
Writing Wrongs:
Losing it in the translation

Part 10 –
Writing

by
David Grossman

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Preface

This draft publication includes only some of the information that I have collected over the years about writing. The other information is included in the other resources in this series.¹

It doesn't include everything

Don't expect this Jewish Writing book to relate to everything that needs to be said about writing.

There certainly are enough materials and resources with that information. Writers love to write about their craft, and there is no need for yet another publication to discuss the same issues.

However, I do want to share the concepts that have developed over the course of my own writing. They may help others in their writing. I also want to share some issues that are unique to writing about Jewish issues.

Consider this book, as well as the others in this series, as a potpourri of information. You probably will not find the useful parts in any other book.

The Jewish Writing² forum is the source, the basis, and the inspiration for some of the articles in this website.

Acknowledgments

¹ Writing Wrongs | Writing | Other books in this series

² Jewish Unity Forums | Part 2 | Jewish Writing

My wife Miriam has been very helpful in preparing the technical aspects of this series. She has done the transcribing of the basic articles, and then converted the websites into books.

The subscribers to my Jewish Writing³ forum have contributed their expertise and knowledge to this book. Some of the articles were originally posted on that forum.

Sequence

The general arrangement of the book does have a rationale.

The book begins with some of my articles on a variety of issues. More of these articles about writing are in the expanded description of the Jewish Writing forum, and still more articles are scattered throughout Writing Wrongs series and other books.

The second part of the book covers a specific issue: how to write academic reports. It is based on several college-level courses that I taught.

A third section presents the case for electronic publishing. Although the stress is unquestionably focused on the advantages of this modern way of distributing documents, it does not come out with a definitive recommendation.

The book concludes with an unfinished discussion about the different genres of Jewish writing. A future revision of this book should include major changes in this section.

³ <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jewishwriting/join>

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This book is

A resource for tips, ideas, methods,
and knowledge about writing and the
writing trades.

**These
selected
topics**

reflect a personal and Jewish
approach.

**Use this
material
freely,**

but remember that these articles are
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My articles

Holocaust writing as a series of exceptions

In America
only the successful writer
is important,
in France
all writers are important,
in England
no writer is important,
and in Australia
you have to explain
what a writer is.
- Geoffrey Cottrell

All too often people who were involved in writing about Jewish topics don't really write about the topics themselves. Instead, they prefer to write about the exceptions. This is unfortunate because it gives the reader of Jewish literature the wrong idea about what really happens.

If Jewish writing stresses those who succeeded in terrible situations then we will be giving the wrong impression about what is really happening.

Testing out the theory

In 2005, I expressed the following thesis to the subscribers to the Jewish Writing forum:

A large part of writing about Jewish issues is based on exceptions rather than on the norm.

For example, many stories describe those who *survived* the [Holocaust](#). Granted, there would not be much of a story if you would write about someone who perished. However, readers may get the faulty

impression that the Holocaust was not so bad after all. They may feel that the terrible period of time is a story of super-heros and survivors. They may even get the impression that Jews benefited from the experience. What a corruption of reality!

As another example, the stories about people who were expelled from Gush Katif in Israel show how select individuals were able to start their lives again and to develop a thriving business or farm in no time. Those stories may give the impression that the expulsion was good for the Jews in Gush Katif. Without discussing the events themselves, there is no question that those who were expelled were not pleased.

Is this theory correct? Does Jewish writing tend to stress the survivors, rather than presenting a balanced picture? Does it give readers a twisted and wrong view of what happened? Does Jewish writing stress Josephus, the sole survivor, rather than all of those who perished in his time?

Are we being unfair to our readership? Are we rewriting the tragedies in Jewish history as good things?

Are we, ourselves, guilty of perpetrating our own form of the Big Lie?

The subscribers were quick to present a range of responses. Some agreed with this thesis, and some did not. Their

comments were edited without changing the content or the tone:

Response 1

"Please don't use the Holocaust to test your theories. The accounts that I have published from eyewitnesses to the Holocaust show pages and pages of dedications to family and friends who perished at the hand of the Nazi murderers. Their murder IS the story!"

Response 2

"The poems that I publish deal with the victims of events, and not just the Holocaust. Such events describe diseases, Alzheimers, senility, growing older, and dead parents. The stories are invariably based on the perished, the victims, not on survivors."

Response 3

"Is there a norm in Jewish history? I think not. "We won, now let's eat" is the norm. We need to celebrate, and we need to be told that we did good. Your assumption of "a good thing" following tragedies is very Jewish. A "Bracha" is to be found in each and every crisis in our lives. If we continue to search it will come. You must obviously be trying to stir us up with your thesis, although it is sad that it has a "Yiddish" flavor. No one has found goodness out of the Holocaust. The outcome of every person from Gush Katif is bad. Their moves have not been successful. The tale of what is good for Israel is yet to be written.

The people, relatives, and friends of those who survived the Holocaust are written into the tales. Josephus was our historian, as are the tales of survivors."

Response 4

"I must differ. A simple basic formula would have to be, "They hurt us. Hashem helped us. We thank Hashem, and we eat."

Response 5

"I don't think that Josephus was OUR historian. In fact, he was Agrippas' historian. He was a closer friend to the Sadducees than to the mainstream Jews. (Josephus defined "mainstream Jews" as those who followed the Perushim - the righteous, Pharisaic, Rabbis). Josephus hated the Rabbis, and vilified a number of them in his works.

I agree that events such as the Holocaust and the expulsion from Gush Katif (though the two are not really comparable) have not been good to us, and that honest people who read about them won't think they were.

I don't understand your points about what's normative. David's theory is that the stories told give the wrong impression. Those who choose to take the stories the wrong way would PROVE David's theory.

As far as I recall, in all of the Holocaust accounts that I have read, great lengths have been taken to describe the horrors and the vast numbers of the dead.

I do not think that the coverage of the expulsion from Gush Katif gave anyone the impression that it was good for the Jews.

I do not see how anyone can read a Holocaust memoir and come to the conclusion that the Holocaust was not so bad. I think that the only people who get the impression that the Holocaust was "not so bad" are those people who already wish to believe so.

Part of the poignancy is the fact that those who did not survive *cannot* write their memoirs of the Holocaust. It is therefore the province of the survivors to make sure that the world does not forget or ignore what happened. Are you suggesting that they NOT do that? That the Holocaust be forgotten instead? This seems a rather offensive stance to take.

Even if it "convinces" some people that "it was not so bad" (and, as I said, it "convinces" only those who wish to believe that), the larger majority will be moved by such a book.

As one example, Spiegelman's *Maus* does not trivialize the Holocaust. It trivializes other issues, like intermarriage, but not the Holocaust itself.

One of the most famous Holocaust writing among non-Jews is Anne Frank's *Diary*. She and most of her family did not survive. There is goodness in the books, especially from the people helping them, but no positive ending.

Other books and films, such as *Sophie's Choice*, and *Enemies: A Love Story*, demonstrate how traumatic surviving can be."

Response 6

"Josephus may have been a close friend of the Sadducees, but he gave us a piece of history that was important. His main thesis was to show the Romans that G-d did continue to support the Jews, and to pave the way for The Romans to re-build the temple. I don't agree with David's theory."

Response 7

"The Haggadah tells every Jew in every generation to consider himself as having personally experienced slavery in Egypt and the Exodus. Similarly, every Jew in every generation must consider himself as having personally experienced and having survived the Holocaust. The pain and suffering does not belong to the "survivors" alone. It is our future generations that will keep the memory alive, as we have kept the Passover alive. We all share the pain."

