other in bars, though obviously I couldn't condone this – but if an author blabs, don't go back to the publisher and say "X is getting this." You'll drop X in it, and yourself too.

## Watch out for common negotiating ploys

*"Don't worry, it's a standard contract for all authors."*

**A**ctually, it might be a standard base contract, but as we've seen earlier, most contracts are negotiable on an individual basis. The 'standard contract' argument is usually used to fix payment to a given level – but some authors are more powerful, and get better terms. One thing you could try is the "John Lewis Clause" – a clause which says, if you find out someone else is getting better terms, your contract automatically upgrades to those terms. Publishers are unlikely to agree to this, but it's a useful negotiating tactic.

*"We can sign a contract later. We're in a hurry to get started."*

Don't do it. You're particularly vulnerable if the project is cancelled. You need something in writing before you get going, even if it's not a full contract. It's true that a spoken contract, in UK law, is as enforceable as a written one – but if you don't have witnesses, it's really difficult to prove.

One interesting variation is called the Custom and Practice contract (UK law). If you've written a book under certain conditions, and then another one, and the publisher asks you to do a third without getting round to a contract, you can argue that you assumed the terms of the new contract were the same as the previous ones. But you have to be ready to lawyer up if you want to do this.

## Some things you might want to look out for

A contract is like a menu – you can ask for fries, especially if everyone else in the restaurant is eating them. Here are some things you might like to have on your plate:

***Travelling fees***
You'd be surprised how many authors I've met who pay the costs of the travel they incur on behalf of the book. Publishers should pay these. This includes travelling to editorial meetings and for all promotion travel – including getting to the airport.

***Your name on the front cover***
You don't want to see your work rebadged and sold under someone else's name. It happens. Ideally, you should ask for a copyright acknowledgement too – difficult to get for large courses but really worth it. And make sure your name is spelled correctly.

***No exclusivity clause***
"if you write for us, you can't write for another publisher". This is less common now, and there's some doubt as to whether it's legally enforceable, but watch out for it. If you see the clause, ask for it to be removed. Sometimes this depends on the size of the contract – if you're writing a mega-course, the request may have

some merit – so get it spelled out as to exactly what it means. As a general rule, try to have the clause cut.

***Permissions costs***

Sometimes publishers say they will pay the cost of X amount of material, and you have to pay the rest. If there's a lot of authentic material in the project, you may face a large bill. So get specific agreements about this before you sign – you don't want to be effectively paying for the costs of the book.

***Schedules for work***

Check these carefully – can you actually do the work in the amount of time given? I've seen one or two schedules that I couldn't manage even if I worked eight days a week. And if it's a long project, make sure you include time off for holidays.

I'm not a lawyer, so please remember that everything here is what I do for myself – I can't be held accountable if you take my advice and it goes wrong. Sorry. I've tried to be as careful and honest as I can. But the usual health warning applies. Finally, don't get bitter and twisted. Writing books is enormous fun, and if you do it well, you're helping thousands of students around the world. It's an honourable job that you're doing. Be suspicious about the contract and scrupulous about reading every single word, but never show these feelings to your publisher. It's still a love affair, after all...

# seven How can I get paid for writing materials?

Lindsay Clandfield

It is one of the abiding myths in English Language Teaching (ELT) that authors (of any kind of book) make lots of money. In fact, this is a myth not only in ELT but in writing everywhere. Stories of the riches of people like JK Rowling and Dan Brown often make the arts headlines. There are similar whispered rumours of private islands, yachts and untold riches held by authors in ELT as well. The truth is that most writers, either of fiction or of materials, do not make enough money to support themselves only with their writing. However, it is possible to earn some extra money as a materials writer. If you're good, and you're lucky, you can earn quite a bit of money.

This chapter looks at how materials writers get paid by publishers or other institutions (from here on in I will refer to simply publishers as that is the most common situation). Self-publishing is another story, although the sums are usually considerably lower.

