

Let Me Help You

Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write
Articles*

Lesson 1

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: MASTER YOUR LIBRARY

By Professor Dick Bohrer, M.Sc., M.A.

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24 WAYS TO SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: OPINIONS
(an opinion-writing manual)

24 WAYS TO SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: STORIES
(a manual)

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24 Ways to
Sell Your Homework:
Articles

- LESSON 1** **Master Your Library**
- LESSON 2 Phrase Sentences/Short sentences
- LESSON 3 Simple humor
 A-B-C
 Sheer nonsense
 The parody
- LESSON 4 Novelties
 Question and answer
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 Tales Retold
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- LESSON 6 Frame & flashback
 Plant and pick-up
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- LESSON 7 Cumulative
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 Catalog
 Surprise ending
- LESSON 8 Alternating statement/quote
 Alternating action/reflection
- LESSON 9 Double barrel
 Triple barrel
- LESSON 10 Inverted pyramid
 Repeated pyramid
- LESSON 11 Problem and solution
 Sunk and saved
- LESSON 12 Biography
 Autobiography

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24 WAYS TO SELL YOUR HOMEWORK:

Week 1

MASTER YOUR LIBRARY

The art of writing articles that sell involves the mastery of the tools of the trade. This involves your knowing what you want to write about, knowing where you'll go for information, choosing the appropriate structure to couch it in and doing the actually writing.

This Week I chapter in the “Sell Your Homework” course is coming to you free of charge. How can you measure the worth of a writing course unless you can taste it first and discern whether the teacher knows what you want to learn?

Subsequent chapters come as the balance of a 12-week curriculum. You may do it all in a few days or spend the six months working your way through it. It comes to you at minimal cost because many people who wish to learn cannot afford high prices. Other courses in this series (writing stories for children and writing opinion pieces for magazines and newspapers) will also come to you with the same terms—the first lesson free and the subsequent lessons at minimal cost.

Your professor here has spent 40 years learning this craft. I wish to pass on what I have found before I go to meet my Maker and Savior. If you wish to correspond with me, You may address your e-mail letters to me at dick@professordick.com .

Now, I assume you know your grammar and can write correctly. If you need a brush-up, my “Easy English” grammar manual has exercises, memory tricks, songs, puzzles—with the idea that grammar study should be fun.

This Week I chapter offers you the treasures you will find in your library. Master writers know where to look for the gold, silver and precious stones that knowledge holds in store.

In following weeks, we'll study structures. These are the recipes for writing articles that SELL. I have examined more than 50 “how to write articles that sell” texts and not one of them provides the recipes and examples you will find here. Come with me. Let's write and sell your homework.

All the world loves a lover, we're told; but that's only half the story.

The world also loves a writer—a good storyteller who can transport a reader to other times and other places, who can entertain and inform and interpret and persuade and poke fun or be whimsical or critical, historical or hysterical.

You're at a lecture and you're bored to death. You've counted the holes in the acoustical tile in the ceiling for something to do.

Inwardly, you groan with despair at the one who has put time into slow-motion, the one at the podium who drones on and on.

And then he pauses.

You look up.

He says, "The very same thing happened to me one night when I'd been climbing mountains in the Rockies. We'd set up our tent out in a field under the stars when suddenly . . ."

You're caught.

You sit there, hanging on every word because you not only see him running from bear, you're ten leaps in front of him and running faster.

There's something about mankind that loves a good story.

It distracts us. It carries us away from the restraints of time and space.

We forget ourselves, our aches and pains, our hurts and fears. Our TV, our radio, our newspapers and magazines

tell us about other folk and we're intrigued. We identify with the hero. *We* win the battle. *We* score the touchdown. *We* take the prize

And a good story and a good storyteller free us to see things from a new perspective. We look through new eyes. We learn with pleasure. We learn and we remember because now we have a peg to hang truth on. God did this when He inspired men to write the Bible. Both Old and New Testaments begin with narratives. God communicates His truth with good stories, memorable stories. We read and we remember.