Response 8

"When I saw the word 'exceptions' my mind went in a different direction. When I was 23 I had a job as a waitress. A friend of my mother's said to me 'Jewish girls don't work as waitresses'. I felt my eyes narrow. I can still recall my feelings. I have spent a good part of my life doing things that Jewish girls are not stereotypically supposed to do. My writing probably reflects this. Or, probably more correctly, writers are the exception not the rule."

P.S. As to what you said about Gush Katif and the Holocaust – it's confusing to me. Most of what I read about Gush Katif is the bad news."

Response 9

"Are we rewriting the tragedies in Jewish history as good things? If you believe the midrash about *hhamushim* (four-fifths died in the darkness) or *makish yetsiah labiah* (for each two that came alive out of Egypt, 599,998 had died in Egypt), you may say that Moses began it."

Response 10

"I disagree. Rather than endeavor to keep the pain alive, we should keep the flame alive.

Holocaust memorials? Yes, we have to make sure history doesn't subvert and forget this reality, and we have to fight the deniers and the anti-Semites. But the best memorial to the lives of the people who perished is Jewish children around the world who learn Torah and observe mitzvos, as well as the revival of Judaism itself - not Holocaustism."

Response 11

"Regarding the explanation of "chamushim":

The number of 4 out of 5 does not specify the total population, because the sentence does not state "4 out of 5 of every family destined to leave Egypt." 4 out of 5 could apply to a certain type of Jew, not the entire total of 600,000.

I say "could" just to raise the issue, but I believe that there is proof as to who, specifically, comprised the population that died; a small subsection of the Exodus."

Response 12

"I do not feel that these types of Jewish survival stories ever, ever, ever, make any horrible moment in Jewish history look like, G-d forbid, a good thing. I think what the stories of survivors illustrate is the inextinguishable desire of the Jewish people to live. These types of stories have always given me strength, that no matter how bad I feel my personal situation is, I say that if they could make it out of their conditions, I can certainly make it out of mine. I have never read anything like what you mentioned about it being a good thing. I think this approach is very different from your idea, and it should be taken into consideration." "I'm getting the feeling that your thesis compares apples and bears. I don't think you meant 'good thing' but rather 'a thing that is,' without judgment. My writings on the subject never included an ounce of judgment. Our history is a fight for survival. We are a strong people, thank G-d, and hopefully, we will be around for a long, long time."

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Do the response disprove my thesis?

Are these other books and publications the exceptions to the rule, or do they reflect the general trend?

Keywords: [History](#), [Jewish](#), [Writing](#)
[/jewishwriting/MyArticles/Exceptions](#)

Unity: the purpose of the Jewish Writing group

Several subscribers wrote about the future of the group. They had three different slants.

Following some postings about workshops in Israel, one subscriber wrote, "Everything on the group is about Israel." That subscriber suggested regional groups.

The second subscriber wanted a group that was less eclectic and parochial. Translation: Jewish Writing is (supposedly) oriented to the needs of religious Jews, and it excludes the secular Jewish world.

The third subscriber criticized the fact that Jewish Writing has too much discussion about fiction. That subscriber wanted Jewish Writing to be split into different genres.

None of these subscribers argued for a *unifying* body of Jewish writers. Each subscriber wanted to have a group that would meet their own limited – and possibly individual – needs. And, I still haven't heard from the subscribers who want a particular style of moderation (or lack of moderation), or from those who want to avoid a particular political slant.

Jewish Writing has many subscribers, *Ken Yirbu*. That means "the sky's the limit." Actually, if I explained what it really meant, then some people would argue that I'm using an eclectic or parochial expression, while others would argue about the group's megalomaniac tendencies.

The group is indeed quite large. Yes, there may be larger writing groups, but that's not the point.

We could certainly split Jewish Writing into regional groups, and then split each regional group into parochial and non-parochial groups, and then split them again, into genre-based micro-groups – and along other lines as well.

Why do I have a strange feeling that these splits would lead to *more* groups than the total membership?

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.
Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Keywords: [Forums](#), [Moderation](#), [Unity](#), [Vent](#), [Writing /jewishwriting/MyArticles/Unity](#)

David Grossman

Finding time to write

I lead a busy life. I don't really have time to write. With all of the other issues pulling me from all sides, including my efforts to manage a household, children, many forums and websites, and trying to eke out a living, there is little time left to produce anything in writing.

Yet, I do write – and I write a lot.

Yes, it's very easy to say that you can give a busy man a job and it will get done, but that is much too simplistic – as well as hurtful to the busy man. Furthermore, there is no way of avoiding the fact that the busy man has to somehow have the time to do the job.

My guidelines for finding time to work may not work for you, since your circumstances are different from mine.

However, they may direct and guide you to find your own way in writing.

Many of you have a time saving machine – a car. It brings you to places faster than public transportation. I don't have a car. I use a time wasting machine – a bus. I don't even check the schedule – and as a result, I'm never sure when the bus will come. I usually just wait at the bus stop, and when the bus comes, it comes.

Doesn't that seem like a colossal waste of time? How can I possibly have time to work on my projects under such circumstances? Wouldn't it be a good idea to suggest that I get a car right away?

Nope.

The time that I spend waiting for the bus, and the subsequent time that I spend inside the bus, is when I do my basic writing.

No, I don't put it down on paper. There's no way to write on a bus with paper.

There's also no way to write to use a laptop computer on an Israeli bus⁴. Instead I take along a small pocket recorder and I stand at the bus stop with the tape recorder in my hand and I record my articles.

They do seem to flow. I've gotten used to writing articles this way and they appear in more or less logical order just as they would appear if I would be writing out my first draft.

⁴ Are you good enough for Israel? | Managing | Computer

I then have them transcribed and come back and work on them. I edit them. This is the time that I have to spend at the computer. Of course, once the articles have already been transcribed on the computer and all that I have is the editing, it goes much faster.

Yes, you might say, but the editing is the main part.

Perhaps.

I've written articles about this problem⁵ on translating. However, the fact that it is down on paper is a major advance.

It's also a big incentive. After all, I'm writing an article about an issue that is of importance right now. I don't have the all-too-common problem of saying I wish I could get this article down right now, since it's urgent for me to write about it right now. It's in me and I can work on it.

Using this method helps me calm down. It's written down, so it will not lose any of its potency or immediacy. I simply have to do the editing. I can find time to do that, perhaps while my email is downloading or while I'm eating by the computer.
[LINK TO EATING BY THE COMPUTER.](#)

Most of these articles were prepared in this manner.

Before posting them, I do try to edit them to a reasonable degree, and then I periodically go through these websites, never thoroughly of course, and I edit them more completely. As a result you'll find that there are some pages (well, not many) that were edited perfectly, while other pages are in varying stages of editing. I hope that the pages that you

⁵ Writing Wrongs | Editing

happen to look at will be edited completely before you look at them.

Yes, that is my way of writing and it works for me.

The point is that anybody, no matter how busy can find a way to find time to write and not be limited by outside work.

Yes, you are a busy person. You may even be busier than I am. It's entirely possible. I don't deny it.

However, it is clear that everyone can develop his own way to write. I found mine. You go ahead and find yours.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Keywords: [Writing/methods/jewishwriting/MyArticles/When2Write](#)

Overcoming writer's cramp

A hungry lion came across two men in the jungle. One was reading a book; the other was typing on his computer. The lion devoured the man reading the book. That's because he knew that readers digest, and writers cramp.
- Source unknown

Writer's cramp is caused by a feeling that you cannot continue your work. You are stuck, or stymied. If you feel

that you cannot stop writing, then you don't think about your minor aches and pains.