## What different ways can writers get paid?

There are two main ways that a writer can be paid.

***A fee***

The publisher specifies a work that needs to be done, a time limit to do it, and pays a fee. If it's large (e.g. over £5000), a fee may be divided into different payments. For example, one third of the fee is paid upon signing a contract, one third on delivery of first draft and one third on acceptance of final draft. In most cases though, the fee is paid in full when the final product is accepted by the publisher. Fees are the most common way of getting paid.

***A royalty***

A royalty is a percentage on the sale of the work. The author writes the material and then the publisher sells it. The publisher pays the author a percentage once or twice

a year on the sales of the work. The publisher pays royalties to the author as long as the work sells. This could be years. Royalties are less common than fees, as for publishers it's cheaper and less effort for them to pay a fee and claim the copyright, rather than it staying with the author. From the author's point of view, royalties are often a better deal than a fee, but they do involve more risk. In some cases, a writer will make more money from a good fee than a royalty. In other cases, a writer will make vastly larger amounts from royalties than from a fee.

## What kind of writing gets a fee?

The issue of fees versus royalties became controversial in 2013, when Pearson let it be known that it would not be paying royalties for most of the work produced by authors. Other publishers continue to pay royalties, and the outcome of the Pearson experiment is still uncertain. Currently, some writers will work only for royalties, while other writers are happy to receive fees.

Most 'partwork' writing work is paid a fee. Worksheets, tests, single lesson plans and teacher's notes are all paid fees. Most digital materials (video-based lessons, interactive whiteboard material, online lessons, interactive exercises) are paid a fee. If you write a few pages of material in a book (e.g. the exercises at the back of a coursebook, or the language reference notes in a book) this will be paid a fee.

Some types of books are paid on a fee basis. Teacher's books are always or almost always paid a fee. In the past, workbooks (the black and white exercise book that accompanies a coursebook) were paid a royalty but these are now being paid fees more and more often.

## What kind of writing gets a royalty?

If you are the main author of a whole book, that often gets a royalty. The student's book of a course, methodology books, grammar books, activity books and graded readers all traditionally get royalties.

It's worth bearing in mind though, that currently publishers are undergoing great changes in how they deliver content. Some publishers are looking at other ways of delivering content online, for example via online learning platforms. In those cases it becomes difficult to see where a 'book' begins and ends. Or how it's paid for. And publishers will be more interested in fees in that situation – though that doesn't mean you have to agree with them. It's in your interests to get all these things clarified before you start work.

Finally, there is a move away from royalties even in the cases outlined in the first paragraph of this section. If you have been asked to write a whole book (coursebook, methodology book or graded reader) for a fee it may be worth negotiating for a royalty, or at least a more generous fee than initally offered.

## What different kinds of royalty are there?

Within the royalty scheme there are a few things you should know. First of all, if there is more than one author on a royalty project then the royalty is usually divided equally, unless both authors agree on a different split. However, there is also what is known as a concept royalty (also known as an 'asset' royalty). In the case of a large course project, the author or authors who originated the idea will often get a concept royalty on all royalty-paying books associated with the course even if they did not write them.

So for example, if you write one level of a course that was created by another author you might get 8% or 9% royalty on that book. The lead author will get 1% or 2%. If you write a book that is part of a series, the series editor may also get a similar small royalty for each book in the series.

Another difference is the royalty on net receipts vs royalty on gross. In the past, royalties would be paid on the cover price of the book, the gross receipt. If your book was listed at £10 and you had a 10% royalty on gross then you would get £1 for every book sold. Unfortunately, that has now been replaced by the royalty on net receipt, in other words a percentage of what the publisher gets after any other discounts have been taken into account. Bookshops and book distributors will get a discount of sometimes up to 40% or more. So if your book sells at £10, the

publisher gets only £6 of every copy sold by a distributor (this is the case for most if not all the books in educational publishing). You get 60p. Quite a difference.