All writers must learn to tell stories well. But storytelling is no easy art to learn. Given a heartbreak, a crippling illness, an unusual honor or an award for bravery, the average person wants to tell someone. Privately, he would admit to a yearning to tell the world. So he gets out a sheet of paper and starts to write "my book." Four pages later, the telephone rings and the book is never finished.

Those who do finish their books find that hazards have been erected down the raceway ahead. Editors with rejection slips can kill the work—the dream—of years.

Something to say and the perspiration to get it said are not all it takes to make a writer a professional. A story, he may have. A talent, he may have; but he needs craftsmanship and organization.

Prof. Peter Jacobi in his marvelous text, *The Magazine Article: How to Think It, Plan It, Write It* (Cincinnati, Ohio: *Writer's Digest Books*, 1991) calls the writer to a four-step process which “involves (1) idea, (2) information gathering, (3) organizing, and (4) writing. Not a word should be written until you have thoroughly taken care of the preceding three steps. Without an idea firmly in place, you're likely to wallow through all sorts of extraneous material and along misdirected paths. The idea may take a different shape once you pursue your task, but without that initial thrust of concept, you're likely to spin your wheels unnecessarily” (p. 9).

He says it's easier to do your research and gather information if you have zeroed in on what you want to write. Then you can spend less time in the library because you know what to look for. You spend less time interviewing because you know what to ask.

When you are organized, “writing, although never easy, becomes a bit less of a chore, a more bearable and possibly even somewhat pleasurable experience,” he adds.

There's another kind of organization that you must master before you become an efficient writer.

You've seen pictures of famous writers in their offices. They're surrounded by piles of paper. “Oh, how much they have to say,” you marvel, not realizing they've lost their first

chapter in the mess. They're sure their wife has thrown it out, so they've re-written it time after time.

Rule: Date every draft you print in your “save as” title, and write that date in your header or footer so you recognize every printed draft on sight.

The disorganized writer becomes his own worst enemy when he doesn't keep a clean office, when he doesn't know where every draft of every article is, when he can't find the research or the pencil sharpener, his bank book, his keys.

When you put anything down, say out loud, “I am putting my keys on the kitchen counter by the can opener.” By saying it aloud, you hear yourself telling yourself where you put them. Speak in an impressive tone so you remember saying it. I warble “Mississippi” when I lock the back door at night. Then I remember that I locked it and don't have to go back six times to make sure.

Better yet, always put your keys in the same place or the same pocket.

Becoming organized does not make your writing sterile. It enables you to live a long, happy, stressless, more productive life.

As you do with your keys, do with your manuscripts. Use a cardboard box if you don't have a metal file. Get one that will hold up hanging file holders

I buy these six-to-eight slot cubby hole boxes and use one for the several

drafts of each book or story. It's so important for you to know which draft is the last and where you put it.

Learn to file.

Learn to keep records of where you mail your queries and your work. Buy a mid-size spiral notebook and keep a record of your mailings. After the day's date, write where each envelope, draft, bill payment, letter is going. Then you know you did send that article to "Diddly" magazine and you sent it on that date.

I buy dollar three-ring notebooks and plastic page pockets so I can put like-things I want to keep where they are readily accessible. I label my notebooks—to do, to buy, to pay, to sort, to read, to use, to teach, among others. And I use—house, garden, cooking, art ideas—as another kind of label for my domestic filing system.

And, men, don't forget to be a house helper. Some men sit toad-like in front of a monitor while the wife deals with the kitchen floor, the washing and ironing, the cooking and dishes, the children, the dog. God and country take note when writing men help at home. It's good exercise and it keeps the blood flowing.

All writers can think and plot and structure anywhere, any time. We don't need a padded cell. We can do our thinking while we make beds and run the vacuum cleaner.

Domestic harmony does wonders for the creative writer.

And it's not true that a clean desk is a sign of a sick mind!

But the other side of the coin states that though you may trust in God and though you may pick up your socks and help at home, you are not automatically a good writer.

There are many more things you need to know.

You need to know your language and how to use words to attract and hold readers. But there's no secret formula that says "always begin your sentence with the subject of the verb." Don't look for that kind of a formula.

Editors want you to write with all sorts of sentence structures. They want you to write so the reader is not conscious of your words. They want you to so grip the reader with a good story that he won't put your book or story down.

