

Writing for Local Magazines vs. National Publications

When you first decided to write magazine articles, you probably dreamed of being published in your favorite magazine, perhaps a magazine with a circulation in the millions—one that your family, friends, and acquaintances would all know and read every week or month. While it's entirely possible that you will one day be published by one of the major women's or lifestyle magazines that are not where you will likely get your start. Most writers begin by writing modest articles for publications with modest circulations. Perhaps you consider yourself better than the average beginner, with some experience and savvy. Even if this is true, without an established track record in magazine article writing, you should consider the advantages to starting small then working your way up to the big leagues.

- **Large magazines rarely, if ever, take a chance on an unproven writer.**

They often have a stable of contributing writers and editors—professionals—whom they draw upon again and again. So you should avoid querying the biggest nationals if you're just starting out and lack an arsenal of clips. Small magazines, on the other hand, are more open to beginners and willing to take a chance on an unknown, especially if your query displays professionalism and excellent writing skills.

- **Small magazines—often regional or niche magazines—are easier for beginners to crack.**

This is especially true if you've done your homework on the publication. Your query is more likely to be read by a senior editor on the magazine rather than an editorial assistant because smaller magazines have smaller staffs, and often one person wears multiple hats. Your query might be reviewed more quickly and with more careful attention—but don't make the mistake of thinking your query doesn't have to be strong and attention grabbing. You still have to impress and make your writing the best it can be, and if your query succeeds, it will stand out

against all the other queries (instead of being mixed in with a thousand others at a large-circulation magazine).

- **Chances are you will be more capable of a successful start with small or regional publications.**

This is definitely the case if they focus on a community or interest you already know very well. You might try querying the city magazine, if you're just starting out because you're more likely to be familiar with the magazine and instinctively know what kinds of articles would interest the magazine's audience.

- **Editors at small magazines are more likely to work with you during the writing process.**

They will help build your skills and give you useful feedback. Especially if the publication is less frequent than a monthly, the editor might have more time to spend on the development of a piece. Sometimes, you might even be able to visit with the offices of such publications to further build your relationship with the editors or to discuss your article ideas. Remember, small doesn't mean low quality or unworthy. Many wonderful small and regional magazines are well respected in the industry and win awards for their content and design. Building your skills and expertise through such publications will help you approach the larger ones. Once you understand how the industry works, you'll gain the confidence to approach the national publications with an impressive selection of clips that will make even the most hurried editor pause and read what you have to offer.