Most, if not all, royalty contracts now specify that the royalty is paid on net receipts.

Finally, royalties can be paid every six months or yearly. Many publishers prefer to pay royalties only once a year (less paperwork), whereas authors prefer to get royalties twice a year (easier to manage the money). In either case, the royalties will be paid several months in arrears.

## What is the difference between an advance and a fee?

If you get a royalty on a book, there is a chance that you will get an advance. An advance is an up-front payment or payments to the author when the writing project begins. Advances will usually be calculated on projected sales of the first year or two years. If you are writing a book that won't sell very much (for example, a methodology book) your advance might be very small. If you are writing a whole course or coursebook the advance could be very big, enough for you to take a leave of absence from your day job, or at least reduce the number of hours you work, for the time you are writing.

What is the difference between an advance and a fee? Well, the advance is something you have to pay back. An advance is literally a loan, which the publisher will claim back out of your royalties. If you have written a book on royalties and received an advance, that sum will be deducted from your royalties until you have paid back the advance. If your book is a bestseller this will go quickly. In some cases, an author may be paying back their advance for a whole year or two.

Advances are good not only for allowing you the financial freedom to write without having to go out and work elsewhere, they also show a financial commitment on the part of the publisher. If you get an advance for a book and for some reason it does not get published, then you keep the advance. If you get an advance and the book is a commercial disaster (ie the publisher doesn't sell enough for you to make back the advance), then you keep the advance. In certain limited circumstances – for example, if you don't write the book – you may be asked to repay the advance.

## Which is better: royalty or fee?

The answer very much depends on the project, and on the author's preference. In general, royalties are much better than fees for big projects. The author stands to gain a lot more. On smaller projects an upfront fee may be better as the royalties could be so small as to be barely noticeable.

One advantage for publishers of a royalty is that the writer and the publisher have a common desire to see the project do well. The publisher's success is shared by the writer. Therefore writers on royalties often work a lot harder on the promotion of their work after it is published. This does not happen as much with fees.

It is a myth that all writers on royalties are making lots of money and that writers who work for fees make very little money. There are authors who make next to nothing on royalties (e.g. methodology books make very little money) and authors who make a very good living doing only fee-based work.

## What kind of writing is done for free?

There is a third kind of writing, and that is the writing for no royalties, and no fee! The explosion of online newsletters, conference proceedings, blogs and other online writing has made it customary to expect that this kind of writing be done for nothing at all. The following kinds of writing rarely, if ever, involve a fee:

- Guest blogposts
- Articles based on a talk you did for a conference website
- Articles for newsletters
- Articles for academic journals

There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. However, many writers do a fair share of writing for free online, partly for the pleasure of it and partly to get exposure. But it's worth remembering the old adage: artists and writers can die from exposure!

## What kinds of writing make the most money and the least money?

There are many factors to take into account here, making this a difficult question to answer. The market or markets a product is written for, whether it's a royalty or a fee, the age group, the publisher behind the project, all influence how much money it makes. As a very rough rule of thumb you can say that royalty-paying general English coursebooks (for adult, secondary or primary) written with a major publisher are what will earn the most money. Some methodology and teacher activity books have earned significant amounts of money for their authors, but the majority of these do not. Products intended for niche markets also tend, logically, to make less money for writers (and publishers).

Despite all the hype and promise of self-publishing (and a few trumpeted cases) the truth is that in most cases a self-published book or product will make significantly less than one published and publicised by a publisher.

## Are there other ways of making money from my writing?

Yes, there are. Once you have published, you may be able to get money by training teachers (in the area that you wrote about) and for speaking engagements. This might not be lots of money, but it may give you a opportunity to travel and meet teachers from around the world interested in your work. For many authors, this is very rewarding.

A new development is asking a writer to publicise a course. If you're good at presenting, a publisher may ask you to be a 'series consultant' and publicise a set of books. This usually involves doing a specified number of talks and webinars, and writing an agreed number of articles. A small royalty – half to one per cent – or a fee is paid for this work, as it can take up a lot of your time.