Keep the writing coming, and there will be no cramp. You can use the method. I throw my translations onto the paper and fool myself as a psychological⁶ trick. That method applies to writing as well as to translation.

This entire series of books was "thrown" onto a recorder. It offered a tremendous but foolish feeling of satisfaction, even though a great deal of editing work remained. The document that you are reading right now is not yet complete. However, the psychological impact is tremendous.

Yes, I print out the books even though they're not really edited properly. I give them a cover. I convert them to PDF format. I put them online so that other people can read them. I then tell myself that I've made a lot of progress.

Of course, I fool myself, because a tremendous amount of editing is required.

Publishing it while I can

I want to get the books online even though they are not ready. All too many people have written books that have not been published. They have remained on their hard drive or in their brains for various reasons:

- They felt that the book was not yet ready
- They did not want to take the necessary first steps for publishing the books

⁶ Writing Wrongs | Part 4 – Teaching translation | How to translate | Psychology
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- They did not want to deal with difficult publishers

I don't want to be in that position. My books will be published when they are still in draft form. With G-d's help, I will be able to improve on these books at a later stage.

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Reports

About

WRITING TIP FOR PROFESSIONALS:

To make your writing more appealing to the reader, avoid "writing negatively." Use positive expressions instead. WRONG: "Do not use this appliance in the bathtub."

RIGHT: "Go ahead, and use this appliance in the bathtub."
- Dave Barry

When you write down your ideas you automatically focus your full attention on them. Few if any of us can write one thought and think another at the same time.

Thus, a pencil and paper make excellent concentration tools.
- Michael Leboeuf

This section deals with methods of teaching how to write reports – a specific genre or type of writing.

It also serves as background material for a course in writing reports. Look in the Study with Grossman textbook for outlines, syllabi, requirements, and other technical issues relating to that course.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Business Letter

I am returning
this otherwise good typing paper
to you
because someone
has printed gibberish all over it
and put your name at the top.
- English professor at an Ohio university

It may seem a bit strange for me to write an article about the right way to write business letters to publishers. After all, I'm no better than you are; I have the same success (or failure) rate that you have, and I certainly have my share of mistakes and dumb things.

However, I have one thing that you may not have.

Guts.

And perhaps a bit of *chutzpah* thrown in for good measure.

I'm willing to go out on a limb and to expose my ideas to the general public. I'm then willing to subject my article to the toughest criticism possible.

You.

I'm then prepared to re-write my article based on your suggestions and ideas.

My original article may be foolish and ridiculous, but when I'm through being dragged through the mud by all the critics on **Jewish Writing**, I'll be sure to have the best article ever written on the subject.

You'll want to adapt your own letter to your own audience, and to do other things that will make your letter read properly for your audience. However, this list of guidelines may give you a good starter.

Start by convincing the publisher that his publishing firm will benefit by publishing your magnum opus.

If your letter is lengthy, divide it into sections with titles.

Actually, that rule is true for anything that you write.

That rule can be canceled if the letter is brief (as it should be).

I've seen several resources that suggest including a PS. I'm not sure why, but I tested it out myself - and I do indeed read that PS!

Use good quality paper and printing. Top it off with your best copy - short, advertising-style sentences, and make sure that your main points stand out. The more that it looks like an on-line presentation, the better it will be.

Try to use a digital recorder, and talk into it whenever you get a chance. I use it even when I'm not at home. People may stare, as if they never saw an audio device such as a cell phone or a portable recorder. Stare right back at them until they feel uncomfortable. If you can get somebody to transcribe it for you, then you're really set.

Don't edit (yet). Write quickly and throw your ideas onto paper. I've written articles about translation that say the same thing. First get it down on paper, and then worry about editing it. Get out of the habit of correcting your work as you go along.

Can you get somebody to read the letter to you out loud without feeling self-conscious? Watch his body language. If he struggles with, or pauses or re-reads a sentence, re-write it.

Put it through some more drafts. The more drafts it has, the better the letter will be. Be sure to put it aside between drafts.

Check out my rules for translating. Many of those rules apply right here as well. In many ways, good translating is very much the same as good writing.

Read more about writing in the [course on Report Writing](#)

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

1. What is the best procedure for writing a letter to a publisher?
2. What is a good guideline for writing or translating in general?
3. What problems may arise when using this system?

Keywords: [writing/methods](#)

Binder

אל תסתכל בקנקן
אלא במה שיש בו
- Don't judge a book
by its cover
(but times have changed...)

Your reports should accomplish the following three goals:

- To make the best impression
- To remove distractions
- To get your point across

This page will deal with the first of these goals: to make the best possible first impression.

That issue is crucial. The way a report is presented may be as important as the content.

In the past, writers may have been able to rely on the content of their masterpieces. That does not work today with reports. You *can* tell a book by its cover. People *do* care about appearance.

The next time you to go a stationery store or a bookstore, take note of the covers and binders.

Why do you think they are available in such a wide range of prices, types, styles, and levels of quality? Maybe there is a reason. Perhaps it is because successful people see them as an important part of their finished document.

Book publishers know that attractive books sell, and books that do not have effective covers remain on the shelves.

Schoolbook developers no longer publish drab, black-and-white texts. Today, they issue attractive (and expensive), multi-colored texts – on all grade levels.

Most teachers will not accept assignments unless they are typed. The days of writing reports on torn-out pages from a spiral notebook are long gone.

This change has also influenced business settings. All business documents must have a suitable binder or cover in order to get attention – and if your document is not intended to get attention, then perhaps you should ask why you wrote it in the first place. Documents that have attractive covers compete with those that have nicer covers. The entire business system depends upon proper marketing and making the right impression.

Conferences no longer distribute fact sheets on plain white paper. Documentation now comes in a binder, and sometimes that binder is placed in a fine-quality bag or carry-case.

A major computer company distributed fine black leather portfolios with their company logo on it, and with tasteful literature inside. They wanted to impress the audience, they wanted the literature to be read, and they wanted to boost sales of their product.

A teacher, publisher, or businessperson who receives a sloppy document is likely to discard it without even looking at it.

This new trend does not affect only printed materials. Even website developers go to great efforts to make their web sites attractive. They know that potential viewers can click out of the site as quickly and easily as they clicked into it.

The binder works two ways

The binder has a positive effect on the reader. However, it also has a positive psychological effect on the writer.

It is difficult to look at a nice cover without asking whether the enclosed document is worthy of the manner in which it is presented. The binder causes serious writers to question whether the format and printing are appropriate, and whether it has been edited well enough.

Making that first impression

Those who write advertising copy know that a split-second first impression will determine whether the target audience

will continue reading your document, or whether the readers will go on to the next item in the newspaper.

Business documents have to meet the same requirements. They must make the right first impression, or they may not be read. Busy people who make decisions have other things to do, and they will not give an unattractive document a second glance. In other words, your first impression may be your *only* impression.

What about good writing?

Yes, good writing is very important indeed. Don't ignore it.

It is almost as important as the first impression.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do <i>NOT</i> print out the article. It is copyrighted. Your exercise for this article is as follows:
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Brainstorming

The best way to get great ideas
is to get lots of ideas
and to throw the bad ones away.
– Charles Thompson

Many teachers simply ask their students to brainstorm without explaining the procedure. Some students are confused and frustrated as a result. Things that seem obvious to the teacher are sometimes much less obvious to students.

