

# Meeting at a glance

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## Paperback writer

— Dianne Moscrip, staff writer

**A**t our last STC meeting, when John Hedtke presented one of his favourite speaking topics, “Hey, Kids! Become an Author at Home in Your Spare Time and Earn Big Bucks!”, there wasn’t an empty seat in the house. John’s steps to writing a great non-fiction book are as follows:

### Select a writing topic

Your topic should be unique. There may be many books on the market covering your topic, and you need to ask yourself what makes your book different.

### Write a topic proposal

After you decide on a winning idea, write a proposal which includes the working title, purpose of the book, audience identification, what the audience will get out of your book, and relevant marketing information. Offer your marketing suggestions. After your proposal is drafted, tailor it to your publisher’s guidelines.

### Select a publisher

When choosing a publisher, consider the following:

1. Contacting another author who has written in a style you like and ask for the name of the publisher.

2. Subscribe to [www.studiob.com](http://www.studiob.com), a listserv offering publishing information.
3. Find books you like the “look” of and note the publisher.
4. Find out if your potential publisher already has a book on your topic.

### Contact an Acquisitions Editor

You’ll need to make cold calls to Acquisitions Editors. Be prepared to discuss your topic and to ask about topics other than your own which the publisher may be interested in. They may be looking for authors. Obtain all the particulars you need to send in your proposal.

### Review the terms: contract, advances, royalties

#### Contract terms

Once you’ve obtained a contract, your first thought should be “How much will I get paid and how often?” As a first-time author, you may make 8-12% on net receipts.



### Advance monies

An advance is paid directly into your bank account and you don’t have to repay it. Although first-time author advances are rare, they do occur.

### Royalties

No payment of royalties occurs during the 60-90 days immediately after your book is published.

### Book copies

If your book doesn’t come with a CD, get 50 extra copies of it. If it does, ask for 35-40 copies.

### What can an agent do for you?

An agent receives 15% of every dollar you make. However, an agent may assist you in managing your career and get you the best deal you can find. Agents range from wonderful to awful, so ask around.

### Finish the book

Writing takes its toll! Take off some time off; rest awhile before dreaming up your next writing topic. ■

*Dianne Moscrip works with Maddocks Systems Inc. as their Technical Writing Manager/Web Consultant and is available for contract work through Dynamic Document eDesign. Contact her by phone at 604.521.5767 or by email at [dmoscrip@moscrip.net](mailto:dmoscrip@moscrip.net).*