Linda Formichelli's E-Course on Breaking into Magazines

Frequently Asked Questions

Course site: www.writeformagazines.com
(FAQ updated February 6, 2011)

FAQ for Linda Formichelli's E-Course on Breaking into Magazines

What is the e-course schedule?

Here it is:

Week 1. Generating Ideas (assignment: come up with three salable ideas)

Week 2. Finding Markets (assignment: choose one of your three ideas to run with for the rest of the course, and find five magazines to send your idea to)

Week 3. Finding Editors (assignment: find out which editor to pitch at each magazine, plus their contact info)

Week 4. Doing Interviews Part I (assignment: set up as many expert interviews as you need - generally 1 to 3)

Week 5. Doing Interviews Part II (assignment: do the interviews)

Week 6. Writing the Title and Lede (assignment: guess what? ;-> Write the title and lede of your query letter)

Week 7. Writing the Body and Closing (assignment: write the body and "why I am so great" paragraph of your query)

Week 8. Sending Your Query (assignment: get that thing out the door!)

How much does the e-course cost?

My e-course on breaking into magazines costs $240 for the Premium version with 8 weeks of e-mail support, and $120 for the Basic version with no e-mail support (more on that below). If you sign up for the Premium version, that's just $30 for each lesson, assignment, and week's worth of e-mail support. And it comes with a free set of Ginsu Knives! (Okay, kidding about the knives.) You can pay via PayPal or check; for more info on how to pay, visit www.lindaformichelli.com/course.

How do I access the lessons? Do I need special software?

The lessons are on password-protected web pages on my therenegadewriter.com site. Every Monday, I'll e-mail you the web address, user name, and password to the next lesson. Just click on the link to the lesson, fill in the user name and password (which are case sensitive) in the pop-up box, and you'll be taken to the next lesson.

I had one student who could not access the online lessons, so for her I created text versions of the lessons and assignments that I could send in the body of an e-mail. If for some reason you can't access the online lessons, I can e-mail you the text version. It's not as pretty, but it's exactly the same information.

Do I have to be in a certain place at a certain time?

Nope. I send the lessons out every Monday morning (or late Sunday night if I happen to be up late). You can read them and do the assignments at your convenience. You don't even have to do one assignment per week if you can't or don't want to. For example, you can skip a week and do two assignments the next week. Just don't go crazy with the freedom...keep in mind if you want feedback on your assignments, it will be hard for me to offer critiques on, say, five assignments in one week!

Can I access the lessons after the session is over?

Shh, don't tell anyone...but I never change the passwords and user names, so you can access the lessons forever and use the information to write as many queries as you like. Please do not share the passwords and user names with anyone.

Where do I send my questions or assignments?

I set up a special account just for the e-course: LindaCourse@gmail.com.

What's your teaching style?

I'd say I'm a motivator. I understand that trying to start a freelance career is scary, so I try to help students get over their fears. Also, perfectionism plagues new writers, and I encourage them to just do their best job and get that query out there because (1) there is no such thing as a perfect query (or article, or response to an editor's e-mail, or letter of introduction), and (2) it's better to get something out there and fail and try again than to get nothing out there at all.

When it comes to offering feedback on assignments, I'm thorough but not negative or mean. I have no problem with suggesting changes to ideas, query letters, etc. If something is not working, I will let you know.

If I sign up for the Basic version of the course, does that mean I get no e-mail support at all?

Technically there is no e-mail support (and also no assignment critiques), but I'm a real softie. If you're in the Basic course and you're having problems with a certain assignment or something I said makes no sense to you, I want to hear from you. I want all of my students to get their money's worth from the course, so I won't leave anyone in the lurch.

What kinds of questions can I ask in the Premium version of the course?

I prefer that students ask questions that relate to the coursework. If you have a lot of general writing/freelancing questions, please consider signing up for a phone mentoring

session -- more details at http://www.therenegadewriter.com/mentoring/. I'm happy to offer my current students a 10% discount -- e-mail me at lindaformichelli@gmail.com for details on how to sign up with the discount.

I'm going on vacation for a week during the course. Is that okay?