The following guidelines were implemented during a report-writing course that was offered in Spring, 2007. The students were very receptive and cooperative, so I wanted to preserve the ideas for other teachers.

These notes were entered during the class, in real time, while the course was offered. The ideas are therefore fresh and accurate.

The following procedure is used in our courses. It has been shown to give good results:

- Plan and organize your ideas before you write
 - This procedure reduces the number of drafts that you will need to produce a good document
 - Spend one-third of your time preparing your document
- Start with a topic (for brainstorming) and a goal (for freewriting)
- Work for a predetermined but brief amount of time - perhaps for 60, 90, 120, or 180 seconds

- Ask what users need to know about this method or course of action
- Do one more 60 second brainstorm if ideas are still flowing
- Freewriting resembles brainstorming
 - Work on the topic
 - Do not work on the goal
 - It has already been handled in the brainstorming process
- Freewriting should deal with the following questions:
 - What do I already know about this topic?
 - What do need to learn about this topic?
 - Why is this issue important to me?
 - Why do I want to write about it?
 - Where can I find more information on this subject?
 - Am I concerned more with the causes of this issue, the effects of this issue, or both?
 - What other related issues need to be examined for me to deal with the topic thoroughly?
 - Is it a persuasive issue?
 - How can you build support for your position?
 - What reasons or reader benefits will your reader find convincing?
- Write quickly, continuously, w/o stopping for 10 minutes, even if you write “I will think of something soon.” Don't judge its worth When the time is up, take a break for a few minutes
- Cross off ridiculous and foolish things
- Select parts of what you have written
 - Mark the best point in draft you've just written

- Circle ideas or phrases that interest you; or that suggest something you might like to pursue.
- Write for another 10 uninterrupted minutes.
- Rewrite it so that it reads well
- Organize it by any method that you like
 - Place a P next to all pros and C next to all the cons
 - Chronologically - place a number or a date next to each issue
 - Order of importance: Place a number or letter to the left of each issue
- We've gotten past the hard part: writer's block
- Result of what we have done
 - Information is written poorly
 - Some of the information is wrong
- You now have the body. You have to add the introduction, conclusion, and binder.
- You have been fooling yourself
- The psychological advantage
 - You now think you've done the whole job
 - You now think that all you have to do at this point is to fix it up
 - You thus feel that you have nearly completed your task
 - You're wrong
 - You have to do much more work from this point than you did when you were writing your first draft
 - This psychological trick works every time
- Next stages
 - Correct the errors
 - Brainstorm your best resources for research
 - You may also select human resources

- You may google the information
 - Yes, to google is a verb, and it can be written with a lower-case "g"

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do NOT print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Brainstorm at home, then pre-write a report on the subject of your choice.

You may be assigned a specific subject or a list of subjects from which to brainstorm.

Introduction and Conclusion

Every novel
should have a beginning,
a middle,
and an end.

- Peter de Vries

You already know that you need to write an introduction and a conclusion in your report or essay, and you probably have a pretty good idea of what should be included in it. However, you may wonder why they are needed. Wouldn't it be better to simply start saying what you have to say, and then to stop talking? Does that "extra" text in the beginning and the end serve a purpose?

Yes, it does. It's more than a formality.

You will write a report about an issue that is important to you. However, it is not that important to the reader. If it would be on the top of his list of priorities, he would have considered and researched the issue already, by himself.

You are presenting something that the reader does not yet know, does not yet think about, and which is not important to him.

But, more importantly, the reader has been managing very well for several decades of his life without getting your input, your ideas, and your research. The reader sees no importance in what you have to say.

The introduction will move the reader from his complacent circumstances, in which he had been handling things that he had deemed to be urgent, to your issue. He needs to temporarily come into your life, read what you have to say, and realize that what you have to say is important and compelling.

That is the purpose of your introduction.

After you have successfully brought him in to your topic, he will read the rest of your introduction, then he will read your thesis, then he will continue to the body of what you have to say. You have made him part of your life.

That introduction makes the first impression. It determines whether he will feel that there is something worth his time.

Make sure that the beginning of that introduction is very good, interesting, and compelling. Make sure that the reader knows and expects to be reading top material. If he thinks from the beginning that he's going to be reading top material, then the rest of what you have to say is likely to be successful. If he has expectations of mediocre, unimportant, or boring material, then that's the way he will look at the rest of your document.

Another important part is the conclusion. The conclusion eases the reader from the things that are important in your world, back into his own world. He can then continue his own life.

However, you can't let him return to his own life unencumbered. Have him carry away some of your report:

- Be sure that he will think about things in a new way
- Be sure that he has new information
- Be sure that he has some of your ideas, concepts, and ways of understanding things
- Be sure that he sees that you consider this to be a serious issue
- Be sure that his new reality includes the points that you wanted to make
- Be sure that he is now a changed person as a result of your document
- Be sure that his reality now includes part of yours

That a lot to expect of a brief conclusion.

Summary

You may have thought that the introduction and the conclusion were formalities or niceties, or just ways to begin and end a report. Well, that is true, but they are much more.

The introduction and the conclusion help the reader, and transport him into and out of your world. Having done that, they include some of your information, understandings, beliefs, feelings, and compelling or urgent recommendations for the future.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.
Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Limit the course

Are you developing a report-writing course? Limit it from the outset.

Your first class should clarify that the course is about writing *reports*. That means that you will not study how to write grammatically correct sentences or paragraphs, or how to apply proper syntax. Although you, as the teacher, may correct occasional English mistakes, this is not the focus of the course.

Indeed, there is no limit to the issues that can be covered when discussing mechanics or editing.

The teacher who focuses on the primary issue – writing reports – will have a chance of covering the topic.

A teacher who spreads himself thin will not be able to deal with the main issue, writing reports. In all likelihood, his efforts to handle the mechanics will fail as well.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.
Your exercise for this article is as follows:

The Case for Electronic Publishing

The story in brief:

I had been writing websites, in order to preserve the body of knowledge that I had accumulated through my life. At a certain point, one of the websites was closed down arbitrarily, without any warning, under the pretext that I had violated their terms of service. When I complained, they quoted a section that was not in the terms of service, and which indicated that I was not allowed to have links.

Not allowed to have links? What is a website without links?

I copied my books to computer files, and converted them to books. I converted those books to PDF files, and those files are now distributed widely.

The conversion process was immense. Links had to be converted to footnotes; web formatting had to be converted to a more acceptable format for books, and much more.

Nonetheless, I do not regret the change. Yes, my books had a wide readership on the Internet, in those websites. They were spidered and googled and regoogled. However, the readership of PDF books that are placed online is no less than websites.

Modifications, changes, and corrections to PDF books are much easier than corrections online. However, the first stage is to get all of those websites online again, in the form of PDF books. Corrections will wait.

Since it is much easier to download a PDF books than to download a website, the distribution will ultimately be much

greater than before. The books will also be distributed on CD format – a single CD can easily hold all of the PDFs for all of the books.

As a result, by the time the conversion project is completed (but not the editing of the websites – that will take much more time) the distribution will be much greater than ever. The Internet will continue to be the distribution venue, but the PDF format will make it more accessible to everybody.

Not everybody is happy with PDF format. However, now that I have decided to go with electronic publishing, I can publish the same book in various formats. PDF will be one format, and I will select from various other e-book formats as well.

Ultimately, the books will be edited to my satisfaction. At that time, they will be in camera-ready PDF format, ready for publication in book form *as well as* continuing the electronic format.

