

## Helpful Tips for Illustrators

### How do I begin to learn about picture books?

Uri Shulevitz's *Writing with Pictures* is a great resource for learning the basics of children's picture book design, illustration, and printing. Read his book, and **read, read, read** as many picture books as you possibly can to learn the basics:

- Most picture books are 32 pages. Some are shorter (24 pages) or longer (40 or 48 pages). The title page, half-title page, and dedication page, typically fill the first three or four pages, so, for example, in a 32-page picture book, the story and art are focused on 28 pages. If you are both the writer and the illustrator of a picture-book story, you will be writing and revising in tandem with designing a layout of sequenced illustrations.
- Once you find a publisher, the editor, designer, art director, and even the sales and marketing departments will all have input into the final book. This team will provide direction as you revise both the story and the illustrations.

### What is a dummy?

A picture-book dummy is a working model of your text and illustrations, put together in a bound mock-up, or model, of your book. Its purpose is to show an editor that 1) you have thought about the sequence and pacing of your story, and 2) that the illustrations extend and help you to tell that story.

### How do I construct a dummy?

A dummy is a life-sized model of the book, in which you will demonstrate your skills in visual as well as textual storytelling.

Every page of the book should be sketched out. The sketches do not have to look "final" or be entirely in color, but they should clearly demonstrate your artistic skills and style as well as your vision of the finished book. The work should be finished enough that the editor and art director can see your intention, but unfinished enough to show that you are willing to revise your art work as well as your text. Keep in mind that you will almost certainly end up revising every single sentence and piece of art after editorial review. [For purposes of the Tassy competition, you must include at least two two-page spreads of finished art.]

Lay out your text onto your art with tape or print copies of each page so that the text appears as one with the illustration. Some artists use computer design programs to construct a dummy.

You can tape one-sided copies together to make double-sided pages, to create a "book." Make a few copies in case you decide to submit to more than one publisher or enter more than one competition; you may also be glad to have a useful extra copy that can be marked up for future revisions.

## How do I submit to the Tassy Walden Award competition?

Entries to the *Tassy Walden Award for New Voices in Children's Literature* competition MUST adhere to the following submission requirements. Entries not following these guidelines will be discarded by the submissions committee and will not be seen by the judges. *No exceptions will be made.*

**Text:** Please submit your picture-book text separately from (but along with) your book dummy. This text-only manuscript should be double-spaced, in 12-point black type, with ample margins of about 1.25 inches on the left and 1 inch on the right, on one side only of 8 ½ x 11 white paper. Please paginate the text, but do not insert page breaks for illustrations. For example, if your story is 300 words long, your text-only manuscript should not be more than two pages total. Put your name and the title of your story on every page of your text, preferably in the upper left-hand corner in a header. On the very first page of your text, please follow the directions for Picture Book Text only submissions: that is, type the submission category (Illustrated Picture Book) above your name, address, and phone number in the upper left-hand corner.

**Dummy:** Along with your separate text, submit your completed dummy (with both illustrations and text) **of no more than 40 pages**. Your dummy must be no larger than 8 1/2 x 11 inches. *Do not send original art.* Gather your artwork

as described above (see: How Do I Construct A Dummy?), with taped or sewn pages on paper only. This competition does *not* accept cardboard or other hard bindings. *Do not* enclose dummy in plastic sleeves or in an artist's portfolio or other binder.

**Illustrator Portfolio:** Submit exactly ten pieces of photocopied artwork no larger than 8 1/2 x 11 inches. *Do not send original art*. At least three pieces should show story progression with the same character or characters. Submit *loose* pages. *Do not* enclose artwork pages in plastic sleeves or in an artist's portfolio or other binder.

## How do I submit to publishers?

DO YOUR HOMEWORK before you submit. Guidelines for authors and illustrators vary from publishing house to house; some publishers do not accept unsolicited manuscripts at all. Be sure to look carefully at publishers' listings in the *Children's Writer's Market* or other source, but be aware that guidelines often change. ALWAYS confirm guidelines at each publisher's website. Many publishers have their current catalogs available online; study those or research their current "lists" through other online resources to see if your project seems like a good match. Create a clear, concise cover letter. *Briefly* describe your book project and how you think it fits into the current children's book market. Only a *brief* biography is necessary, emphasizing only relevant information; your work should be able to speak for itself.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do my illustrations extend my story or add an extra visual dimension to my text?
- Do my illustrations match the quality of my text?
- Are my art and palette well suited to my story?
- Have I created an engaging sequence of scenes?

When you submit your art samples and book dummy, include a separate manuscript with the text only in the standard format as outlined above for the Tassy competition. Your samples--copies (one to three pieces) of finished artwork--should be of the highest quality. *Never submit original art*.

Don't bind your finished art samples into your book dummy. Keep them separate and label each of them with your contact information on the back.

## What else can I do?

### Helpful Books

- Molly Bang. *Picture This: How Pictures Work*
- Uri Shulevitz. *Writing With Pictures: How to Write and Illustrate Children's Books*
- Harold Underdown. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Publishing Children's Books*
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### Helpful Websites

- **Write4Kids.com and the CBI Clubhouse:** <http://write4kids.com/> From Children's Book Insider, this helpful site provides articles and tips on many topics of interest to writers and illustrators.
- **The Purple Crayon:** <http://www.underdown.org>. Basic information about writing children's books and getting them published; interviews, book reviews, publishing news, and other topics.
- **SCBWI:** <http://www.scbwi.org/> The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.
- **Yellapalooza:** [www.yellapalooza.com/tutorials/](http://www.yellapalooza.com/tutorials/) This site provides helpful hints and very useful links for beginners in the children's book writing—and especially illustrating—field.

Unpublished illustrators who are curious about the caliber and variety of artwork being submitted both to competitions and to publishers may want to have a look at this inspiring illustrators' web page, which features many of the submissions for the Tomie dePaola Award. Choose your own favorites by visiting <http://scbwicontest.blogspot.com/p/how-to-participatefaq.html>.

**Attend a conference! Take a class! Join a critique group! And don't forget to READ, READ, READ!**