You also need to know English grammar so that you may vary sentence lengths and structures. Participial phrases and adverb clauses are wonderful ways to begin sentences.

You need to know how to spell and how to type. You need to read and read twice—once to discover what an author has said and again to discover and analyze how he said it. Analysis reveals form and form reveals structure.

And a writer needs to have a sense of style. That comes from knowing struc-

ture. There are nearly four score different ways to construct an article. Writing becomes much easier when you hang what you want to say on a structural peg.

Knowing that you are going to present your article in alternating statement and quote releases you to do the writing at once. You have the assurance that it will turn out well because you've used a professional technique.

But remember, technique is not enough. Craftsmanship is not enough. You have to have something to say.

Amy Carmichael, the missionary poet of South India, put her finger on the nerve:

**Thou shalt have words,
But at this cost, that thou must first
be burned,
Burned by red embers from
a secret fire,
Scorched by fierce heats and
withering winds that sweep
Through all thy being, carrying thee
afar
From old delights.
Doth not the ardent fire
Consume the mountain's heart
before the flow
Of fervent lava?
Wouldst thou easefully,
As from cool, pleasant fountains,**

Flow in fire?

Flow in fire?

Oh, how we yearn to flow in fire, but too many of us are not willing to have our heart consumed before the lava flows. Chatter comes freely from those reclining beside cool, pleasant fountains.

But meaning and significance come when we've dealt inwardly with the essential realities of destiny—our destiny, our being—and truth.

The more we know the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life—"he that cometh unto Me I will never cast out"—the more compelling will be our words.

Once the heart is wise, the writer can write of "old delights" as well as "flow in fire."

Writing is hard work. If it comes easily, some say, doubt it. But when you know article structure, writing will come more easily than if you didn't. Knowing article structure will help you to say what is yours to say—with craft.

But it's not enough to read through this book once and think you know it all. It takes study—real study—and practice. Like any artist or musician, you must practice before writing will come easily.

Now, before you begin, we need to discuss some items.

The difference between the amateur and the professional writer is that the

amateur writes his article first and then seeks a publisher. The professional finds his market and then writes.

Take your idea to Poole's *Index to Periodical Literature* in your local or school library. It lists categories and key words of subjects that have been covered in magazines. It lists articles by title and tells the name of the magazine in which each article appeared as well as its date, its volume number and page number.

You may find that someone has already won the gold medal before you've stepped up to the starting line. There's no point in writing an article that has already seen the light of day.

Another thing.

You must remember who you are. A feature writer does not write for himself. He does not include private jokes only he and his family and friends understand. He is not sloppy in his organization, letting the first thing out of his mind become his final product. Rather, he allows some self-doubt to force himself to edit and refine what he's written. What *we* write is not inspired of God; it's not infallible. We've got to *polish* our silver.

Review your grammar. I've included occasional grammar lessons and tests to keep you sharp.

Review punctuation.

Review your spelling. Some bookstores have what they call a "poor speller's dictionary." Words appear as

poor spellers would spell them. Then the correct spelling is given. But if this kind of review is too much work for you, write the way you want and then look in the classified section of a writer's magazine for someone who advertises himself as an editor for hire. He may charge one or two dollars (or more) per page, but he *is* an option.

Then, keep a universal frame of mind. You are not writing for your mother or for some English teacher you once had. You are writing for the public, for an audience that needs an explanation of what you're doing. You can't just start writing on these exercises that follow. You've got to set things up.

Pretend you're a feature writer for the "Glory Press Gazette." You have a column. Call it, "As I See It." As you begin each article, write an explanation or an introduction that tells the reader what's going on.

Or treat your first sentence as a table of contents and confine your remarks to the limits you've set in those few words.

If your first sentence is, "All men cheat," you will limit your remarks to men and to cheaters. You won't write about women. You won't write about liars. You learn to stick to the subject you've selected.

Let the first paragraph of your article hook your reader's interest with a proof statement that goes to the heart

of your message, one that shows you know what you are talking about.

We need to know that you have the authority to say what you are saying. Statements of fact show it. Quotes of experts show it. Examples and anecdotes flesh it out.