## How do I know what a good fee or royalty is?

Unfortunately you don't! The publisher will often offer a fee or royalty and state that it is the 'standard' for this kind of work. That just isn't true. Fees and royalties can be negotiated, and if one strikes you as low then it's always worth asking for more.

One way to think about what constitutes a good fee is to calculate the hours of work it would take you do and then figure out your hourly rate. This kind of work should ideally be paid more than teaching. Bearing in mind the overheads you carry, and the limited amount of work that sometimes comes your way, a good rule of thumb is to cost your writing work at twice the hourly rate you are paid for teaching, although there are always exceptions here – if you want to get your foot in the door, for example, or just really need the money.

Another way to find out if what's on offer is any good is to reach out to other materials writers. Conferences are good places for this, or social media. Oscar Wilde was right when he said "When bankers get together they talk about art; when artists get together they talk about money." The same goes for writers. The same goes for writers. Get out there and network with them. Find out.

# eight What about author tours and promotion?

Antonia Clare

*"…the work of promoting the book requires just as much work as writing the book, if not more so." – Adam S. McHugh*

As a young, recently-qualified teacher, I still remember the thrill of meeting ELT authors by attending their talks at conferences. It was wonderful to meet your classroom heroes in the flesh, and listen to the ideas and principles behind their books. ELT superstars would charm their audiences with talks of innovative approaches, interspersed with quotations, anecdotes and sometimes wacky activities. I would come back to school inspired and eager to try out some of the new techniques and materials.

However, as a newly published author, I was terrified by the prospect of having to give my own promotional talks. Although I had previous experience of giving teacher training sessions, the idea of having to entertain and inform large audiences in the way I had seen my predecessors do, was intimidating. When I was first asked to go on tour to promote my books, I pleaded with my publisher: I was happy to write articles or talk to small groups of teachers, but I dreaded the idea of having to speak at conferences.

Hopefully this chapter will help you understand more about how books are promoted and what's involved when you're asked to go on tour. Maybe it will also help anyone experiencing the same concerns I had.

## What role can I play in the promotion of my book?

Increasingly publishers are looking for writers who are happy and available to be involved in promotion. Offering to run webinars, speak at conferences, write articles for newsletters or blogs can be a great way to make yourself popular and get your name out there, especially if you're good at it! And it will almost certainly help to bring you more work.

## So, what exactly might the publisher ask me to do?

***Conferences***

You may be asked to give a talk at a conference. Generally, there are two types of talk: a semi-commercial (or academic) talk, which showcases elements of the book, or a commercial (or promotional) talk, which openly talks through the main features and underlying principles of the material. For an academic talk, you can choose an area you're interested in (e.g. developing listening skills), research it to make sure you're well-informed about the latest thoughts on the subject, and then include snippets from your own material which effectively demonstrate the ideas you're talking about. Beware of overdoing the emphasis on your own material though. People who come to an academic talk do not want to find that they are actually sitting through a promotional one. The best talks will leave the audience tantalised and wanting to find out more about the materials mentioned. Equally, in a promotional talk, avoid trashing the competition to make your own book look good, and keep your focus on the principles behind the material (why you wrote it like that) rather than just what the material itself is like.

***Visits to schools***

You may be asked to visit teachers in schools, together with a sales rep, either to offer a workshop or a short talk, or maybe just to chat to teachers in the staff room or café and answer questions about the book. This can be a really interesting way to meet teachers who are using your books. However, some teachers may resent giving up their lunch break to talk to an author when they would rather be getting on with their lesson prep, and they may not come up with any questions without prompting. It can be a good idea to put them into pairs/groups to think of a few questions first, or maybe take the lead yourself by asking the teachers questions instead.

