



ARDITH'S NOTEBOOK

T H E F R E E D O M T O P U B L I S H

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Marketing

Reading for beginners

Not all authors enjoy giving readings of their work. It takes different skills to convey a great story on the printed page and to hold an audience's attention with a performance, and not everyone has both. If you just can't bring yourself to get up in front of people, don't do it until you feel comfortable. If you're nervous, you'll make your audience uncomfortable too. Writers are divided on the importance of public readings for building a career, but all agree that a bad reading is worse than not reading at all while a good reading can really build an audience.

If you can read from your work in public, you should do so at every opportunity. It's a brilliant way to bring your stories to the attention of potential book buyers and it can be really fun for author and audience alike.

Here are some tips to help you give a great reading.

- 1) Be familiar with your selection. Practice. Read to your friends and family before appearing in front of strangers. Read aloud to a tape recorder so you can hear how you sound.
- 2) You can read from a copy of your book or you can print out the necessary pages, it's up to you, but many authors find it really helpful to mark pauses and emphasis on the printed pages. That way, you don't have to memorise these things. You just have to follow the marks on the page.
- 3) Pause before you begin to allow your audience to get ready to listen. If the passage you are going to read is not self-explanatory, be sure to introduce it so your audience knows what's going on. You don't need to explain the whole plot of your book, just who's there, what's happening, where, and maybe, why.
- 4) Make eye contact with people in the audience. Don't look down and mumble through your reading. Choose various individuals and read directly to them.
- 5) Speak up. If you need a microphone, ask for one. Don't shout. Pitch your voice to the room. And don't drop your voice at the end of sentences.
- 6) Slow down. You want your audience to enjoy the story, so don't rush through it.

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Publicity

How to talk to journalists

Once you have published a book, one of the best ways to let people know about it is through book reviews in the various magazines, literary journals, and websites and blogs that discuss literature. If your book is non-fiction, it may be reviewed in the mainstream press or in one of the specialist publications that covers your area of interest.

In addition to book reviews, many publications like to publish interviews with authors or profiles of them. These tend to concentrate on well-known writers, but not always. Once your book has grabbed a journalist's attention, you are half way to getting some great publicity. But this kind of attention won't just happen your way. You have to work for it.

When you approach a publication with information that you hope will lead to coverage, do some research: find out the name of the appropriate person to contact and then contact them only. Do not scattershot your press release to every person on a magazine's masthead. This guarantees that nobody will do anything with it. Do not send a press release to the publisher of a magazine and expect him or her to assign it to a writer. That's the editor's job and the publisher has enough to do without doing the editor's work as well. The exception to this rule is a publication that is obviously a one-person project. The producer's title may be "publisher" but they may also be writer, editor, ad sales rep, and distributor.

If you are looking for book review coverage, send a press release to the publication's Books Editor or Arts editor if there is one. Send it to the Editor if

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Marketing: Reading for beginners

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Don't worry about doing different voices. Just read clearly so everybody knows when someone else is meant to be speaking. If you feel comfortable reading with lots of expression or "acting" the story, by all means do so, but you have to feel comfortable doing that.

Choosing a selection

This depends on where you are: for a gathering of your fellow writers, it's a good idea to pick something new. If you have published a few books, read from your best seller and read something funny or at least something entertaining. People don't want to be depressed. And never read for longer than 20 minutes. Even the best readers can tire their audience if people have to concentrate for too long.

If you don't have something suitable that stands alone, be sure to introduce your selection: put it in context, tell the audience who the characters are (BRIEFLY) and what's happening when we join them. And, end at a logical point.

When you are booked to read in public

Don't assume people will just know about your reading. You must publicise the event. Tell everyone you know. Email, phone, advertise, stop people on the street if you have to.

You can read at open mic events, book stores, festivals, or conferences related to your book's subject matter. The Canada Council's website has an excellent list of literary festivals and reading series, complete with links so you can contact individuals who may invite you to participate in their event.

You don't even have to have a published book in order to read, although it's harder to get invited to events if you don't have a book. But don't ignore opportunities for unpublished authors to share work.

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there is no review writer specified. It will save you money if you send the information electronically first. Then follow-up with a phone call or personal email to see if they would like a review copy of the actual book. This does not guarantee coverage, but it does allow you to target your review copies more carefully.

Proof read your press release more than once. Nothing will detract from the value of your efforts more than poorly presented publicity material.

If you are interviewed by a publication, don't assume that journalists are out to get you. The stereotype of the tabloid hack just waiting to trip up the unsuspecting subject is true enough, but generally only when applied to people with something to hide, like politicians or captains of industry facing class-action lawsuits. Most arts reporters just want to file their copy and write about something interesting.

You can help them by having a high-resolution scan of a photo of yourself and jpeg scans of your book jacket available. You can provide a "ready to run" review of the book or a question and answer sheet with information about yourself and your work. They may not use this, but it will give them ideas and help them to get the facts straight.

Finally, if a journalist writes a positive review or an interview that portrays you and your work in a positive light, write them a note to say thank you. Everybody likes to be appreciated, and journalists tend to hear only the complaints. If you are nice to them, they'll remember you when your next book comes out.