Here's an idea. Before you begin your writing career, find a copy of *Reader's Digest* magazine. Study the contents page and see how feature writers title their articles. Then go through the magazine and study first sentences only. Then go through again and study first paragraphs. Then read the articles and try to analyze how each has been developed. Then study last paragraphs.

As you do this, write in the margins. Underline. Outline the article in the margin, using numbers and letters to outline the development and handling.

As you learn more about structure from this book (you should recognize it when you see it elsewhere), write the structure of the "Reader's Digest" article in the magazine at the top of the first page of each article as well as beside the title on the contents page. Use that magazine each month as a text. Let it educate you in writing style and technique.

Keep a spiral notebook pad for listing like articles under each structure. You might want to tear out each significant article you find and file it in an accordion file. Label each slot with the name of the appropriate structure.

Because you can lose a pad, when you find a structure in *Reader's Digest* that matches a structure given in this book, use the back page in that particular chapter to list articles that use that structure. Write the title, author, month and year of the magazine and also the page on which it begins. When you want to write that style, refresh your memory of how professionals have used it by looking up examples from your little index there.

Now, let's have a screeching halt for a moment. Let's qualify these do's and don'ts.

If you are writing for your family, you have an audience that is keenly interested in the little details of what you think and why and how. They want to know every detail about where you lived when you were young and what you wore and where you liked to go.

You might wish to tell it in buckshot or short sentence. You might want to use cycle or alternating action and reflection. Nobody in your family will ever shoot down your memories with a "So what!"

But, if you are writing for the public, all the world will say, "So what!" if you're not careful. You must write about matters that everyone is interested in. If the world doesn't care, write so that it will.

None of us cares a snit about mosquitoes. Let one whine near us and we'll slap air until we annihilate it. We don't give a hoot about mosquitoes un-

til you tell us that there are six moving parts in their snouts. Then you've caught our attention.

We don't care that you always went to your grandma's house on Thursday afternoons when you grew up so she could teach you how to sew. We don't care that you picked roses off your garage wall to take to your fifth grade teacher, Miss Fleishman, at Maxson School in Plainfield, New Jersey. We don't care that you drink fenugreek tea for your sinuses. And don't you tell us that since everybody does these things that everybody is interested in articles about others who do them (namely you).

We're not! We want a twist. We want a story. We want you to tell us things like—that Grandma's tea was brandy and she would never admit it until one day when you wanted a sip and . . .

We want to learn that Miss Fleishman was convinced she was wasting her time with your class and that no one cared until the day you came with your roses and . . .

See what you're doing? You're showing us humanity. You're showing heart. You're showing character. That's the stuff editors want to see in articles.

Fiction writers struggle with a further discipline just here. We won't let them *tell* anything. They must *show* it. One of the characters must say it or act it. The narrator may never say that the

heroine is "so pretty." He may not say, "Jack went over to Jill's house to ask her to climb a hill." The characters themselves reveal these things as the story progresses. Some feature articles become more convincing when their writers keep this technique in mind.

But, when you are doing a how-to-do-it article or a personality profile or "I-know-something-you-don't know" explanation, whether it's a narrative like "A Whisker of Pride," (Cycle) or "Chaste by Choice," (Autobiography), don't worry about showing. Telling is fine.

So now you know there's a one-word secret to developing article style. All professional writers know it and practice it. It's "Study." Study lots of articles and analyze how they're written.

Study first sentences. Find out how the experts hook reader interest. Find out how they set scenes. Study how they introduce characters. Some use "then and now." Some use "cause and effect." Some use "before and after." Some use a topic sentence to set the boundaries of the article. Some rouse your curiosity. All work hard to get just the right effect in their first sentence.

One student of mine turned in a blank paper. He had spent four hours on the first sentence (which he never did find) and didn't have time to do the assignment. Wait until you've finished the article before you begin to polish

your first sentence or you may never get your article done.

When all else fails and you can't think of a way to start, write "Dear Mom" and tell what you want to write about as if you were writing her a letter. Work with that and you've got a start.

