

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING AUTHORS:

Dreams are the spice in our life recipe

You've finished your book and though you've officially written The End, it's only the beginning of your journey. First, pat yourself on the back for pursuing your dream and completing your novel. Enjoy the sweet oblivion, the exhilarating notion that "if I write it, they will come." Each stage of your journey is its own reward. Remember this when things get rocky. Now hold onto your hat, because the rest is going to be a crazy ride!

How do you get from here - new author with manuscript under arm - to there – published?

You've probably already joined a writer's group. If not, do so, immediately. Joining a group comprised of like-minded people is life-changing. There is much to learn and mentorship is the key. Listen to the wise ones in your new tribe. Their experiences can save you time and heartache. There are organizations for every writing genre; do you know where your manuscript belongs? If not, figure it out, immediately.

For me it was the Romance Writers of America, and I often say I owe everything I've learned about writing and publishing to both the National organization and my home chapter of RWA. Each attended meeting introduced me to new information on publishing, craft, writing opportunities, future critique partners, and a handful of eventual lifetime friends. Each workshop taught me new skills to apply to my novice novel. Each National conference lifted another veil from my dream-influenced eyes. Go forth. Join. Learn.

Don't just take notes and nod

Roll up your sleeves. Invest more time in the process. Write every day, even if only a few lines. Read everyday. Plop down some money for writing classes. Follow through on what you glean from workshops and author lectures. Apply this new knowledge to your work in progress. Don't be offended by honest critiques. Learn from them, apply whatever makes sense. Ignore the snarky comments, but grow thicker skin and quit being so easily offended. Be open to suggestions. Rewrite. Edit. Delete. Begin again. This is the process. It cannot be ignored.

Seize opportunities

Life is filled with synchronicity. When you're on the right path opportunities arise. A chance meeting with an editor at a writers' conference may open a door in the future. Be aware. Be prepared. Maybe you've entered a contest or signed on for an agent or editor appointment and they've requested a partial or a full. Don't panic. Follow through.

Polish and send in the requested material. A high percentage of writers don't do this. Don't be one of them. Revisions are inevitable. Do them. Rejection is part of the process. Get used to it. Don't entertain defeat. Move on to the next opportunity and project.

Know when to let go

My first manuscript, the one that opened the door to the amazing world of writing and publishing, resides in a box on the top shelf of my office storage closet along with several other completed novels. And though it will never see the inside of a book cover, it is one of my most prized possessions. Though it does happen, chances are your first manuscript won't get published. Love it for all it has taught you. Remember the myriad lessons when you begin your next book.

Begin again...

Several years into this dream you've honed with passion and knowledge, thousands of aspiring writers have already fallen away or given up, but not you. You've amassed information, grown a bit wiser, increased your network, improved your writing skills, and you're excited about your next project. Maybe this will be the one. For all of your hard work, and most especially for your positive attitude, I commend you. Perseverance is the single most important quality that will help you make that first sale.

It took six years and as many manuscripts before Lynne Marshall made her first sale.