

# Better Bio's

So you've decided to submit to a literary journal, but they want you to submit a bio. What is this mysterious buy-oh? It has to be 500 words or less (some journals request a little more or tell you to stifle your enthusiasm), but what should you include? Good questions!

First off, a bio is a little snippet that details your writing prowess and accomplishments. That's about it. Simple, right? Well, the journal you decide to allow access to your work might have specific guidelines. Some journals allow links in bio's (if they're online, more so) to other published works while others ask they be omitted. One journal might ask for a small personal reflection and others might tell you to keep that sappy garbage to yourself. Read the bio request carefully before submitting. It's often the case that submissions are discarded due to a poorly crafted bio OR one that doesn't follow their specific guidelines.

Hopefully this will help you craft a professional, elegant bio that will make the journal of your choice simply swoon. If not, it's their loss. Right?

\*DO include your past accomplishments, publications, etc. DO NOT send them your professional resume. (Always in 3rd person!)

I don't know who has a 500 word resume, but I personally wouldn't find that very impressive. They will likely want to know about where you've been published before and a few of your professional accolades. You can keep the fact that you love Thai and romantic comedies to yourself for the most part; I \*have\* submitted to journals that ask a personal question of their writers. I believe they asked me about my favorite characters in contemporary works of fiction. I don't think they published a word I wrote, but perhaps it gave them some insight into my writing frame of mind. Another journal asked for an embarrassing childhood story. Whether they use this information or not, it's important to oblige. If you can't think of something, pull inspiration from Ralphie in A Christmas Story.

Also remember that you don't need to list EVERY publication. Pick a few winning horses/the ones you think are most impressive and stick with them.

\*DO brag a little about your writing accomplishments. DON'T come off as an arrogant sod.

I think this one speaks for itself. As I said before, pick a few choice accomplishments you're particularly proud of and leave the rest. Keep your bio humble. Pomp and arrogance will likely get you a "Pfft" and filed under G—and by G I don't mean, "Good gracious! We have to publish this jerkwad!"

\*Keep it simple. Seriously.

Don't over-think your bio. Don't write a full length biography. I'm sorry, but nobody cares about your collection of Calico Cats, your new baby, or how awesome your girl/boyfriend, life partner, adoring wife, supportive husband, or adoring feline(s) are. You can keep that information to yourself.

Keep it short and to the point.

For example, here's my bio.

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Janine Mercer is a Canadian ex pat living in Milwaukee, WI. Her publications include A, B, and C. She has a INSERT ACOLADE HERE and is working to publish PROJECT D.

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See how easy that was? You can also tack on interests or a fun fact about yourself if you so desire.

I'm not saying this is the perfect bio, but it's a basic outline that should help you craft your own. Some journals allow for personal details and encourage such things, like reading preferences and family tidbits. It's important to carefully evaluate the requirements set by each individual journal so you don't automatically end up in the reject bin.

There are also many resources out there to help you craft a killer bio that will really knock 'em on their ear. Google is your friend.

Happy Scribbling!

Janine Typing Tyrant Mercer

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