***Webinars***

Most publishers use webinars (online talks) to offer training to teachers around the world. Webinars are generally free and can be a great way for teachers to access professional development. The advantage for you is that you can stay at home and present from your study. The disadvantage is that you can't see your audience to gauge their reactions, so it can feel like you're talking into a void. Before presenting a webinar for the first time, try and attend a few yourself. This will give

you a feel for what goes on, and how it works. Make sure you have a practice run using the platform with your presentation loaded before the day, to make sure you're familiar with the technology, and everything works. Nicky Hockly's book *Webinars: A Cookbook for Educators* is a great place to get tips.

***Articles / Advertising***

Your publisher may ask you to write an interview or an article talking about the book. If you write an article anyway (even if it's not related to the book specifically) it's worth letting your publisher know, and they may still pay for an advertisement placed next to it.

***Social events (schmoozing)***

In addition to the kinds of events described above, you might be asked to attend meetings or meals with heads of departments or prospective clients. These are often lavish and enjoyable affairs (where the publishers are trying to impress the client), but they can also be fairly nerve-wracking, and they invariably come at the end of very long days, or just before a presentation. There may also be important cultural expectations that you should be aware of, so it's worth finding out as much as possible beforehand.

## What books get most promotion?

Coursebooks tend to get the most promotion. Methodology books also feature quite heavily in promotion, which you are likely to be involved in (and may be paid for). If you write a workbook, teacher's book, a graded reader or resource materials, it's worth checking with the publisher whether or not you'll be expected to promote.

## Do I get paid for promotion?

Writers who receive a royalty for their work will often be expected to do a certain amount of promotional activity for free. Normally there will be a clause in the contract which refers to this – make sure you check it before you agree! However, all of your expenses should be covered by the publisher for any trips

you're involved in. Writers who have been paid a fee (perhaps for components such as workbooks, teachers' books etc.), can also be asked to do promotional work but should be paid for this separately.

## My publisher wants me to do a commercial talk about my book but I'm too embarrassed. What should I say?

It can feel awkward giving a talk which simply sells the book, but there are occasions when this is exactly what's required. If you feel nervous about it, ask your publisher for help. They should be able to give you the key points to get across. They might help you prepare the talk or the slides, watch you rehearse, give you feedback, or maybe offer you training. So, if you're not sure what to do, ask.

## My publisher is not promoting my book! What can I do?

There may be all sorts of reasons why this happens. Get in touch with the publisher, ask questions to find out what's going on, and offer your services. If your publisher isn't marketing your book, remember you can always self-promote. Giving talks at conferences, writing articles and blog posts and getting involved in social media are all great ways to let teachers know about your books and help spread the word.

## I'm going on tour for the first time. Any tips?

Lastly, here are a few tips from experienced authors on how to approach a tour for the first time.

***Be prepared***

- Don't be afraid to ask questions from 'What's the expected ratio of native / non-native teachers?' to 'How do you say Hello / Goodbye / Thanks etc. in the teachers' L1?' The more you know about the contexts where you're promoting, the more confident you'll feel. (Ceri Jones, Katherine Bilsborough)

• Make sure you techproof yourself! Have presentations on a pen drive in different formats – store them in a cloud – check if you need to bring your own laptop. (Ceri Jones)

• There is often a tendency to pack in as much as possible. I'd advise discussing/checking the schedule first and making sure you can cope with it (i.e. that it involves more than five hours sleep a night). (Rachael Roberts)

• If you don't have to do 'freebie' promo work (check your contract), check whether the publisher's people who've invited you know that. They may not, so having to pay from their local budget could come as a surprise. Also, be sure to negotiate the rates per training day AND per travel day before you leave – and before flights etc. have been paid for. Different publishers pay different rates, and 'newbies' do not earn what, say, David Crystal does. (Fiona Mauchline)

• Talk to the local reps about the audience's most likely teaching style, language level, pet hates, etc. Any local knowledge is useful. When I went to Morocco, I was given milk and dates (with stones) just before a Q & A session began. All I could think was "What do I do with these stones?" (Paul Andrew Davies)

