

FIND YOUR NICHE

BY KERRIE FLANAGAN

There's a whole world of publishing opportunities outside your local newsstand. Here's how to start writing for trade, niche, and international magazines.

AS

a freelance writer, you have more options for magazines to pitch your ideas to than you may realize.

When you peruse the racks at Barnes & Noble or other newsstands, you only see a fraction of the publications circulating the country. Most people are familiar with general-interest consumer magazines like *Better Homes & Gardens*, *People*, and *AARP The Magazine*, but many more lurk in the background. Have you heard about *Bee Culture*, a trade magazine for professional beekeepers and those interested in the science of honeybees? Or how about the niche publication *Teddy Bear Times & Friends*, which explores all aspects of the wonderful world of teddy bears? Then there's *Get Lost*, Australia's leading adventure travel magazine. All of these, along with many other niche, trade, and international magazines, are out there, just waiting for your enlightening, entertaining, and/or informative articles.

When you think beyond the publications found on newsstands, more opportunities become available – and even more when you think beyond the border. The U.S. has over 7,000 print magazines, as does the UK. There are many more in other English-speaking countries around the world, and they all have the same basic need — good content, from good writers, which is great news for you.

Editors of these lesser-known publications are not being bombarded with as many queries as the consumer magazine editors. They tend to respond quicker and be more open to new writers. These magazines allow you to diversify your writing experiences. The topics they cover may surprise you, and they provide you options to write for them, even if you are initially unfamiliar with their niche or trade.

What are niche and trade magazines?

Niche magazines focus on special interests, hobbies, a certain group of people, or an organization. For example, this very magazine is considered a niche publication, given it's designed and created solely for writers. Other examples include publications that exclusively cover university alumni, woodworking, haute French cuisine, or photography. These specialized markets do not target the general consumer.

Trade magazines, on the other hand, contain news and information related to a particular trade or industry. There are magazines for private pilots, firefighters, general contractors, restaurant owners, and professional organizations like the American Nurses Association. You don't have to be a part of these trades to write for the magazine. If you enjoy writing personal profiles, these may be a good option because many of them highlight successful people in a given industry. The meetings and events industry has various magazines featuring locations throughout the world that event planners might consider for their next conference, which opens the door for you to pitch a travel article.

International magazines written in English offer even more opportunities for writers. With everything from the general consumer magazine to trade and niche publications, these offer the chance to pitch new content or take articles you have already sold in the U.S. (and have the rights to) and resell them to these markets.

Where to find these magazines

The Writer updates a curated list of niche and trade magazine every year in our October issue. These online resources also provide additional avenues to find niche and trade publications:

- » **New Pages:** newpages.com
- » **Funds for Writers:** fundsforwriters.com/markets
- » **Freedom With Writing:** freedomwithwriting.com
- » **U.S. magazines:** en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_magazines
- » **Trade magazines:** en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_trade_magazines

For international publications, explore these:

- » **World Newspapers, News Sites, and Magazines Online:** w3newspapers.com
- » **World Magazines:** world-newspapers.com
- » **List of magazines by country:** en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Lists_of_magazines_by_country

Also, check your local library's website. Google is helpful, but many times libraries have access to bigger databases, allowing users to find more information. With my library, there is an "ask the librarian" feature where I'm able to email my question directly to the research librarian. This could prove useful if you are searching for a certain type of publication and are having a difficult time finding it.

Organize your list of publications

As you find niche, trade, and/or international markets that interest you, create an organizational system to search and locate submission information easily, alleviating the need to do tons of market research every time you have an idea you want to query. An easy example of this is an updated spreadsheet with column titles such as:

- » **Name of publication**
- » **Topics covered**
- » **Website URL**
- » **Editor's name**
- » **Email**
- » **What to send (i.e., query, full article...)**

As your list grows, update and organize it by name, topic, etc.

When you begin submitting pitches to editors, it's a good idea to create a new tab (or an entirely new spreadsheet) to keep track of your submissions and follow-ups. You might include:

- » **Name of publication**
- » **Topic of query/article you sent**
- » **Editor's name**
- » **Editor's email**
- » **Date sent**
- » **Follow-up date**
- » **Response from editor**

Achieving success within these markets

Now that you have found new magazines to submit your ideas to, getting paid assignments is within your grasp. The basic process of submitting and writing for these publications is the same as writing for consumer magazines:

- » **Research the magazine**
- » **Read and follow the submission guidelines**
- » **Write an effective query relevant to that magazine**
- » **Be professional and turn in your work on time and within the assigned word count**

Even though the basics are the same, here are some subtle differences to keep in mind with these markets.

