



FOLLOW-UPS: WHEN AND HOW TO DO THEM

by Julie H. Ferguson

Author and professional speaker, Julie H. Ferguson leads live and tele-workshops that provide aspiring authors with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to approach publishers and succeed. Her workshops are available as downloadable booklets and as fully-narrated CD-ROMs through Beacon Literary Services at www.beaconlit.com, then click on Writers' Tools.

With nearly 90% of book and magazine publishers accepting electronic query letters, many participants of my workshops want advice about when and how to follow-up these days. Questions include:

- "How do I follow-up? Electronically? Or by phone?"
- "Is the timeline compressed for e-follow-ups?"
- "When is it OK to phone editors?"

We find it harder to wait for editors' responses in this age of instant communications but we still have to give them a reasonable time to consider our ideas because their workload has not diminished. Indeed, most editors believe the deluge of query letters has increased.

Here's how I do my follow-ups in the new e-ra:

1. If I have sent an e-query to an editor I have not worked with before, I allow 2-3 weeks to pass before following-up with magazine publishers and about 6-8 weeks for book publishers. But usually I find I don't have to wait that long before an editor's reply plops into my inbox.
2. When the wait is longer, I email the editor's assistant (if there is one) or the editor and ask when I might expect a response.
3. If nothing happens after that, I will send an email (NOT a phone call) directly to the editor politely reminding him/her of the subject of the query and the date I sent it and ask about the status of my query. *Is it still under consideration?* is a well-phrased question. I always include a copy of my original email below the new one.

4. If another 2 weeks go by without a word, I email the editor once more enquiring if s/he received my first follow-up and stating that, if I don't hear from him/her within 1-2 weeks, I shall withdraw my article or book idea.
5. If the silence persists, do it - send a final email re-moving your query from further consideration.

Phoning an editor is permissible if you have worked for him/her previously and s/he have given you permission, either explicitly or implicitly. But before you dial the number, make sure that your conversation cannot be done just as effectively via email.

Once you hit your stride and are sending out multiple e-queries, you will need to keep a **submission log**. If you don't, you will forget what you sent to whom and be unable to follow-up properly. This is an example from mine:

MAGAZINE ARTICLE SUBMISSION LOG								
Title	Periodical	Editor	Date sent	Response	Comments	Date sold	Right sold	Fee
Canadas Struggle for Submarines	Sea Power	French Caldwell	May 97	Accepted	As is. 2 photos	June 97	1st NA	\$480.62
How Sweet It Is!	Sea Power	Rick Burgess	4 Oct 97	Exclusive deadline of 13 Oct missed by them, so queried the following 7 mags	E-mail-MS	Nov 3 1997	1st NA	\$710.00
How Sweet It Is!	Canadian Defence Quarterly	Martin Shadwick	15 Oct 97	No reply	E-mail-query			
Unmatched, Unparalleled.. Canada's New Submarine Deal.	Legion	Dan Black	15 Oct 97	Nov 27.97 Dan Black wants a slightly different piece when sms are approved Apr 2.98 Submarine deal close - wants 2700 words asap. May 1.98 Asked for photos/disc	Snail mail-query	May 15/98	1st NA	\$1200.0
How Sweet It Is!	Esprit de Corps	Scott Taylor	15 Oct 97	Not this time, but keep querying. Liked <i>Periscope</i>	Snail mail-query			
How Sweet It Is!	Vanguard	Angus Brown	15 Oct 97	Not right now. No editorial bud-get, tho' this may change soon.	Snail mail-query			
How Sweet It Is!	Warship International	?	15 Oct 97	Undeliverable -- outdated address. Query returned by PO	Snail mail-query			