Clearly, the website that was closed down gave me the push that I needed in order to change and improve my project.

The domain that had hosted my website is located in an earthquake zone. Yes, they have disaster recovery plans, but those plans mean nothing to me. If they get hit by an earthquake, I will feel satisfied that my books are located in many other places as well. It would take many focused tragedies in many locations to eliminate all copies of these books.

Throughout the generations, books have been lost by auto-da-fé, by deliberate maliciousness, and by crises. Electronic

publishing will remove that threat. My books will always be available from one of the multiple backup venues.

Furthermore, people continue to download the PDF or e-book versions. Each downloaded volume is another backup of the book. It can be copied as easily as any other computer file.

I'll upload the books to the files section of various groups. I'll add them to blogs and I will be sure that they are distributed widely on CDs.

There is no limit to how much they can be backed up.

I have occasional visitors from people who live in various countries. I will be happy to give each one a complimentary CD with all of my books. If I write too much, then I'll have to place the data on two CDs, or on a DVD. They will then take it back to their own country, and I will have a new backup in a new part of the world.

The books were not easily searchable on the website. Granted, there are programs that can add a search feature to a website, but it is certainly not as effective as a simple word processor search. It also does not cut through all of the websites in the series. A quick search through the main folder in my computer now leads me to any term in any book, in a way that the website could never provide.

That series of websites had annoying and sometimes embarrassing advertisements. My PDF books will remove that problem.

With that background, let's evaluate the situation in detail.

Copyright ©
David Grossman
World rights
reserved

It doesn't pay to publish your own book.

Oh, you might be a well-known writer already, in which case you know that you're going to have a best seller. Go ahead and publish your book, and rake in a lot of money.

You might also want to publish your book because you have a message to share with the rest of the world.

You might write a textbook for your school or for a series of schools. You might write a manual that is required for a product or service. That book is certainly necessary. Go write it.

For the rest of us, it doesn't pay to write a book. The remuneration is unquestionably insufficient.

A simple calculation of the return, hour for hour, for publishing a book – as contrasted with just about any other way that you would spend your time – will reveal that it isn't worth it. Find a better way to make money.

Nonetheless, people do write other materials for free.

Many writers work for free

Let's begin with small writing projects – letters to the editor.

Do you know anybody who got paid to write a letter to the editor and got paid for it? Of course not. Yet the people do write these letters. What is their incentive? They want their

message to get out. They want many people to read what they have to say.

Newspapers usually have a large distribution. That distribution – having the opportunity to have many people read the letter – is the motive for writing the letter. The remuneration is not an issue.

They don't get paid for that work yet they work very hard to make sure that that letter is written in the best and most cogent and most persuasive manner possible. Why do they do it if it is for free? The reason is because of the number of people who will read that newspaper. It's usually a large number and they are willing to forgo the publication the payment so that a large number of people will be able to read what they have to say, to read their point of view.

An article is similar to a letter to the editor. The difference is the greater length of the article. The writer may have worked harder on the article, and in many cases they will not get paid for their article, but they will publish it for the same reason. The writer of the article wants it to be distributed to a large reader base – one that is commensurate with the amount of effort that he expended.

In our case we are discussing the writing of a still larger document, a collection of articles, which is a book, and again we are going to forgo the payment for it again for the very same reason. Books are even longer, and many people who write books want the distribution to match their efforts.

Some people opt to write websites instead of books. In many cases, the author of the website is not paid for writing the articles, but – again – he feels the necessity to publicize this message to a large group of people, and this is an effective way of doing it.

Websites provide a way of publication that is easier and faster than the standard book route. The website doesn't have to wait for bureaucratic approvals in a publisher's office. It doesn't have to wait one or more years to get published, as with a book. Material that is placed on the web is available to the public immediately, and people who know the right URL can access it right away.

Readership

Readership of websites is much larger than that for books. Small hard copy publications range from 300 to 1000 copies – whereas a website could have that many readers in just a few weeks.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Keywords: [Publishing](#), [Value](#), [Writing/methods/jewishwriting/MyArticles/When2Write](#)

I also know that I want to have the final word about the text in the book. I don't want an editor messing around with it, and then to let them do me a favor and accept some of my demands of how it will be published, after much negotiating. It's my book, and I want it published my way. If I feel like

having it edited, then I'll decide who will be the editor, and I'll have the last word.

I don't want an editor to tell me that my book doesn't fit into the style of their series or publishing house.

Yes, I'd prefer a standard book from a famous publishing house that has great distribution. My e-book is much less likely to make the New York Times Book Review section, because of its format. I can live with that.

I realize that my goal means a tradeoff, and I'm not willing to make that tradeoff. I'm going to have to be realistic and choose the things that are more important to me.

It will cost much less to invest in Adobe Acrobat than in a publisher's agent. PDF format creates books that are not copied easily.

There are advantages and disadvantages in living in or near New York City. One disadvantage is that I won't be near the major publishers, so I won't be able to push my book easily. As a non-resident, I will have certain difficulties dealing with publishers and royalties. I'll stay right here in Israel, and I'll push the book in different ways – through the Internet.

I won't make any money from the book, but it will cost me less, and I'll be able to distribute it widely. I'll be the only one to benefit from that distribution, and I won't have to share the profits with publishers, distributions, and agents.

I will retain the option of publishing it with a serious publisher at a later date. If my book catches on, and in the unlikely event that it catches a publisher's eye, then I can

negotiate with him. The difference here will be that the publisher is trying to woo me, instead of the other way around. Yes, this option is unlikely, but then again, this is not my real direction. I'm using a direction in which I can't lose, and any mainstream publishing effort will be a negotiable option at a later time, when I am not begging the publisher to accept it.

My ebook will never go out of print. I'll put it on as many websites as possible, and people who copy it can make an additional copy of their PDF file to send to friends.

Sure I could make a lot of money publishing a book if I strike it lucky. The question is if I want to change my lifestyle so that I become a person who plugs the book in order to make a publisher rich or whether my goal is to get the word out that I have to say, get my message out, and have a lot of people read what I have to say. I have to decide what is my direction in life.

If I publish my book through normal means then the rest of the time I'm spending doing things that I don't want to do which is working for the publisher for distribution so that more people will read it. That distribution effort that I have I don't get paid for. My time is worth money. I could use that time in order to write more books or more articles or more chapters for books and yet I'm working instead on the distribution of it. Any amount of money that I make has to take into account the effort and time that I put into it in addition to my the fact that I have to travel to various locations in order to promote my book. It's no longer a question of how what I want to do or how much money I want to make. It's a question now of how I want to use my

time and what I want to accomplish most in life. Do I want to spend my time and to accomplish selling more copies of my book in order to make my distributor my publisher richer and in order to put some more money in my pocket, it's true, or do I want to spend my time working on more books and more chapters and getting more of my ideas out to the world?

Different people would answer this question in different ways. My way of answering the question is that I would rather get more of my ideas down onto the computer and to get them ready to distribute to the wide world. That's what's more important to me.

That's what's going to remain after I leave and not the money.

Furthermore if money was the only issue, well, then I can earn far more money per hour pushing my other work which is computer consulting or private instruction in which I could make a decent amount of money per hour and that would be far more worthwhile than the additional money that I would get for several more books. In other words, my cost benefit analysis for the time that I invest means that either I want to make money in which case there are other ways to do it much better and much more efficiently or I want to distribute my books in which case I can do it better if I distribute them more widely through e-books or I want to make my distributor rich and to distribute more hard copy books in which case I am making the least amount of money per hour and doing things that I don't enjoy doing which is selling. Indeed, if I did enjoy selling I would be a salesman and then I would sell make much more money selling products than I would be making with books.