Study the magazines

Freelance writers who take the time to study the publications they want to submit to have more success. Editors appreciate writers who have a clear understanding of their magazine, making them more likely to give them assignments.

Read past issues. There is no need to track down print copies (unless you really want to) when digital copies are easy to find. Look at the magazine's website, use a platform like Magzter, or access emagazine archives available via your local library. Study a few articles to get a feel for the tone and the style. Are they more conversational? More academic? How long are the articles? With international markets, be aware of different cultural norms and even distinct spellings for words. For instance, some words in British English have a slightly different spelling, like *colour* and *centre*. For niche magazines, examine how in-depth the articles are: Are they geared toward beginners or more advanced readers who practice this hobby or hold this interest? If the articles cover all levels, then mention in your query which level you plan

to target with your article. With trade publications, study how often experts in the industry are quoted and whether the topics are covered in a more broad or narrow scope. Also, pay attention to the length of the articles, so you understand the approximate word count to pitch in your query.

Know the reader

This is essential with these specialized markets. Editors want to know that you “get” their readers and that you can slant your topics to meet their expectations. Every magazine has a certain readership with a target reader: mother of young children, antique enthusiast, budget traveler, and so on. It is imperative you know as much about that reader as possible before submitting a query to the editor. The more you know about who reads the magazine, the more you can tailor your work to reach that audience best.

One strategy to learn the demographics of the reader is to locate the media kit on the magazine's website. This document is intended to provide data to potential advertisers about the magazine's readership and is a gold mine for freelance writers. The media kit provides information like average age, income, gender, hobbies, homeownership, education, and marital status. This helps you understand who exactly the magazine targets.

Understand the jargon

With niche and trade publications, it is important to understand the specific language associated with that trade or hobby so you can weave it into your query or article when necessary. For instance, if I planned to write for a niche RV magazine like *Family RVing*, I might include terms like full hookup, slideout, black water tank, and triple tow without worry of explaining each one because I know the audience is familiar with this language. If, however, I was writing an introductory RVing article for a budget travel magazine, I'd probably take the time to define the phrases, since there's a greater risk of the audience not understanding these particular terms. And if *you* are unfamiliar with the jargon associated with a specific trade or hobby, take the time to do additional research and familiarize yourself with it. This extra step will assure both editors and readers you're familiar with the subject at hand.

Write an effective query letter

A query letter is an editor's first exposure to your writing. Whether you want to pitch to a consumer, trade, international, or niche magazine, the query should be succinct and include enough information to show you understand the topic and the reader, and you are qualified to write the piece.

» Address the query to the correct editor:

For example, Dear Mr./Ms. Smith. Avoid using “Dear Editor” whenever possible. Find the name of the editor or managing editor on the publication website and confirm their pronouns.

» **Open with a great hook:** You only have about 10 seconds to catch an editor's attention, so start your query with something interesting, such as an anecdote, jaw-dropping statistic, or a quote.

» **State the article content:** This is the bulk of the query where you show the editor you are an authority on the topic and explain the main points you plan to cover in the article.

» **Include specifics:** In this section, share the estimated word count, a specific department if there is one, experts you plan to interview, and any other information pertinent to the piece.

» **List your qualifications:** Share your writing experiences, your expertise, and why you are the perfect person to write this article.

» **Insert a call to action:** Add a quick one-sentence closing with something like, “I look forward to talking with you more about this idea.”

» **Sign off:** End with “thank you,” “sincerely,” or “best regards,” and include your name and contact information.

Stay at the forefront

Once you have turned in your article, the editor has read it and requested any revisions, and sends it off to print, it's time to send another query for the publication. This will show that you have more ideas and are eager to continue writing for this magazine. Unlike more general markets where editors can often change from publication to publication, editors in the niche and trade markets tend to stick around for a long time, so

forming a solid working relationship with them is a great way to continue getting more assignments.

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Niche, trade, and international publications provide freelance writers many unique opportunities to pitch their ideas. If you haven't considered these magazines in the past, maybe now's the perfect time to expand your writing horizons. 📖

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