



A top-10 list for joining writers' group

Melody Wren, Community Editorial Board

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When it comes to joining groups, I agree with Groucho Marx who said: "I wouldn't join any club that would have me as a member."

However, three years ago I joined the Professional Writing Association of Canada or PWAC and haven't looked back. Guelph is rich with writers, but not all belong to PWAC. The local Guelph chapter gets together monthly to brainstorm, and most importantly, has a go-round to hear what everyone in the group is up to. We talk about what articles we are working on, articles we are pitching to publishers, and how to turn around a rejection. I am endlessly fascinated by the diversity of our group and what they are writing: books, *Chatelaine* columns, regular articles for *Today's Parent*, *the Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *Waterloo Region Record*, curling magazines, *More Magazine*, *Small Farm* magazine, *Caribbean Beat* magazine, *Canadian Lodging* magazine, websites, focused religious newsletters and corporate writing.

After I joined, I put together the top 10 reasons to join PWAC:

I'd just attended my third PWAC meeting, and had been chatting about the virtues of the meetings to many of my friends, saying things like "I wish I'd joined years ago" and "I've gotten so much out of the meetings already, and every writer should join." Then, I realized that I needed to let others know what I was saying and thinking about PWAC — not just the already converted members, but the wannabes. I started with the Top 10 reasons, attempting to emulate David Letterman's Top 10 of anything and everything list, but it didn't end there, hence the 11th item.

1. **Motivation** — Hearing what everyone else in the group is doing encourages me to work harder and be more focused.
2. **Shared Resources** — Every meeting so far has resulted in lists of books, websites, and contacts to check out.
3. **Morale-boosting and Cheerleading** — I always get ideas and feel more confident when I leave.

4. **Exchange of Skills** — This is a talented group that is more than willing to share their talents and teach others in the group.
5. **Networking** — If they don't know about it, it doesn't exist.
6. **Brainstorming Ideas** — If I am stuck on a rejected proposal, the group can turn it around so I can see it differently.
7. **Exposure on Website** — Link to your own website.
8. **Enthusiasm** — This is a group that wants to write and be published.
9. **Press Pass** — When I got my press pass in the mail, I had to resist the urge to clip it to a news reporter's hat and burst into a taped-off crime scene.
10. **Accountability** — Similar to going to a weight-loss group meeting and wanting to report a lost pound or two, when I go to a PWAC meeting, I want to be able to share a new contract or a proposal that got a bite.

And ... 11. To evolve from the feeling of "impostor" writer to "professional" writer.

If you are interested in joining PWAC, you will never guess who the membership chair is. That's right, email me: melody.wren@sympatico.ca

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