

The fun and easy way® to
write a great children's book and get it published

Writing Children's Books FOR DUMMIES®

The ABCs of writing
for children

**A Reference
for the
Rest of Us!®**

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Lisa Rojany Buccieri

Bestselling, award-winning children's
book author

Peter Economy

Bestselling author



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**by Lisa Rojany Buccieri
and Peter Economy**



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About the Authors

Lisa Rojany Buccieri is a publishing executive with over 15 years' experience in the industry. Lisa has also written nearly 40 children's books and co-written a *New York Times*-bestselling adult nonfiction hardcover, *Fund Your Future* (Berkley, 2002), with Julie Stav. Her books have received various accolades, such as reaching Number 1 on the *Publishers Weekly* bestseller list two years in a row (*Make Your Own Valentines*, PSS/Penguin) and winning the American Bookseller's Pick of the List (*Giant Animal Fold-Outs: Kangaroo & Company*, PSS/Penguin). *King Arthur's Camelot* (Dutton) was selected to be a Book of the Month Club selection; *Child Magazine* chose her *Exploring the Human Body* (Barron's) as one of its Best New Parenting Books; and *The Magic Feather* (Troll) won a Parent's Choice Silver Honor Award. Lisa is currently spearheading a new children's book packaging and publishing division at Americhip Books, focusing on integrating light, sound, animation, paper engineering, and other cutting-edge technologies with stories and art. She has been Editorial/Publishing Director for Golden Books, Price Stern Sloan/Penguin Group USA, Intervisual Books, Gateway Learning Corp (Hooked on Phonics), and others. She speaks about children's publishing, writing, and editing at U.C.L.A. Writer's Program Extension courses and other venues and is currently working on a book of fiction for grown-ups. Lisa also runs her own company, Editorial Services of Los Angeles, in which she

helps other writers make their work the best it can be. You can contact her at www.editorialservicesofla.com.

Peter Economy is a veteran author with nine *For Dummies* titles under his belt, including two second editions. Peter is coauthor of *Home-Based Business For Dummies*, *Building Your Own Home For Dummies*, *Consulting For Dummies*, *The Management Bible*, *Why Aren't You Your Own Boss?*, *Enterprising Nonprofits: A Toolkit for Social Entrepreneurs*, and many more books. Peter is also Associate Editor of *Leader to Leader*, the award-winning journal of the Leader to Leader Institute. Check out Peter's Web site at www.petereconomy.com.

Dedication

To writers and illustrators everywhere, aspiring and published, who use their creativity, imagination, perseverance, and courage to write children's books that make a difference.

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Introduction

If you've gone through the trouble and expense of buying this book, we're going to take a wild guess that you dream of writing your own children's book and getting it published. Your desire may come from a deep-seated yearning to communicate with young people or to share experiences with them. Or it may stem from an interest in a subject that you think children may also be interested in. Regardless of where your desire comes from, we want to help you turn that desire into a well-written, saleable manuscript. Our goals in writing this book are to help you understand the children's book writing process and give you the tools you need to turn your children's book dream into reality. Many people think writing a children's book is child's play. Actually, it's not. Writing a children's book takes a lot of hard work.

We've seen plenty of people just like you attempt to tackle the process of writing a children's book. Some haven't the slightest idea where to start. Others have a good idea where to start, but don't know what to do with their manuscript after they've written it. Still others have published a children's book or two, but would like to try writing a new type of children's book. Good news: We understand the process and what it takes to move through it with as little stress as possible. In the pages that follow, we provide you with the very best advice our many years of experience have to offer.

About This Book

There's a lot more to writing a children's book and getting it published than simply knocking out a manuscript and mailing it to a publisher. If you're serious about getting your book published, then you need to understand the entire children's book process and how to deal with the different challenges that present themselves along the way. Where do you start? Who at a publishing house does what? How do you get your manuscript in front of an editor? How do you help market your book after it's published? This book answers these questions, and hundreds more like them — and all in an easy-to-use reference that you can take with you anywhere.

We also include interviews with extremely knowledgeable veterans of the children's book industry — authors, editors, agents, illustrators, publicists, and more — in each chapter to provide you with their own unique perspectives and experience.

We divide each chapter into sections, and each section contains information about some part of the process, such as:

- ✓ The basics of the children's book market — who your buyers are (and who they're not)
- ✓ The many different formats of children's books, from board books to picture books to chapter books

- ✓ Elements of good writing explained, from writing good characters to setting up a strong plot to transitioning from scene to scene
- ✓ Writing exercises to spark your creativity
- ✓ How to get an agent or publisher interested in your book
- ✓ How to help publicize your book after it's published

Conventions Used in This Book

We use the following conventions throughout the text to make everything consistent and easy-to-understand:

- ✓ All Web addresses appear in monofont.
- ✓ New terms appear in *italics* and are closely followed by an easy-to-understand definition.
- ✓ **Bold** text indicates keywords in bulleted lists or highlights the action parts of numbered steps.

What You're Not to Read

We've written this book so that you can find information easily — and readily understand what you find. We also simplify it so you can identify “skippable” material.

Sidebars are the shaded boxes that appear here and

there. They share fun facts, but nothing that's essential to the success of your children's book. Many of the sidebars include interviews with veterans of the children's book industry — authors, editors, agents, illustrators, publicists, and more — who provide you with their own unique perspectives and experiences.

Foolish Assumptions

We wrote this book with some thoughts about you in mind. Here's what we assume about you, our reader:

- ✔ You've long been dreaming about writing your own children's book and getting it published.
- ✔ You may have already written a children's story but are not sure how to ready it for submission. You may have already had a children's book published, but would like to experiment with a different type of children's story. Or you may even be an experienced children's book author who is looking for new perspectives on the industry.
- ✔ You're looking for a comprehensive guide that demystifies the children's-book-writing process by focusing on the information that's most important for you to know.
- ✔ You would like to improve your writing skills.
- ✔ You're willing to take the time to become knowledgeable about the conventions in the children's book world that will separate you from the wannabes.

- ✔ You're interested in exploring different publishing options.
- ✔ You want to know what you need to do to find an agent or publisher.

Foolish of us, maybe, but we assume that you trust us to do our very best when writing this book. We hope you enjoy reading it, discover new approaches and processes, and move your dream of writing a children's book closer to reality.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into six parts — jump in wherever you want. The following sections explain what you'll find where.

Part I: The ABCs of Writing for Children

In this part, we introduce you to the world of children's books and take an in-depth look at the many different formats of children's books as well as who actually buys children's books and why.

Part II: Immersing Yourself in the Writing Process

Above all, writing a children's book involves *writing*. In this part, we help you get a jump on the writing process, looking at how to set up your workspace, develop great story ideas, and build upon your great ideas with research.

Part III: Creating a Spellbinding Story

A spellbinding story includes a plot that makes sense and doesn't leave out details that make the story believable, characters you care about and root for, dialogue that sounds real, a setting that transports you to a different world, and so on. This part helps you create all of that and more, whether you're writing a picture book, a chapter book, or a work of nonfiction.