

Write Jokes and Laugh All the Way to the Bank

Some publications feature jokes amongst readers' letters; others have a special jokers' slot. It really doesn't matter where your jokes appear, as long as you slant your work to suit the publication, its readership, and editor. The basic rules of writing humorous features apply equally to jokes.

Comedians - professional, semi-professional and amateur - need jokes. That's common knowledge. What isn't common knowledge is that most comedians buy their jokes from freelance contributors. A recent feature in *Contributors' Bulletin* revealed that Ken Dodd's agent is a regular buyer of freelance funnies. That being so, then other comedians can also be targeted with jokes that match their professional requirements.

Writers' Rules

* Some publications are unsuitable for joke writers, notably staid publications covering serious issues, such as medicine, health and safety and import/export. But, given the right joke, the editor of the most serious publication might consider printing it. Look for the tiniest hint of humour in any publication and submit a few samples of your work.

* Earnings can be very high for individual jokes, in publications such as *Reader's Digest*, where literally hundreds of pounds can be awarded for every one. Try specialising, not in jokes, but in markets, and really make your mark on a high profit publication in expectation of regular rapid five minute rewards.

* Various radio shows buy jokes, some fetching up to £250 a time. Again, try specialising in the spoken word and target your joke towards a particular celebrity. Find information about comedy radio shows and buyers of jokes listed in *Writers' and Artists' Year Book*.

* Many jokes can be cut from publications, even very old editions, and revamped for different or newer markets. Many publications of the early 1900s contain jokes every bit as good as those one reads or hears in today's media. Obviously, a few changes might be required to make the joke understandable to today's reader, but that should not be a problem. Remember, however, some published items still in copyright and, while you can change or revamp a joke or other humorous comment, it's still not right, though not illegal, to 'lift' something wholesale and call it your own.

* Earnings can be high, even for the shortest snappiest joke, so never think just a few words can't be worth hundreds of pounds. In fact, they can, in such as *Reader's Digest*.

* Keep a constant eye open for new markets in such as *Contributors' Bulletin*, *Writers' News*, *Writing Magazine*, and other market updates.

Published Examples

"I wish someone would invent a perfect formula for getting rid of weeds", said the perspiring gardener to his neighbour. "But they have", replied the neighbour. "Four of sand to one of cement".

"I wouldn't worry too much if your son makes mud pies", said the psychiatrist, "or even if he eats them. It's quite normal."

"I don't think it is", said the woman, "and nor does his wife."