It's just an issue of what I want to do and how much money I want to make and the tradeoff of the combination of these issues.

An acquaintance told us about an agent who remembered you after many years. You were cheated out of your money when you had 60,000 books printed from the little children's golden books series. Just because the agent remembered you and he was nice and pleasant and he seems friendly and even smart doesn't mean that the publisher won't cheat you. The publishers are out to cheat people. I've heard too many stories of the publishers cheating people. You say that this time you won't get cheated? Perhaps. But that's going to not be very convincing and I'm looking for an alternative to the publishers and to the agents. If I owe nothing to anybody and nobody owes anything to me then we're off to a good start. That's what I have in mind.

The case against traditional publishing

Most people who write an article or a book like to see it in print and by this by so doing they assume that many people will read it.

Others want to make money on for their work. They invested a great deal of time writing their article or their book and they want to be repaid for their efforts.

However, as you notice, this book is not being published by traditional means. It is being distributed for free to anybody who wants to get it. Why is this the case? Why did the author choose to distribute this book by other means and did not send it to a publisher?

There are many reasons.

Number of copies

The publishers are not interested in how good your book is. They're not interested in distribution. They're not interested in making a reputation for themselves. Publishers are interested in making money. The worse tragedy that could happen for a publisher is to have books remaining on the shelves or in a warehouse in which they would have to pay for the storage. They will not take the risk of having that happen.

As a result most books are published in very small quantities. Books of sectarian nature may have 300, 500, maybe 1000 in a few cases 2000 and in rare instances somewhat more several thousand books.

I will have a wider distribution that what can be expected from publishers. Jewish books tend to have a paltry publication run of 400-2000. Take away the spoiled copies, freebies, reviewer copies, and so on, and you have very little distribution indeed. It's barely worth stumping it for such small quantities. When the stock is depleted, it's depleted, unless the publisher is convinced that it's worth a second printing.

My ebook will never be out of print. People in the future will always be able to find a copy from some location.

Thus, the distribution factor is minimal with printed books.

There's no limit to the number of books that will be published. People receive a copy and they then distribute it themselves, they pass it on to friends.

It never goes out of print. NOTE TO MYSELF: Add the issue of going out of print to the first part of the article.

There are always copies that are going around and they will always continue to go around from one person to another and they will keep going around forever.

There are some websites that accumulate books and put them on the website to be distributed and if your book placed on one of those websites then they will help to distribute it as well.

Yes, you can stipulate that you don't want to get any money for it and then you can be sure that they will put it on their website and people will continue downloading it. You may never know how many are going to download it but you can be sure of the following.

Furthermore, an electronic publication never goes out of print. There are always copies someplace and the only problem will be to track them down. These copies keep on getting spread from one person to another. At some point the spreading is going to slow down which means that it will be more difficult to track it down but by that time there are a very large number of the copies of the publication all over the place.

Whereas with a print book you will have a print run of 300 copies on up and of those 300 copies some are going to be defective, some are going to be freebies, some are going to

have to be given away to reviewers or to others. The situation is not the same with electronic books. The sky is the limit. You can have any number of copies that will be distributed and they will continue to be distributed perhaps forever. Future generations will always be able to read it and it has nothing to do with the publisher. You don't have to worry about the publisher running out of copies, going out of business or anything else. You don't have to worry about people not finding it in stores. Electronic publishing means that it is always available and people can always get and they can get it easily. It means that instead of distributing the book by begging people to buy it there's a different system in which you give them the book, each person whom you speak to receives the copy instead of having to buy it. He gets it. In other words he has the copy of the book instead of you begging him to get the book and hoping that he will at the end buy one copy. If you feel like distributing it and you speak at a conference everybody in the conference can get a copy on a CD. The CDs are cheap. Or they can be told where to download it. You've immediately distributed thousands of copies as opposed to a print book in which you speak to a group of people and you can hope that a few copies are sold at the end.

A book which is printed is final. There are no more corrections that can be added.

Oh yes, the publisher can add an errata at the end of some books when he catches a mistake or some mistakes. He can beg the publisher to put out a second edition with corrections, but these methods are certainly kludges and they are not the best of circumstances.

The money issue is also not that much of a factor.

Distribution

One means of distribution is by handing people CDs. I can even distribute them together with my *shalach manos* on Purim.

It's a method of giving people the very latest version of constantly revised books, at a very reasonable price. I can distribute my entire library of books on one CD for well under a dollar. My cost is limited to the cost of the CD and a nice box with an imprint.

Books have additional limitations. The writer is expected to spend a great deal of time distributing it on soap boxes, working hard in order to get Amazon or other distributors to do their job.

Book distribution is hard work. I would have to arrange speaking engagements about the books. Perhaps I would be very lucky and arrange for an audience of a hundred people. I would pay for a large room and I would spend a great deal of time honing my presentation. At the end, some participants would buy the books, and others would not. I would have to get help carrying in a large number of books, some of which may be damaged at the meeting.

During the time that you are doing the work of distribution you could either be writing another book or you could be doing work that earns money. It just doesn't pay from the point of view of money.

A person who wants to make money would do well to work in an area that offers greater compensation. Books offer a bottom line of a few pennies to a few dollars per copy. It's not worth it

Instead of bringing in a hundred people to distribute my book, I can I can bring in a hundred CDs with the attractive and expensive covers. I don't need help. The weight and bulk is bearable for a hundred CDs with covers. I can just hand them out to everybody and go home without that weight.

In this way, I have just distributed my books. I haven't degraded myself by begging people to buy them. Granted, I will have no revenue, but all of the participants will leave with a feeling that they have gained something. They've walked away with the books that I have spoken about. I have distributed my message.

I have no objection to them copying those disks and passing them on to others. They are doing the distribution for me. My message is spreading.

Ah, you say, but you spent a hundred dollars on those CDs that you distributed to a hundred people. Instead of that you could have sold fifty books at twenty dollars each, and you could have pocketed a thousand dollars.

Well, that calculation might be inaccurate. Subtract the expenses from that thousand dollars, and it really is not that profitable. Don't forget the cost of printing and transporting and returning the books. You will have taxes, as well as the cost of setting up a nonprofit organization in order to collect the money. Subtract those costs from the thousand dollars,

and the amount that you pocket is much less. Granted, it's still money.

However, this distribution job has turned you from a writer with important things to say into a salesman who puts in a great deal of work and effort in administrative issues and carrying, distributing, hawking, schlepping, and more, just in order to make a small amount of money.

I thought you wanted to be a writer.

- Have you changed your profession overnight?
- Do you now have a new life goal?
- Do you want to be a schlepper?
- Do you want to be a writer, or do you want to be a book salesman?

Oh, you want to be a book salesman? You can do just as well making money in a bookstore.

With electronic distribution, you may have to invest effort distributing your books for the first round, but after that, the distribution continues by itself. People make and send out copies of the book. You will have no idea how many people have the book at the end.

Let's contrast the conference in which you sold printed copies of the book with free distribution of CDs. By selling the printed copies, you might make \$100-200 after expenses. Instead, your cost of distributing CDs is a hundred dollars.

We'll assume that actual readership remains the same with CDs and with books. Some of those with the book or the CD will read it; some won't.

However, that's just the first round of distribution.

Those who have books can pass them on to others, but then they no longer have a copy. They can photocopy the book, but not too many will bother. Thus, only one person can expect to have the book at any time.