• Make sure you get high-quality digital images of any pages of the material you intend to project from your publisher. Then enlarge them so that the print size is legible from the back of the room. Don't rely on being able to read presenter notes from laptop / iPad etc. as that may be stranded a long way away from you. Embed videos and sound where possible. (Joe McVeigh, Victoria Boobyer)

• Flying? Put all the stuff you need for your sessions in your carry-on bag in case your luggage goes somewhere else. (Evan Frendo)

***Your presentation***

• The basics: look at the room before your talk, to anticipate any problems; get to the hall 30 minutes before your talk so you can set up; rehearse the talk before you do it; have a Plan B in case your laptop fails and you have 300 people to entertain for 15 minutes; structure your talk in 20 minute segments (max) so you have a change of pace; make jokes and have a good time; leave your audience on a high. (Steve Elsworth)

• Have a few different versions of your session in your head, so that you can easily lengthen or shorten it, or make it more or less 'workshoppy' depending on the size of the audience or the room. What teachers really want is some ideas they can use in their classrooms on Monday. (Rachael Roberts)

• Once your presentation is up and ready to go, never EVER, under any circumstances let anyone mess with the computer. Even if it is to, 'just put on the conference logo screen saver..' (Annette Flavel)

• Be yourself! It's no good trying to be hilarious if that's not your style. (Kate Cory Wright)

• I still can't believe how often I see presenters with those text-heavy presentations that they plough through, reading line by line. You're the presenter. Present! Don't make people sit there as you read stuff aloud. (Sue Banman Sileci)

• Roger Hunt once gave me this tip: "Smile. This is your party and these are your guests – enjoy yourself." Not always true, but with that attitude you can get through those first nerve-wracking presentations. (Lindsay Clandfield)

• Always remember the Three Loonies Constant Theory. If there are 100 people in an audience, there will be three loonies. If there are ten people in the audience, three will be loonies. If there are three people in the audience, they're all loonies. And they'll be the ones who ask questions. (Simon Greenall)

***Your attitude***

• Flexibility, patience and a generally easy-going attitude to last minute hiccups are definitely appreciated but you don't have to always be available for everything – carving out some quiet time on your own can really help recharge batteries. (Ceri Jones)

• Don't take it all (or yourself) too seriously. Ride the wave of nervous energy but don't get stressed out. If it's not going the way you expected, go with the flow because you might end up somewhere even better and there ain't anything you can do about it anyway. Talk to the audience as a group of individuals not as a big scary crowd. Bring chocolate. Be fabulous, not perfect. Have fun. (Patrick Jackson)

***And finally,*** *…*

• Just a word on expectations...your presentation went great, they all loved you... so squillions of sales, right? No, not necessarily. The link between a successful tour and big sales is a very mysterious one... (Pete Moor)

If you're looking for more advice, you can find a complete version of the above tips in the ELT Writers Connected Facebook group, and there's a great article in the *TESOL's Materials Writers Interest Section Newsletter*.

Good luck, and remember; even the most experienced conference speakers get nervous before their talks. It's part of what helps you put on your best performance. So, take a deep breath, smile and just try to be yourself. Your audience will love you for it.

# NiNE What can go wrong on a writing project?

Rachael Roberts

Being a writer is great in many ways: you can manage your own time, don't have to deal with rush hour traffic, can stay in your pyjamas all day... but you also have to remember that you are now running your own business, which means that you have to do some of the tough jobs that perhaps previously you could leave to others.

The top item on this list of jobs is probably having to negotiate contracts, which is covered in detail in chapter 6. However, there are a number of other things which can go wrong and which may require you to have a few sticky discussions and/or have a few sleepless nights.

Often there isn't a perfect answer or piece of advice in these situations. However, many of them have happened to me and the other authors on the team, so at least you'll have some ideas about what we did – or wished we hadn't done!

