

Writer's Track Instructions

Please bring the first page of an article, chapter of a book, or any piece of your writing for the **Writer's Track First Page Peer Critiquing session** on Thursday night at 8:30 p.m. (Directions on page 4)

Preparing for your:

Pre-Conference – Book Proposal Intensive Clinic (3 hours)

Taught by Dave and Cindy Lambert, "Somersault"

Limit: 25 registrants

Prerequisite: Complete and bring with you a working proposal. Once you've registered, download the book proposal template (either [fiction](#) or [non-fiction](#)) designed by the Lamberts, or you may use a proposal model you've found on your own.

Broken into four segments, this hands-on interactive clinic will begin with an in-depth presentation, then offer individual time to work on and refine specific proposal elements of your own, then break into small groups for fiction and nonfiction personal feedback and critique, and finally come together again for advice and guidance to launch you into the world of meeting with editors.

OR

Pre-Conference – Book Proposal Studio (3 hours)

Taught by Kathy Bruins and Kim de Blecourt

Limit: 25 registrants

- [Fiction Proposal Template](#)
- [Non-fiction Proposal Template](#)

Prerequisite: Attendees for this session should come with a first draft completed using one of our two proposal templates above. Registered attendees will receive directions (via email, before the conference) to help you pull together the necessary information for your proposal

The BOOK PROPOSAL STUDIO is for writers in the process of preparing a book-length manuscript to present to agents or editors for traditional publication consideration. A well-written book proposal helps you to clarify your project so you can clearly communicate your idea for publishing consideration. Your book proposal must also answer the questions on an agent or editor's mind, such as:

- the message of your book idea,
- your book idea's audience,
- your book idea's competition,
- and more.

15-Minute Publishing Appointment Instructions

Our Speak Up Conference is unique in that each participant in the writing track will be offered not just one, but up to four 15-minute appointments with publishing/editorial professionals, author mentors, self-publishing professionals, or social media experts. Our goal is to match you with the best possible connections, so take time to read through the descriptions in the 15-minute appointments section. You will be given the opportunity to choose your top five possibilities, and we will do our best to schedule you with three of those choices.

In preparation for your 15-minute appointment, please prepare a “one-sheet” ahead of time and bring 5 to 7 copies with you in case you meet additional editors, publishers, or authors after their break-out sessions, after the writers’ Q & A, or at your meals. This gives you something tangible to place in their hands with your contact information on it and with your book idea summarized.

What to Include on your “One-Sheet” for a Successful 15-Minute Publisher Meeting

(There is more than one way to prepare a One-Sheet. Publishers may want you to adapt to their specifications.)

- An 8 ½ x 11 sheet (can be two-sided)
- A picture that reflects your personality (can be a professional head-shot or something more casual)
- Your contact information—name, address, e-mail address, phone number, and your blog address (if you are currently writing a blog)
- A biographical summary that highlights your qualifications for writing (Include any publishing credits you currently have, such as articles or devotionals you’ve written, and any contributions you’ve made to someone else’s book.)
- A one-sentence “concept statement” on what your book is about
- A few short paragraphs about the book (Include any information on the “felt need” your book addresses and how you can help to solve a problem and offer “real-life-help” to the reader.)
- A description of the audience for this book (age & gender demographics)
- Your projected word-count (A typical non-fiction book would be about 60,000 words. Novels are often longer.)

- A brief comparative analysis showing what makes your book unique from what is already “out there” on your topic. (Check Amazon.com and list book titles that might compete with your title.)
- The name and contact information of your agent (if you have one)
- A brief description of how you can market the book (examples: through your denomination, your blog, or your website) What is your current “platform?”

What to include in “The Pitch” to the publishing professional

- A brief greeting: “Hi! Thank you for seeing me today. My name is _____ and my book is about _____.”
- “My credential for writing on this topic is _____.” (significant life experience, education, or professional background)
- “This book is aimed at _____.” (Describe your target audience.)
- “People who read this book will walk away with _____.” (include 3 or 4 significant points)
- Optional: “I’ve done some research and discovered _____.”
- Optional: “Let me show you the structure I have in mind.” (Pull out your book proposal if it is complete and let the writing professional take a quick look.)
- Optional: “Can you tell me if your publishing house is currently looking for a practical guide on this a topic?”
- “I’d like to give you a one-sheet to take with you for future reference.” (Hand them your “One-Sheet.”)
- “Do you have any questions for me?”
- “I know my time is up and I want to thank you for seeing me today.” Extend your hand and request their business card.

General Guidelines:

- If you sense the publisher/editor is highly interested in your idea, say: "May I e-mail my proposal or my complete manuscript to you?" (If your manuscript isn't complete, then ask only about the proposal.) In some cases the publishing professional will want to keep a copy of your book proposal, but in most cases your one-sheet will be their first choice.
- If you are writing fiction, your approach will have much more to do with a summary of your story line and plot development, in addition to your biographical summary and writing credentials. You may prefer to have an appointment with our fiction specialist, Dave Lambert.
- Be sure to cover the preparation for your appointment and the actual meeting with much prayer. Ask God for clarity of mind and for the ability to be concise and passionate about your idea.

First Page Peer Critiquing

Twila Belk

In his book *Writer to Writer: Lessons from a Lifetime of Writing*, veteran author Cecil Murphey says, “Over the years I’ve asked editors and agents how much of a manuscript they read before they make a decision. Most of them tell me that if the first paragraph is badly written, that’s enough and they reject it. Some agents allow them only a full page. They’re busy and they won’t belabor manuscripts they’ll reject anyway.”

First paragraphs matter.

First pages matter.

In a small group setting, we’ll read and discuss the first page of an article, chapter of a book, or any piece of writing from a few volunteers. This is a good opportunity for us to learn from others. As we review the work of our peers and listen to the feedback, we discover things to improve in our own project.

After the piece is read, we’ll discuss two things:

- 1) What did you like about it?
- 2) What is one thing you can suggest to improve it?

Here are a few things to think about:

- 1) Does the beginning grab you?
- 2) Does it start with a problem or conflict?
- 3) Is the ending given away too soon?
- 4) Does each paragraph connect with the one before and after? (Did the writer use good transitions?)
- 5) Does the sentence structure vary, or are all sentences similar? (For example: subject/verb, subject/verb, subject/verb)
- 6) What clichés did you notice?
- 7) How realistic is the dialog?

For those commenting:

- 1) Begin with something positive or encouraging.
- 2) With sensitivity and gentleness, offer suggestions for things you think need changed or improved.
- 3) Give both general and specific feedback. Be as constructive as you can.
- 4) Avoid restating things already mentioned.

For those receiving comments:

- 1) Everyone needs an editor, and every manuscript can be improved.
- 2) Comments are subjective, and you don’t have to agree. Listen without being defensive.
- 3) Ask for clarification, if needed.
- 4) Thank those who made suggestions.