

Ten Things that Agents and Editors Hate

By Rick Frishman

The following are ten things agents and editors hate.

#1: Writers claim no competition exists.

Competitive or comparable books usually exist. Rarely does a book have no competition.

#2: Writers claim their books will be the next blockbuster.

Although it's essential for authors to be enthusiastic about their books, it's equally important that they be realistic.

#3: Writers say how much others liked their books.

Agents and editors simply don't care what others think about a book unless they are (a) book-publishing professionals or (b) celebrities or published authors who are willing to endorse the book. Even then, their opinions don't carry much weight and will rarely influence the agent's or editor's decision.

#4: Submissions are made for books on subjects that the agent or editor doesn't handle.

Sending submissions that recipients don't handle wastes everyone's time. So don't send your memoir to an agency when the guidebooks and agency's Web site clearly state that it doesn't represent memoirs.

#5: Correspondence is not addressed to a particular agent or editor.

Don't address any correspondence, especially submissions, generally or to "Dear Agent or Editor." It's impersonal and it makes your communiqué look like a form letter that you simply dashed off to a slew of agents or editors.

#6: Writers call constantly, are demanding and don't let up.

It makes no sense to put undue pressure on agents and editors. Be reasonable, patient, and understanding. Agents and editors know how important your book is to you, but their hands may be tied.

#7: Writers try to be cute, instead of being direct and straightforward.

In children, cuteness can be adorable. In adults, it seldom works; in fact, it usually becomes irritating. Agents and editors don't have time for cuteness. They want to know, in a few words, what your book is about, and why you're the perfect person to write it.

#8: Writers send submissions in strange formats and colors.

Attract interest in your writing by providing top-quality work. Great ideas expressed in clear, well-crafted sentences that are built with the most vivid words will speak more convincingly than outlandish colors and designs.

#9: Writers have a bad attitude or act superior.

Acting as if you're entitled to an editor's attention will instantly turn him or her off.

#10: Writers reject professional advice.

Some writers won't listen to constructive criticism from their agents and/or editors. Trust the people who are publishing your book and don't think that you know more than they do about the publishing process.

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