

*Thoughts for the Aspiring Writer*

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So, you want to write a book. Good for you. If it's a memoir, go ahead and knock yourself out, but be sure to check your dates and memories. If you don't, others will.

If you're interested in writing either fictional stories or non-fiction social commentary, poetry, plays, and even simple essays, I offer these tidbits to think about.

First, dummy up. Don't tell a soul. If you need an editor or proof reader, give them the copy without the author's name and tell them it's for a friend.

Then, get a pen name. Make it catchy or literary sounding, but never, ever, use your real name when starting out. You can have a big reveal during your first television interview.

Once you've written it, get it nicely bound in both paper and hardback. There are services that do this, such as Barnes and Noble.

Then the fun begins. Buy several copies and give them to your friends and relatives. Don't do this all at once and don't tell them it's your work; not yet. Instead, tell them something like, "Hey! I ran across this writer (don't say new) and thought you'd enjoy his book, so happy birthday!" If you have more than one book, make sure that the recipient of your gift knows where to buy the other title, but be subtle. "I think he sells his books on Amazon or Barnes and Noble."

If you're lucky, and a good writer, the word will get out that the book is worth buying and you will get sales. Then you're on your way.

Now, I should explain why I'm offering this advice. If you tell people you wrote a book, a couple of situations arise. Your friends expect to get their copy for free. After all, they're your friends. They might like it and might even recommend it to others, but then they let on it's your book. Your friends' friends probably know you or know of you and know that you're a nobody. "Oh, that guy? He couldn't write a book! At least not one that would hold my interest."

And then there's your family. They too expect a free copy, but, after reading it they will tell you very explicitly what is wrong with it.

The problem is that they know you. As an unknown entity, you can build a professional profile without the, "I knew that clown in high school," effect.

Once you've established yourself as an author, you'll have a great surprise for your friends and family: Autographed copies.

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