Generally, yes. If you need to take some time off, I'm happy to extend the e-mail support for however long you were off so that you get the full eight weeks of support. But please clear this with me, as there may be times when I'm unavailable after the course ends and can't offer an extension of the e-mail support (such as when I have a vacation planned).

I'll be away/busy/washing my hair when the course starts and would like to start a few days late. Can I do that?

If you're confident that you can catch up on the lessons and assignments to your satisfaction, starting a little late is usually fine. You can do the assignments at your own pace, so it's not like you have to make a deadline. I'll also be happy to extend the e-mail support so you get your full eight weeks -- but again, please clear it with me first in case I'm unavailable after the course ends to extend the e-mail support.

If you want to sign up after the course session has started, I'll send you the lessons you missed as soon as I receive your payment, and then you'll get the rest of the lessons on schedule. As for extending the e-mail support so you get your full eight weeks, please clear it with me first.

Will there be any interaction with the other students in the course?

No. Some courses take place in e-mail groups (such as Yahoo groups) so that the students see one another's questions and assignments and also see the instructor's answers and critiques for every student. My e-course is one-on-one: you send me your questions and assignments directly, and no one sees them but you and me.

When will you answer my questions/critique my assignments?

I answer e-mails on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You can send me your questions and assignments any time you like, but keep in mind that if you send an e-mail on, say, Friday night or Monday morning, you won't receive a response until Tuesday.

Do I have to turn in my assignments for critiquing?

No. You can do the assignments on your own if you wish. I have plenty of students who do that.

Will you critique this query that I already wrote?

Sorry, but no. I can critique only the query that you create as part of the coursework in my e-course.

I live in the U.K./South America/Australia/etc. Can I write for U.S. magazines?

Yes. Thanks to that wonder called the Internet, anyone who's online can write for U.S. magazines. I have plenty of editors I've spoken with only via e-mail! However, keep in mind that it may be harder for you to access U.S. magazines and find markets to query; many magazines have their contents online, but not all of them do. Also, think about how you'll interview U.S. sources (which most U.S. magazines will expect you to do). One of your assignments in my e-course will be to interview a couple of sources for your query. You can sometimes interview sources via e-mail, but do consider the expense and time-difference issues you may have to deal with when interviewing a source who is in the U.S. by phone. Lots of overseas writers handle this just fine, but you may decide that it's too much trouble or expense.

At the end of the e-course, what will I have?

At the end of my e-course, assuming you do all the assignments, you should have one query letter sent out to five magazines. You should also have an understanding of what makes a salable idea, how to research the markets you'd like to pitch, how to track down editors' contact information, how to do an interview, and how to research, write, and send a query letter. Finally, you'll have access to the lessons and assignments forever in case you'd like to brush up on your query skills or follow the assignments to write more queries.

Can I write more than one query letter in the course?

Technically, you can write as many as you want...I can't stop you! But I can critique assignments for only one query letter.

According to your schedule, the first assignment is to come up with three ideas. I'm overflowing with ideas...can I send you more than three?

No, sorry. Part of successful freelancing is learning to separate the idea wheat from the idea chaff -- to narrow down your ideas to the ones with the most potential. Also, I like to thoroughly critique ideas, and I just don't have time to critique more than three ideas from every student! So I'd appreciate it if you could send just the three ideas you consider your best. If you send me more than three, I'll critique just the first three in the list.

Do you make a living writing 100% for magazines?

It fluctuates. There have been times when almost 100% of my income was from magazine writing, with a little bit from books. These days, I'd say that roughly 80% of my income is from magazines, and the remaining 20% is from books, courses, and copywriting gigs. Although it's possible to make a living writing 100% for magazines, I

encourage writers to diversify. This (1) keeps you from getting bored or burned out, and (2) helps protect you should one of your sources of income hit a slump.

I can't decide whether to take your course or the one offered by MediaBistro/WritingClasses.com/etc. How does yours differ?

