

**Writing For Professional Publication:
Keys To Academic and Business Success**

By *Kenneth Henson*

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Writing For Professional Publication: Keys To Academic and Business Success addresses a topic many student affairs professionals are beginning to show interest in. Many professionals desire to write but fail to make it a priority in their career. Kenneth Henson, a former academic affairs administrator and current faculty member, wrote this book for professionals such as these.

Throughout the book, Henson emphasizes the need to make writing a priority. He addresses the need for goal setting, pre-planning, and endurance in the writing and publishing process. This book takes the reader on a journey from the beginning of the writing process to the end. Henson does an excellent job of encouraging and motivating potential writers throughout this book. He advises writers not to get dejected when their article or book manuscript gets rejected, and also provides valuable advice to reduce such risks.

Throughout this book, Henson does a phenomenal job of simplifying the writing process by breaking it down step by step. This can only serve to encourage potential writers because it allows them to see writing as this step-by-step process as opposed to a long, drawn out process.

Chapter 1 – “Why Write,” addresses the fact that many individuals desire to write but many never get around to doing it. Good writers establish a writing routine. Successful writers make writing a priority and incorporate writing into their everyday life. Henson states, “serious writers have specific goals to reach through their writing” (p. 3). In this chapter, Henson provides an excellent article that he had previously published titled, “Six Myths That Haunt Writers.” These myths parallel many of the excuses individuals give for not writing. Henson makes it clear that writing requires self-discipline and intrinsic motivation. The only drawback to this chapter is the length due to the numerous examples provided by Henson.

Chapter 2 – “Finding Topics,” explains ways for writers to find and develop topics. Henson lists several valuable resources for obtaining potential topics such as dissertation research, grants, job experiences, other occupations, and reference books. Henson also encourages individuals to consciously seek ideas for future topics and to make sure the topic is still “hot” enough to merit publication.

Chapter 3 – “Getting Started,” deals with getting started in the writing process. Henson

suggests choosing and writing a title before doing anything else. He points out that titles and the first sentence are of primary importance because many readers examine these parts of an article first to determine if it is of interest to them. Henson also states that a common problem among many writers is the inability to start and end paragraphs effectively.

Chapter 4 – “About Style,” appears to be mistitled. The chapter seemed to be more about proper writing as opposed to different types of styles. The author fails to give examples of different types of styles, although he does encourage writers to examine their writing style. Henson wrote that “style is not just the words a writer chooses; it’s also how the writer uses them” (p. 42). He mentions that it is important to find a style that serves your purpose for writing (promotion, pleasure, tenure, merit pay/evaluation, seeking funding, etc.). Henson also mentions the need for editing a document prior to submitting it for publication to be sure the article is clear and concise.

Chapter 5 – “Organizing Articles,” addresses the proper way to organize a professional article. The organization of an article establishes credibility as well as the purpose behind the article. The organization of an article should flow smoothly and clearly to a reader.

Chapter 6 – “Using Journals, Libraries, Surveys, and Action Journals,” advises the reader on ways to use different resources in the writing process. Henson emphasizes that one good way to begin is by writing articles for journals with theme issues, call for manuscripts, etc. The chapter also provides an excellent sample evaluation tool used to assess articles by editors, co-editors, and reviewers. Henson emphasizes the need for literature and references to be current and up-to-date. This chapter also provides tips for developing questionnaires, as well as tips for ensuring a high return rate on surveys.

Chapter 7 – “Common Errors in Writing For Journals,” examines typical preventable errors many writers make. Some of these mistakes include being unfamiliar with what the journal expects, using the wrong style, and failure to carefully proofread and examine the manuscript prior to sending it to the editor. Recommendations to remedy and prevent these mistakes are given and explained. This chapter ties in well to the rest of the book, particularly chapters 2 & 6.

Chapter 8 – “Communicating With Journal Editors,” addresses the relationship between the author of an article and the editor. Strategies for effective communication, such as sending query letters to gauge interest in a topic, are outlined. A query letter is a letter sent to an editor to receive their permission to submit in your manuscript. Sample letters are provided (both good and bad). Henson also explores the idea of serving as a guest editor in order to get published.

Chapter 9 – “Questions Writers Ask,” examines frequently asked questions by writers. One key question focuses on how to handle rejection and mentions that it is best to use the constructive criticism to make your article better. If the journal is not interested in publishing the article, revise it and send it to another journal. However, Henson also warns that writers may only send their article to one journal at a time. This chapter also examines different types of publishing opportunities such as refereed journals, vanity publishing (paying someone to publish an article), and self-publishing. Copyright laws are also covered in this chapter.

Chapter 10 – “Getting Book Contracts,” switches the focus from publishing articles to publishing books. Henson strongly encourages first writing and submitting a book prospectus to potential publishers to gauge their interest in order to save both time and money. Henson also recommends completing a topical outline prior to writing the entire book. Oftentimes, this outline can be revised to serve as the book’s table of contents. Henson also lists several criteria to consider when choosing a publisher.

Chapter 11 – “Planning For Success,” emphasizes the need to be proactive in the writing process. Henson states that some luck is needed, but if luck is all a writer has, then the writer probably will not be very successful. The author provides a four-step process to identify and order preferred journals for submitting manuscripts.

Chapter 12 – “Grant Proposal Writing,” examines the advantages of writing and publishing grants. Henson recommends that a grant proposal first be submitted to match the strengths of the grant with what the potential funder wants and/or needs. Henson provides the reader with 10 guidelines for writing an effective grant proposal.

Chapter 13 – “Using the Computer,” examines the use of computers in the writing process. This chapter probably was not needed as most individuals use computers daily anyway. Those who do not would not be able to do this without training anyway. This book does an excellent job in educating potential writers on the need for discipline and proper motivation. Otherwise, writing will become just like the exercise program we have all started at one time or another only to drop it at another time. Everyone has potential as a writer. What makes an individual an effective writer is consistent time and practice. Effective writers have been rejected. However, they keep going and trying. Henson never said writing is easy; rather, he mentions that it is hard work. This book is very well structured and is beneficial for individuals truly interested in writing for professional publication.