## My publisher has changed the brief of my book. What should I do now?

When you start a writing project, it is usual to be given a brief – a document which explains (or should explain) exactly what you are expected to do. For example, it might tell you that each worksheet should be two pages of A4, with five to six exercises to practise the grammar and vocabulary content given. For a longer project, such as a coursebook, the brief can be quite a bit longer and more detailed, and include such information as the target market, the methodology (e.g.inductive or deductive) and so on.

Unfortunately, it is far from unusual for briefs to change. Sometimes it's because the brief wasn't very clear in the first place. Whenever I am told by a publisher that the brief is 'fluid', I know that means a lot more work and rewriting. If you are being paid on a royalty basis and you think the book will do well, you might not mind that. After all, it gives you a more of a chance to shape the book yourself. However, if you are working for a fee, be very careful indeed. I would suggest trying to pin the publisher down in terms of roughly how much time they think the project

will take, or how many rewrites would be reasonable for the agreed fee. A fee that looks fine for a three-month project will not look so good if you're still responding to a 'fluid' brief twelve months later.

The other thing that happens is that a brief changes in response to market feedback. Again, if you are writing for a royalty, that may be annoying, but it's actually a good thing. You don't want to waste your time writing something that won't sell. If it's for a fee, it might be time to try and renegotiate payment.

## What can I do if they keep delaying the start date?

When you are approached about smaller pieces of work, publishers will often want you to start straightaway. However, for bigger projects, they often need to get permission from higher up, and the project can be put on hold while this happens. This can be very frustrating if you are waiting to start and turning away other work. If you have a lot of power in the relationship, you might be able to negotiate a retainer. However, for most of us, I think it's just a question of accepting this as a downside of being a freelancer. Depending on how much I wanted the work I was waiting for, I would probably continue to take on small jobs to tide me over, and explain that I would be getting off to a slightly slower start if I was still involved in one of these when the big job finally started.

## How do I cope with these crazy deadlines?

When I first started writing I thought that you had to meet the deadlines publishers gave you or else. As a result I spent several family holidays with a laptop on the holiday home kitchen table. Newsflash: Deadlines are usually negotiable and it is perfectly reasonable to explain that you have a holiday booked. Obviously, there are limits to how negotiable dates are, but there is usually a bit of slack built in – more on longer projects, less on smaller ones.

When you are negotiating, ask for a little bit more time than you think you need. Things come up, you get a bad cold or want to go away for a long weekend, and it is much better not to have to go back to them all the time to ask for a few days more.

Once you have agreed deadlines, try your hardest to stick to them. In my experience, publishers are fine about giving you a bit longer than they originally proposed, but not so fine if you don't then produce the goods when you said you would. Oh, and be very careful about handing things in much earlier than you promised. You might then set up expectations you can't live up to when the next unit or set of worksheets doesn't come as quickly and easily to you.

## What happens if my co-author and I don't get along?

I can't express strongly enough how important it is that you and your co-author(s) do get along. And that you get along with your editor and publisher and everyone else. Publishing is all about relationships.

Emails are a very convenient way of communicating with each other, but be very careful. If you need to say anything at all contentious, write a draft and then read it through again later (or get someone else to read it) before you send it. Even light criticism can be interpreted as being harsher than you meant, and you should never send an email when you're feeling angry. Pick up the phone if you have a problem that needs talking through, and try to have at least one face to face meeting if you can (even on Skype).

It can be difficult writing with other people if you have a very different style of working, so unless you have written together before, I would suggest dividing up the work according to each other's strong points, making it clear you see your co-author's strong points and not being afraid to recognise your weak ones.

## What do I do if my favourite editor leaves and I get a new editor I don't know?

I think this happens pretty often too. Certainly it's happened to me more than once. And, in one case, it happened three times on the same project! It is not an ideal situation. You have to get to know someone new, and another way of working. It can also often mean more rewrites as a new pair of eyes will quite possibly see things differently. Again, if you are getting a royalty you could see this as a plus, if it's a fee, you might need to renegotiate payment.