I can't say because I haven't taken those courses. When you're choosing an e-course, ask yourself:

- *What are the instructor's credentials?* Has he or she written for many magazines? Are they magazines that you've heard of or that you'd be interested in writing for?
- *How much does it cost?* E-course prices vary greatly. I wouldn't advise shopping by price alone (sometimes there's a good reason that a course is super-cheap or free!), but I understand that price is a consideration for most people.
- *How is the course formatted?* If you want to interact with other students, look for a course that takes place in an online group setting. If you don't want to interact with other students or share your ideas and critiques, consider a one-on-one course (like mine).
- *What do others say about the course?* There are many threads on various writer's forums where writers discuss and critique the e-courses they've taken. Try www.mediabistro.com, www.absolutewrite.com, and other sites that have forums.

Can I learn everything that's in the course by just reading your books, *The Renegade Writer: A Totally Unconventional Guide to Freelance Writing Success* and *The Renegade Writer's Query Letters That Rock*?

No. To become a successful freelance writer, you must take my course, buy all my books and e-books, and send me gifts of money in the mail. Okay, seriously...*The Renegade Writer* has advice on how to break into freelance writing and make more money by breaking the rules. Some of this info is naturally woven throughout the lessons because it's just the way I work. But *The Renegade Writer* is not an instruction guide on how to write a query letter.

The Renegade Writer's Query Letters That Rock has about two dozen successful query letters, plus comments from the editors that assigned the articles, comments from the writers who wrote the queries, and a FAQ on query letters. If you're going to buy one of my books instead of taking my e-course, this is the one you want. However, it doesn't have step-by-step instructions on how to write a query letter, and it doesn't come with assignments or e-mail support. The e-course also has additional resources, plus information that doesn't appear in the book.

What are your credentials for teaching this course?

In 1997, my husband Eric and I moved from California to Massachusetts with enough money saved up to last six months. Eric was in college full-time, so it was up to me to support us both. If I didn't earn enough from freelancing within six months, I'd have to hit the want ads for a 9-to-5 job. Well, here it is ten years later (as of 2007), and I'm still freelancing!

I've written for more than 130 trade and newsstand magazines, including such national publications as *Family Circle*, *Woman's Day*, *Redbook*, *Writer's Digest*, *Wired News*, *Business Start-Ups*, *Parenting*, *WebMD*, *Health*, *Alternative Medicine*, *USA Weekend*, and *Fitness*. You can see a list of the magazines I've written for at www.lindaformichelli.com/articles. Keep in mind that I've written for the majority of the magazines on the list multiple times; I don't move from one magazine to the next just to rack up an impressive-sounding list. I deliver what editors want, so they hire me again and again.

I'm also the co-author of *The Renegade Writer: A Totally Unconventional Guide to Freelance Writing Success* and *The Renegade Writer's Query Letters That Rock*, and co-owner of the Renegade Writer Blog at www.therenegadewriter.com. I've spoken on freelance writing at writer's conventions nationwide, including the American Society of Journalists and Authors conference in New York City, the North American Travel Journalists Association conference in Santa Fe, and the Wrangling with Writing conference in Tucson.

I started my e-course in June of 2005, and as of February 2011 I've taught close to 400 students. My students have landed assignments in such magazines as *Writer's Digest*, *Woman's Day*, *Pizza Today*, *Michigan Out-Of-Doors*, *Graduating Engineer*, *E: The Environmental Magazine*, *Black Health*, *Cottage Living*, *SpeciaLiving*, *For Me*, *Wines & Vines*, and *Body & Brain*.

Do you offer a money-back guarantee?

Yes. You have two weeks from the start date of the course to drop the course and get a full refund. After two weeks, refunds are on a case-by-case basis. Luckily, this hasn't been an issue so far: Out of 400 students, I've had only three students drop out of the course.

You rock. Is there anything I can do for you?

Yes! Please tell your friends about my e-course. I'm trying to increase enrollment so I can offer the course every month instead of every other month. You can send your friends to http://www.therenegadewriter.com, and feel free to send them this FAQ as well. If you're a current or former student of my e-course and you get a friend to sign up, you'll get a cool thank-you gift. The gift changes, but in the past I've offered students Renegade Writer mugs and writing e-books.

I have a question that's not answered here. What should I do?

Please e-mail me your question at lindaformichelli@gmail.com.