Study thesis statements. Often, after the first paragraph hook has been thrown into the water, a writer will "set it" like a fisherman does once he has a bite. He'll state his whole thesis, the whole scope of what his article is going to be about; and he will usually do it in one sentence. He'll put it at the end of his opening, just before he begins the development. From there to the end, he'll use that as a "red string" to tie the parts together.

Then study structure. This book is keyed to structure because backbone comes before flesh. Knowing structure is half the secret of good article writing.

And study conclusions. How does the writer wind up and sign off? Does he repeat the thesis sentence? Does he repeat key words? Does he look back and summarize? Does he look forward to a happy hereafter? Does he ask a question to drive his reader to action? Does he end with a charge?

So it's up to you to read and study. Who knows? You may find that the world IS actually waiting to hear from YOU.

Learn how to write articles like a pro and you just might find an audience you've never had before. Not only that, you might find you have a ministry God can use to draw people to the Savior and to tell them God's truth. What finer reason for craftsmanship is there than that?

Now, what follows is essential for the serious writer of articles for magazines.

While it is true that many people write all their articles out of the resources of their own heart and mind, the world is not always all that interested in what you think or what you've experienced or what you know.

Editors can get experts and authorities to write articles for them. They ask, "Who are you and what do you know?" when you submit even the finest query letter anyone ever knew how to write.

Editors want to sell magazines. If they can tell what an M.D. thinks or a Ph.D. professor or you, guess who they'll go with!

So you get around that by using research to find out what the M.D.s and Ph.D.s are thinking and are revealing in library books and on the web.

Secret: You've got to know where to go to find your information.

You've got to have access to the internet and know how to use it for research. You will find many books in

your libraries and book stores as well as classes in the nearest junior college to direct you.

But you also need to know your way around the reference room of your local library.

What follows is a lesson in library research to learn as you ask your reference librarian to take you around her room. It asks you to make a map of your library's floor plan and mark where each resource is found.

When you've finished, use that map to make yourself familiar with the books themselves and write down the dimensions of what they cover.

As you get an assignment or an idea of your own, you will look at your map and know exactly where to go to get the information you need.

The book and magazine indices will point you to the chapters and articles that will spell out the information you want. They will also provide quotes from M.D.s and Ph.D.s that will meet the editorial requirements of editors.

They are always on the lookout for effective researchers who can take the material from the academic or scientific tome and put it in the language of the people and in a structure that is easy—even compelling—to read.

You want to be able to do your research in the shortest amount of time possible, and that's why you need to know where to go to get the information you want.

A professor at Ball State University, where I have taught, said, "Speed is the heart of the journalism program. Think fast. Write fast. Research fast—not sloppy fast, mind you—savvy fast!"

You may not know anything, but you can find out everything.

First, you need a map of your library and then you need a plan. It's like robbing a bank—only this stick-up is legit.

1. Make a map of the library you'll use. Walk around using a clipboard, perhaps, and draw and label each part of the reference section. Plan to put numbers to the map itself and a legend of explanation along an outside edge. Don't clutter the face of your map with words.

On your final map, you might want to go spatially around the library or you might want to list computer materials first and then bound volumes second.

You might want to use the alphabet on the face of the map to identify locations, and then list them that way in your legend.

Second, walk around the library to identify where they keep each section called for in the rest of this lesson. You may, if you're nice, get the reference librarian to escort you and point out the resources you'll be looking for.

Identify library offices and stations and furniture. No need to draw each table and chair. Draw a box or rectan-

gle and shade them in where they belong.

Third, identify and place on your map (and after the word “Location” be-

Letter: A

Subject: General Works

Location:

low) where your library keeps the following resources. For this list, we’ll use a simplified subject classification system of the Library of Congress.

Letter: B

Subject: Philosophy, Psychology, Religion

Location:

Letter: C

Subject: Archaeology, Genealogy, etc.