Nevertheless, however sad you may be to see your favourite editor go, you should welcome the new one with open arms. It's not their fault, it's probably not anyone's fault, and they may become your new favourite editor anyway. Editors and publishers move around, so, in some ways, the more people you get to work with (and get on with) the better.

## I hate the cover or title they are suggesting - will they change it ?

It might just be that I don't have any clout, but I have never been more than politely informed about decisions like this. Publishers have research and marketing teams and they don't make decisions based on what the author wants. So, I'd suggest responding with as much enthusiasm as you can muster. Nobody likes a diva.

## I have not been paid!

Sometimes publishers can take a while to 'get you on the system', but payment should be within 30 days or so of final handover. Make sure you check whether you are supposed to submit an invoice, or you might be waiting a lot longer! It's generally a good idea to find out about payment systems at the start of the project, so you know what to do without coming across as a nag or desperate.

## My book isn't being marketed properly, what can I do?

Again, this may be infuriating (and I have been there too), but there isn't really very much you can do. If it isn't a key title, it won't figure highly in the marketing plan, and if it isn't in the marketing plan, then they won't be doing much marketing. And marketing plans are made several years in advance.

Increasingly, the growth in social media means that you can do a certain amount of marketing yourself. I had a coursebook adopted by a big school because of a connection I made that way. However, with fee-based projects, of course, it doesn't really matter except in terms of getting your name out there.

# URLs

- **Apollo Global:** http://www.apolloglobal.us | Ch.2
- **Benesse:** http://www.benesse.co.jp/english/kyouiku | Ch.2
- **British Council:** http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/uk-elt-organisations | Ch.2
- **Cambridge University Press:** http://www.cambridge.org | Ch.2
- **Delta Publishing:** http://www.deltapublishing.co.uk | Ch.2
- **EL Gazette:** http://www.elgazette.com | Ch.2
- **ELT Teacher 2 Writer:** http://www.eltteacher2writer.co.uk | Ch.3
- **English Language Teaching Journal (ELTJ):** http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org | Ch.2
- **English Teaching Professional (ETp):** http://www.etprofessional.com | Ch.2
- **Express Publishing:** http://www.expresspublishing.co.uk | Ch.2
- **Garnet Education:** http://www.garneteducation.com | Ch.2
- **Guardian Education:** http://www.theguardian.com/education/tefl | Ch.2
- **Helbling:** http://www.helblinglanguages.com | Ch.2
- **IATEFL MaWSIG:** https://www.facebook.com/MaWSIG | Ch.3
- **IATEFL Special Interest Groups (SIGs):** http://www.iatefl.org/special-interest-groups/sig-list | Ch.3
- **IATEFL Voices:** http://www.iatefl.org/about-iatefl/iatefl-voices | Ch.3
- **International House (IH) Journal** http://ihjournal.com/contact | Ch.3
- **Kaplan:** http://www.kaplan.com | Ch.2
- **Laureate:** http://www.laureate.net | Ch.2
- **Macmillan:** http://www.macmillaneducation.com | Ch.2

- **Modern English Teacher:** http://www.onlinemet.com | Ch.2
- **One Stop English:** http://www.onestopenglish.com | Ch.2
- **Oxford University Press:** https://elt.oup.com | Ch.2
- **Pearson:** http://uk.pearson.com and http://www.pearsoned.com | Ch.2
- **Society of Authors:** www.societyofauthors.org | Ch.6
- **TESOL's Materials Writers Interest Section Newsletter**
http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolmwis/issues/2013-08-29/4.html | Ch.8
- **The Round:** http://the-round.com | Ch.2
- **Virtual Round Table:** http://www.virtual-round-table.com | Ch.3
- **Webinars: A Cookbook for Educators:**
http://the-round.com/resource/webinars-a-cookbook-for-educators/ | Ch.8