You have made a little bit of money – not much – and your distribution has ended. You can now look forward to your next conference or meeting, at which time you will earn another pittance.

You are likely to need help in order to determine your actual costs and income, but you are unlikely to want to brag about the bottom line.

Don't compare yourself to J.K. Rowling, or to how much money she made. Consider only how much you can realistically make on your book.

Are you sure that it is worth it to distribute your book through a publisher?

A much better way, in which you enjoy the benefits of both worlds, is to distribute your book by electronic means. If there is a demand, then you can subsequently create a print version. Let the publisher sell your print version.

What will I do? I will distribute my books by electronic means, and I have asked my family to distribute it by print means after I pass on. Everybody will gain by this in the most effective way.

Will this method work? Will people get the electronic version and read it?

Well, you are reading the electronic version right now. You were interested enough to read this far.

Apparently, the system works.

Working with an editor

Publishers don't like to admit that people can write worthwhile books, so they hire editors to make changes. It is important for them to make those changes, so that we will remember that they are important.

Oh, you think I'm being too cynical? Well, that's true, but you can check out how this system works – by yourself. Here's how:

Case 1

Write a letter to the editor of a magazine or newspaper. Work on it, and make sure that it is quite good. Contrast your original letter with the published version.

You're disappointed in their changes, right? Well, that was just a small experiment. This situation can be very frustrating when it occurs on a larger scale, with an article or a book. Your book might have to match the publisher's style or philosophy for all of the other books in that series!

You would have to work with the editor, and compromise the content of your book. At a certain point, after a great deal of negotiations you may submit to their conditions, so that the

book will finally get published. There's a limit to how much you can argue with a publisher and an editor.

The book that is published is not the same as the one you wrote.

True, even a publisher's editor sometimes improves an article or a book. However, do you want to take that risk? Do you want to subject yourself to the possibility the book that goes out with your name may not reflect the things that you want to say?

An electronic publication, on the other hand, presents your own document, with no compromises.

Case 2

I wrote a provocative, but somewhat humorous letter to the editor to a very large, nationwide freebie newspaper about a relevant, timely, and interesting topic. After undergoing many changes, it was given the top spot in the letters to the editor page.

Not one person told me that he had read that letter to the editor after it was published. Despite the extensive distribution of the newspaper, nobody had seen the article.

On another occasion I wrote an article for a local community newspaper. Again, not one person approached me to say that they had read it.

The topic was the Jewish Groups series of Internet forums that I moderated. Yes, the groups continued to grow, but I could attribute no change to the publication of that article.

In both cases, the distribution in the journalistic news media was far greater than any print run that I could have anticipated from any book. In both cases, my goal was to publicize an issue. I wanted people to read it. I wanted to get the word out. Yes, I could use the money, but that was not my goal.

My online forums get more publicity than those books. People actually read the messages. I know that they read them, because I get feedback, both online and offline.

Content

A publisher will be wary of publishing things that differ from general accepted policy, or things that are not politically correct. However, you wanted to make a point. You wanted to get your idea across. You did not want to write things in a shallow way.

You may well face a conflict with the publisher on some major issues. The publisher may want to water them down. As a result, you may have no choice but to write some things from the publisher's point of view rather than your own.

Does this mean that you will still publish it? Yes, probably, because you want to get it out. At a certain point, you will acquiesce to the publisher's changes.

Does this happen with all books?

It happens to a great many of them. Unless you publish the next Harry Potter series, you may have difficulty writing the

way you like. You will not be in a position to speak up to the publisher and to get things done your way.

Yes, there is great satisfaction in seeing your material published in print. However, that satisfaction may be accompanied by compromises, frustrations, and indignities when dealing with a publisher.

On the other hand, when the book is published and distributed by electronic means, then you are in full control.

Vanity publishing

There is another option. Vanity publications allow you the option of publishing and distributing your own materials. Self-publication can work, but many other things in your life will be on hold. You have changed your direction from writer to publisher and distributor.

Self-publication will give you more profit per book, since publishers often take a large amount of the profit for themselves. However, you will have a greater share of the expenses.

Secondary goals

Status

Publishing a book with a known or large publisher gives you a greater of status than vanity publishing. You may work with a firm that is selective about the titles that they accept. Thus, another goal might be your future or intended status.

Audience

If you write about a niche topic with a limited audience, then large publishers are not likely to accept your manuscript. They want mass sales. You might want to try a specialized academic publishing house, but that will limit the circulation.

Clearly, each goal presents tradeoffs, and writers rarely achieve all of their intended goals. Most of us have to make realistic, but sometimes difficult and painful decisions about which route to take.

Charging for the books

I do stand behind what I have written, but I must acknowledge an opposing argument – a good reason to charge for the books instead of distributing them for free.

I tried an experiment in one of my classes. I teach a course in which I distribute a booklet. The students pay the equivalent of about six dollars in local currency. An optional, accompanying workbook also costs about six dollars.

One student found multiple copies of the workbook in the shelter of the building. The owners said that they had bought the books, but they were not used in their classes, so they left the unused documents in the shelter for any other students to take.

She brought the books to class, and announced that they are available gratis. It is rare to find anything that is free in the college.

Interestingly, the students were not overjoyed to receive the booklet, even though the exercises could might help them prepare for quizzes and tests. Some students had left the free booklet behind on their desk. They didn't bother to take it booklet.

What was happening?

The students were saying that it was not important unless it met certain criteria: It had to be on the test, and it had to cost money.

Yes, they complained about the expense when they were asked to pay. They argued that it was not fair to pay for books in addition to tuition. However, they respected books that cost money.

Let us keep their complaints in perspective. Students complain. They complain about homework, tests, quizzes, and other requirements. They argue in order to reduce the demands placed on them by teachers. On the other hand, if they have fewer tests, then the subject material is perceived as having less importance.

The situation is thus similar to the books. Despite their complaints or arguments, the students need tests in order to perceive the subject as being important. They need to pay for materials in order to respect them.

We can apply this information to our publications. It presents the argument against the main thesis of this chapter. It questions whether books should be distributed for free.

Yes, there are two sides to the issue.

Keywords will be complain, experiment, money, pay

Readership

There are two reasons to write:

1. To get your message out to the public
2. To make money

It is rare to benefit from both options. Choose which one is more important to you.

If you want to make money then there are usually far better ways per hour to make money and with the same investment of time, effort, energy, brain power, and work you can usually make a lot more money doing something else.

Of course, you might publish the next Harry Potter series and make a good deal of money doing it. That's also an option. But unless you are planning on writing a serious best seller, it is generally not worth your time and effort to try to make money by writing.

If you want a large distribution, then electronic publications are more effective.

However, readership is not the same as distribution. A publication may have a very high distribution, but a much smaller readership. That is why periodicals love to publish statistics about their distribution, but they are more reticent about publicizing the readership.

Why I write books for free

True, I could go out there and make a lot of money during the time that I spend on my books. However, I question whether I would really spend my time doing that much additional work. I have come to that conclusion after watching the way others spend their time.

By devoting myself almost exclusively to my writing, and by working on these books at every possible opportunity, I can accomplish a great deal. The pleasure of watching one draft book after another appear on my shelf is its own reward.

I note that most people do not spend a significant amount of time doing work that can earn money. Some people waste their time with TV or kill an evening with the Internet. They don't expect to get paid for that time.

I use the same time to write.

Those people who waste their time have nothing to show for it.

My books will live on long after I pass away.

Those people will not get paid for the time that they waste watching TV.

