

VOCABULARY OF

THE WRITING/PUBLISHING WORLD

- Advance** The money a publisher gives a writer in advance of writing a book. The advance is a kind of “loan” given the writer since it is subtracted from later royalty earnings.
- Agent** A person who knows the world of publishing and represents authors. Agents find the best publisher for a work, negotiate favorable contract terms and generally assist a writer’s career. Agents keep about 10% of what the author earns. Only full-time or successful writers need agents.
- Copyright** The legal right to reproduce (“copy”) and sell a piece of writing. The author owns the copyright unless it is given to a second party in a contract. A student who copies from a book and represents it as original writing is cheating. An author who copies from a published work (without permission) and represents it as original is breaking the law.
- Editor** At a publishing house, the person who works with an author to bring a manuscript into final, published form. At a magazine, the editors turn a collection of articles into a magazine.
- Free-lancer** Sells writing to various publications and/or publishers. A free-lancer is paid only for published writing.
- House organ** A newsletter or magazine issued to employees by an employer to provide information about the company. Steady source of employment for those wishing to write for a living.
- Manuscript** The typewritten book or article before publication.
- Publisher** The company or person who has a manuscript printed, bound and sold. The publisher is not the same as the printer. The publisher is responsible for selling the book.
- Query letter** A letter inquiring if a magazine or publisher would like to read a manuscript for possible publication.
- Remainder** Many bookstores have “bargain tables” where books are sold at hugely discounted prices—these are remainders. They are books that are not selling well but that publishers still have in stock in their warehouses. Also called “publisher’s overstocks.”
- Royalty** A percentage of the cover price of each book that goes to the author.

Scientific writer	Writes in terms ordinary people can understand about scientific, medical and technical subjects.
Subsidiary rights	The right to publish a book in a foreign language, make a movie of the book, publish a paperback or book club edition, etc. How the money for such rights is divided is carefully spelled out in contract between the author and publisher.
Technical writer	Interprets technical information for an audience which has some particular interest or knowledge in the field. Usually works for the government or corporations.
Textbook	A book written for school use. Not usually sold through bookstores.
Trade book	A book sold "to the trade"--to bookstores for sale to customers.
Trade discount	A bookstore can buy a \$10 book from the publisher for 40%-60% off that price. This is the trade discount and represents the source of profits for bookstores.
Vanity press	A "vanity publisher" will "publish" any book you submit--for a fee. The writer pays to have the book published. This is profitable to the printer and the "author's" ego but rarely sells books. Such "publishers" are really printers. Authors do not pay money to publishers.

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