

Writing Ability

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/writing-ability/>

As a writer, you never stop working to improve your writing ability. This is a thing that never stops, not until you decide to put your pen down forever.

It's absolutely true that writers need to hone basic writing abilities. We must be great spellers, have impeccable grammar, and for those of us who dare to write books for kids, we're even expected to have a solid grasp of the different vocabulary levels of children and the [educational "core" standards](#) for each grade. (If you live abroad as I do, this stretches too [beyond your own culture](#).)

Oh sure, and then there's also the need to [understand the publishing industry](#), to be [aware of competition](#), to have an easy understanding of all the types of people who work in this business and how. Don't forget [your website](#) and [social media](#) and *figuring out how to draw readers*.

It's monstrous, the amount of information a modern writer is expected to have at their fingertips.

It's insane, really.

Don't Panic

Don't go insane over this stuff. Take a bit of information, absorb it and use it. Then move on to the next thing.

You will always find a Next Thing that you just didn't know before.

It's true for me, and I've been *teaching* this stuff for several years! Though there is a great deal of traditionalism involved, the business of being a writer is also organic. None of the information we use is static. *It changes because it's in use.*

So it isn't the *not knowing* that matters – that won't keep you from moving forward as a writer. What will stop you from moving forward is the creative paralysis that comes from *not trying* - from worrying so much about what you don't know that you end up not doing anything at all.

That first step is the biggest.

I promise, it does get easier.

Spelling, Grammar & Writing Helpers

If you have problems with spelling or grammar, *get help from as many people as you can* on that – and work on it, however you're able. You can take a class, read online dictionaries a little every day

(seriously: I do this), and read sources on grammar. Here are some great resources:

[Dictionary.com](#) is much more than just a dictionary. You'll get word play, etymology and fascinating articles about how and why we use the words we use.

[Etymology Dictionary](#) is a simple resource with a short history of words. If you're interested in writing historical fiction, this is your go-to.

[Library Online](#) provides some simple punctuation guides. Very helpful resource.

[Grammar Check](#) offers an automated spelling, style and grammar check. It's amazingly simple and it's free. No downloads are necessary.

[Grammarly](#) is a downloadable program that checks your grammar. Also free.

[English Grammar](#) offers a free guide that includes some of the most common spelling and grammar mistakes when you subscribe.

I highly recommend getting in a Writer's Group. Reading, writing and talking about the craft with other writers is a great way to improve your writing skills. [Find out how to start up your own Writer's Group and the 10 vital rules every group of writers should have.](#)

No one expects you to be perfect – they just expect your manuscript to be perfect... or nearly so, at any rate.

Editorial Feedback

For this reason, and because so many people have asked this of me, I've decided to offer a **Book Review & Editorial Feedback Program** for individual manuscripts and books. [How this will work:](#)

- If you have an unpublished *manuscript*, I will give you my in-depth editorial feedback.
- If you have a *published book*, I will provide a Book Review and Testimonial - but only if your work has earned 4-5 stars. If it's 1-3 stars, I send you Editorial Feedback *instead* of a Book Review. I feel this way, you get something valuable for your money - no matter what.
- If your book gets 4-5 stars, you will get a badge that you can use on your blog and on your book cover.

We're currently building The GSB Book Review & Editorial Feedback Program. For an update about when that is available, sign up for my Weekly Digest (it comes every Sunday) - that's where I will announce it.

Essential Writing Terms

There are certain publishing terms and standards that are important for a writer to know. If you're not sure what the industry standards are for a certain kind of story or a certain kind of book format, here are some extremely useful resources:

[About Word Count and Page Count](#)

This is the definitive list on expected word count for every type of story you can write, along with how that translates to actual page count.

[Types of Books with Pictures](#)

A lengthy list of definitions for any kind of book on the market that would come with pictures.

[Genres for Kids Books](#)

Kids Books, especially for pre-readers and early readers, have special genres. This is the list.

Book Market Resources

- You can go to [World-o-Meters](#) to get a [current count on the number of book titles published country-by-country](#) this year so far (made available by UNESCO).
- Download the [International Publishers Association's Report](#) on publishing statistics from 2012. I think you'll find it quite interesting and helpful. Though it's a few years old, it's still insightful.
- [New Pages](#) provides an [extensive list of independent book publishers and university presses](#). I don't know of any resource that beats this list.
- [Publisher's Marketplace](#) is one of my go-to guides. It's where I check out information on editors and agents in the business.

The Band Keeps On

I will update the information on this page every so often. **If you have a resource you love** and feel should be added here (or perhaps elsewhere on GSB), please send me an email. I'm always on the hunt for good stuff.

Keep creating, no matter what.