Similarly, I won't get paid for the books that I write.

On the other hand, I already have something to show for the time that I spend on Planet Earth, and my demonstrations grow every day.

The fact that I have something to show is enough pay for me. I will leave behind something of great value.

They will have nothing to show after they pass on.

Many people will waste a great deal of their precious time doing nonproductive, meaningless, unimportant, or unprofitable work, yet they question why others would want to contribute to society without charging for their valuable time.

They waste their time, and at the end they gain nothing for their time.

I spend my time for free, but I contribute books of value to society.

Their questions, which sometimes border on criticism, are difficult to understand.

Getting published by traditional means

Despite all of the reasons presented for electronic publishing, there are also good reasons to get your publication out in book form:

1. To make lots of money, as if you have the next Harry Potter series.
2. To have many people read your material because you think that it is important.
3. To become famous

There are various ways to go about it.

1. Vanity publishing
2. Commercial publishing house
3. Self-publishing as an e-book

I'm not interested in any of those reasons. I want people to read my books because I think they are important.

I'm also not interested in making a publisher rich. After all, I assume that the publisher made more than Ms. Rowlings, the author of Harry Potter.

The bottom line David Grossman

Although there are definite advantages to electronic publishing, should *you* use it instead of the print media?

Not necessarily. Each situation, each circumstance, and each publication is different, and it should be judged accordingly.

This discussion showed that it would not be wise to make an automatic decision to publish using the print media. There are many cases in which the electronic media would be more advisable or better suited to many needs.

Genres

Different types of writing

"It's amazing
that the amount of news
that happens in the world
every day
always just exactly fits
the newspaper."
— Jerry Seinfeld

We use the term *genres* very loosely in this section of our **Jewish Writing** website.

Writers have different ways of expressing themselves. It is therefore necessary for us to evaluate their writing in different ways. The categories in this grouping represent some aspects of those various possibilities, as well as the guidelines for evaluating them.

- General fiction
 - Novels
 - Short stories
- Forums
 - A quasi-genre that is growing in popularity and effectiveness
- Journalism and news writing
- Jewish religious materials
- Non-fiction
 - This includes various disciplines and subjects
- Research
 - Grant Proposals

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

What is meant by "genres" in Jewish writing?

Fiction

The greatest masterpiece
in literature
is only a dictionary
out of order.
- Jean Cocteau

Poetry
is indispensable
if I only knew
what for.
- Jean Cocteau

The difference between
fiction and reality?
Fiction
has to make sense.
- Tom Clancey

Lies.

That's what a large body of literature is made of.

The category includes short stories, novels and novellas,
possibly some poetry, and other genres as well.

Basically, anything that is not non-fiction could go here,
unless it has another category.

However, we can argue that a great deal of the non-fiction
material is also lies.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

How do you define Fiction?

Kodesh

Kodesh is the Hebrew word for "holy". Jewish religious materials and their commentaries are listed under the *Kodesh* section in **Jewish Writing**.

The category is admittedly problematic. Many *Kodesh* materials in our **Jewish Writing** group are translations of previously published Hebrew documents. Why, then, are they not discussed on our **Hebrew Translating** group instead of on **Jewish Writing**?

The answer is clear. The *Kodesh* materials on **Jewish Writing** are extended passages from full-length texts. **Hebrew Translating** only deals with terms or phrases.

Furthermore, we will not be relating to translation issues per se in the document. We will be considering the document from its writing aspects.

Many people who translate *Kodesh* materials will want to belong to *both* **Jewish Writing** and **Hebrew Translating**. For the benefit of ALL subscribers, only the relevant issues will be discussed on each group.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Which *Kodesh* items belong on Hebrew Translating? Which items belong on Jewish Writing?

Nonfiction

Truth.

This contrasts with the **Jewish Writing Fiction** webpage, which described that genre as Lies.

That requires two spurious assumptions:

1. You have to agree that fiction is a lie (and sometimes there's no better way to tell the truth)
2. That you accept the absurd assumption that fiction *or* non-fiction are genres.

Having stated those caveats, and with the additional assumption that non-fiction is the opposite of fiction, we can understand that non-fiction works include, *inter alia*, the following publications:

1. Encyclopedias (do they tell the truth?)
2. Do-it-yourself manuals (Is it still non-fiction if you *can't* do it yourself?)
3. Biographies and autobiographies
4. Certain history volumes (others may well be fiction)

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

What is the difference between fiction and non-fiction as defined by Jewish Writing?

Novels

There are three rules
for writing
a novel.

Unfortunately,
no one knows
what they are.

- William Somerset Maugham

Many of our categories overlap. **Novels** are a good example of a problematic classification.

Where would we place a religious novel? It could go either here, in Novels, or in the Kodesh (religious) classification, or in Fiction.

We classify full length fiction as Novels, and shorter works as Fiction.

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Your exercise for this article is as follows:

For our purposes, what is the difference between fiction and novels?

Proposals

Proposals are different from research.

Proposals are written by writers who specialize in this quasi-genre.

Proposals are documents which are intended to help researchers (or others) receive grants. Proposal writers have a difficult job, because there is no guarantee that their proposal will be accepted.

Jewish Writing helps us write proposals.

In some cases, this may be done on conjunction with our **Jewish Philanthropy** group. It is likely that those who write proposals will want to join both **Jewish Philanthropy** and **Jewish Writing**.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Keywords: Writing/methods

Research

A research document begins with a research proposal. **Jewish Writing** will help you prepare the proposal, if that's your thing.

If that proposal has already been written, and you've already completed the research, then **Jewish Writing** will help you present your final document - the research - to the world.

One of our goals will be to help you write the final research report so that it is readable. This will unquestionably distinguish it from most of the other research that's out there.

Are you required to read this article for a course? Do *NOT* print out the article. It is copyrighted.

Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Keyword: [writing/jewishwriting/Start](#)

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Other books in this *Writing Wrongs* series

We include writing, translating, editing, proofreading, lexicography, and transcribing in our definition of the writing trades.

The series is divided as follows:

Part 1: General issues

- Find out about this book
- Translation humor
 - Truth
 - Who can translate
 - Forums

Part 2: Life as a translator

- Working at Home
- Social issues
- Translating offensive or objectionable material
- Time

Part 3: Making money as a translator

- What are the differences among the Business, Surviving, Marketing, and Rates sections?
- Business
- Surviving
- Getting jobs
- Marketing yourself
- Rates

- Directory of translators, to or from Hebrew – canceled.

Part 4: Teaching translation

- How to teach the writing trades
- Teaching Translation Skills
- How to translate
- Assignments for teaching Translation Skills
- The first day
- Back translations

Part 5: Lesson plans

Part 6: Distinctions

- Hebrew-English differences

Part 7: Languages, lexicography, and glossaries

- Language
- Names
- Pluritis
- Additions to my own dictionary and word finder

Part 8: Editing and proofreading

- Editing
- Proofreading

Part 9: Writing

Part 10: Transcribing

Other books by the same author

Jews speak with forked tongues: Bilingualism

Yiddische Kop: Jewish psychological issues

Your Jewish Personality

It's the Teacher's Fault

Jewish Dating: So this is the best time in my life?

Jewish Parents Should Be Licensed

Are you good enough for Israel?

Yiddishkeit Lite

Collecting Dust: Libraries and librarianship

Jewish Unity through Jewish Groups

Computerization

Computer Gemach

Jewish Special Needs articles and links

Study with Grossman: Courses

Doing Our Own Thing: The Grossman Family

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Title and topical indexes

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