Location:

Letter: D

Subject: History (other than American)

Location:

Letter: E and F

Subject: History (American)

Location:

Letter: G
Subject: Geography, Anthropology, Recreation
Location:

Letter: H
Subject: Social Science
Location:

Letter: K
Subject: Law
Location:

Letter: L
Subject: Education
Location:

Letter: M
Subject: Music
Location:

Letter: N
Subject: Fine Arts
Location:

Letter: P
Subject: Literature, Language, Literary Criticism
Location:

Letter: Q
Subject: Sciences
Location:

Letter: R
Subject: Medicine
Location:

Letter: S
Subject: Agriculture
Location:

Letter: T
Subject: Technology
Location:

Letter: U and V
Subject: Military and Naval Science
Location:

Letter: Z
Subject: Bibliographies, Library Sciences
Location:

4. Locate the section where they keep the bibliographies:

What is the value of a bibliography?

5. Name one major figure who has had a complete bibliography written about him or her. Give the title and call number of the book that has it in it.

6. In *Gale's Trade Names Dictionary*, find a company name of an unusual nature, one that might easily be misspelled in an article you might write. Write the name and the page it's on.

7. Locate the latest *Writer's Market*. List three new markets you think might buy your work if you submitted a query.

a.

b.

c.

8. You need to quote a song in your next article but you want to get the lyrics right. Examine the *Popular Song Index* and write down the opening lines to “Red Sails in the Sunset.”

9. Does your library list any books under the Dewey Decimal System? For your information, the call numbers for items in that system are:

**000 General works
100 Philosophy
200 Religion
300 Social Science
400 Language
500 Natural Science
600 Useful Arts
700 Fine Arts
800 Literature
900 History, Biography**

10. You want a book your library does not have but which you feel a nearby library might have. How do you go about obtaining the book for a few days’ use? (Also mark on your map the resource person you would go through.)

11. Reference books are essential for specific quotes you might wish to include in your article. Memorize the location of especially helpful references. Are references in your library gathered along one particular wall or are they located all around the room?

12. There are all sorts of subject almanacs. List several of them.

a.

b.

c.

d.

13. In one, look up your place of birth (if it was a small town, look up the nearest city). Then look up the name of the city where you would like to find a job or retire. How do both of these rate in the *Places Rated Almanac*?

a.

b.

14. How would you be able to use the *Biographical Dictionary of American Music* and *Mosby's Medical Dictionary*?

a.

b.

15. When you can't find the meaning of archaic words, look in *Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure and Preposterous Words*. List four fascinating words you find and write their meanings:

a.

b.

c.

d.

16. How would you tell what day of the week New Year's Day fell on in the year of your birth? Look in a General Almanac for a perpetual calendar that will tell you. Give the name of the volume and the page the calendar is on. Tell that day of the week.

17. What is a concordance? Why is one useful? Name three you find in your library.

a.

b.

c.

18. What are three of the more unusual subject encyclopedias (like *Encyclopaedia Judaica*) in the library. What is their value?

a.

b.

c.

Value?

19. *The Dictionary of American Slang* is useful to get definitions of common—sometimes very common—words. Open it and write three words that you'd like to use in an article of your own.

a.

b.

c.

20. You want to write for religious periodicals. What will *Religion Index One* tell you?

21. What is the *Almanac of Dates*? What event(s) does it say happened on the day you were born?

22. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces how words evolved through the years. Look at it and find a word that has changed significantly from how it was used 500 years ago. Write it down and tell its story and what page it was on.

Word:

Story:

Page:

23. Journals are sources of ideas of general interest. Find several specialized journals in the periodical library. List two articles by name that would be worth investigating and writing a query about to paying markets. (Realize that scientists write their findings in journals, for instance. Researching writers put those findings into the language of the people by way of magazine articles they sell.)

a.

b.

24. Every writer who writes service pieces about businesses that render unusual service to the public needs to examine *Where to Find Business Information*. Name four or five categories that intrigue you.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

25. You would like to show the foreign personage you've an appointment to interview that you know something about the literature and stories of his country. Look in *Index to Fairy Tales, 1949-1972* for an interesting myth or legend or fairy tale from that country (any country of your choice). Briefly re-tell it here:

26. Various *Who's Who* volumes are useful when doing research. What are some of the titles of *Who's Who* books in your library. Is anyone you know in one? This author? Which one? What page?

27. You want to spice up an article by using statistics. See the ASI (*American Statistics Index*) for some background. List its call number.

28. You are going to write a long article and wish to check doctoral dissertations for the subject you are going to use. Where do you look?

29. You are going to give a talk on the birds of your state. Find a quotation in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* that you can use in your speech.

30. You've written a book and you want an agent. The best source is *Literary Agents of North America*. Find an agent who might be interested in your style of writing.

31. Summarize a book you've read in the last five years by checking *Book Review Digest*.

32. You've written an article that you would like to have the largest number of people read. Look up three magazines you think would have the largest circulation from *The Standard Periodical Directory* and/or *Gale Directory of Publications* and/or *Magazine Directory*. Write down the name and circulation of each of the three magazines.

a.

b.

c.

33. You are going to interview the author of a children's book. Look him/her up on *Something About the Author*. For all other books, look in *Contemporary Authors*. See Volume 43 of *Something* and find one interesting quote about the Muppets. Look up Dick Bohrer and see his claim to fame. List the volume and page number you found him in and on—if he is even there.

34. Where in your library will you go to conduct a computer search on a particular topic or author?

35. When you need a broad look at the writing field, see *Writer's Encyclopedia*. List one term defined that you'd like to know more about and the page number you found it on.

36. Tell the exact location in the library where you would find government publications.

37. You want to research a famous dead person. Start with *The Annual Obituary*. List the volume and page number of one such person.

38. *Current Biography* has short sketches of famous people. See if Jerry Falwell is included and write down the year he is listed.

39. You have a favorite entertainer, sports hero or politician you want to research. Look in any given year of *The New York Times Index* and list the date that one or two articles appeared that relate to him/her.

40. You are going to write a 10,000 word article that includes the social mores of folk living in your home town or an area of your home state or a place that interests you. Examine *Sociological Abstracts* and write down what you find. Tell the call number of the volume.

41. Look up "love" in *Sociological Abstracts Index*. What do you find?

42. You have a consuming interest in famous literary people. Look up one in *MLA International Bibliography*. What information do you find?

43. Look up an article in the category of “relaxation” in a late volume of *Cumulative Subject Index to Psychological Abstracts*. What do you find?

44. You want to do an article on the upcoming Olympics. How much is already available? Examine the latest volume of *Sports Bibliography* and tell how much has been written already.

45. Another source of interest is *Access*. What is its province?

46. What does *Reader’s Guide* tell you?

And ProQuest?

Rule: Make friends with the library staff. Those people know more about their library than you will ever know. They can steer you to the right place when you're stuck. They can often do your reference work for you when you are glued beside your computer and don't have time to run to the library to look something up.

Rule: As an article idea is forming in your mind, consult *The Reader's Guide* in your library to see if someone has already written on the subject. That reference lists articles published in a broad number of periodicals. If you find someone has, look up that work to see if it is up to date or if an angle you can supply has been ignored.

Rule: When you have a workable idea with no published competition, think what kind of magazine, newsletter, newspaper would be interested in that topic. Write the editor a query letter. Tell what you want to say, how you plan to say it (with what research you will do) and why you are qualified to write it.

Never tell editors you are a student or a child or a beginner or a writer who has never submitted an article before. They won't work with students/children/beginners/novices. They're too busy. They want to work with professionals or people who can

research the findings of professionals.

Rule: Date your research. You always want to know when you came across that material. You may have put it down and covered it up with clutter only to discover it two months later. When research along a certain line takes time, it is important to know what is old and what is new.

Rule: Document all research with the name of the author, the book, the date it was published or copyrighted, the publisher and his address in case you come across a quote of substance and need permission to quote it at length. In this case, you address your query to "Permissions," explaining what you are doing and why you need this material.

Rule: Plan to do more than one draft of your article. You might wish to write down everything you know in the first one and organize it in the second. You may wish to insert your research in the third. Many writers let their work cook for a short time (some take showers) while they think of angles they left out.

Rule: You yourself cannot tell whether your article is publishable unless you send it to an editor.

Now we've come to the end of the first lesson.

If I have something you think you can use, something that will bring springtime to your heart and lightness to your step in learning to write for publication, I would be honored if you would join me for these lessons.

Sincerely,
Prof. Dick Bohrer
2 Corinthians 2:14