

# When Words Feel Like Wedgies

By Pat Nelson



When writing, if you use the wrong word or punctuation—or even misspell a word—you’re likely to make your readers squirm in their seats.

Before submitting your story to Publishing Syndicate (PS), proofread carefully. The better care you take with your story, the less uncomfortable wiggling your editors and co-creators at PS will do when they read it. A clean story gives your work a better chance of being published.

I bet your mama always said, “Be sure to wear clean underwear when you go out in public.” A similar rule applies to stories. Following are 12 tips to consider before you send your writing out the door:

1) Different publishers prefer different styles. It’s important to know which style a publisher uses before submitting. PS uses a mix of the 2012 *Associated Press Stylebook* and the *Los Angeles Times*. The two most common mistakes that come to mind when I proofread *Not Your Mother’s Books* manuscripts are the incorrect use of the words “okay” and “back yard.” The correct usage is “OK” and “backyard.”

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*Happy  
summer!*



Published monthly by  
*Publishing Syndicate*

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Contact Publishing Syndicate at  
[Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com](mailto:Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com)



# The Wow Principles e-newsletter

## Wedgies . . .

*Continued from page one*

2) To help the proofers at PS, and to give your story a better chance of being published, I suggest you use the “find” feature of your word processing program to flush out the two words shown (okay/OK and back yard/backyard) in #1, as well as these:



Incorrect: forwards, backwards, afterwards, towards, amongst  
Correct: forward, backward, afterward, toward, among

3) Does tech-talk tongue-tie your writing? Capitalize the first letter of Internet and Google. When writing eBay or iPad, remember that the first letter is lowercase and the second is capitalized. Even though “cellphone” is often written as two words (cell phone), the style used at PS calls for one word. Likewise, “smartphone” is one word.

4) Don’t get carried away with all caps in order to shout out your point. Not all of us are in our 20s and trained in today’s social-media style of spelling and grammar. For those of us who are older and a little hard of hearing, your shouting is likely to make us uncomfortable. Instead, use available tools to give emphasis such as italics and the exclamation mark!

5) What school taught that it’s OK to combine punctuation marks at the end of a sentence or to use multiple punctuation marks!?! Mine didn’t, and even though you will sometimes see this type of punctuation in a *Not Your Mother’s Book*—with the most common usage being “?!”—PS encourages writers to avoid it. Too much unneeded punctuation draws attention away from your story. A truly good writer can convey emotion without a string of punctuation marks or words in all caps.

6) And speaking of punctuation, be sure there is only one space between sentences. Using two spaces is bulky, like wearing an extra layer of underwear you don’t need.



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# The Wow Principles e-newsletter

## Wedgies . . .

*Continued from page two*

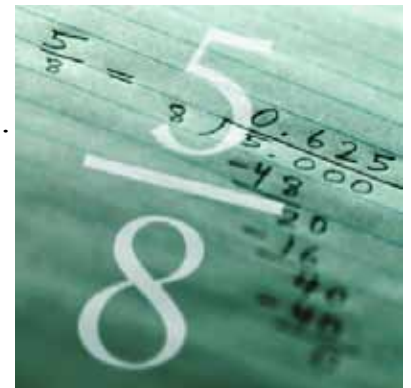
7) Avoid using parentheses at all costs. If a comma or long dash won't work in their place, it's time to rework that sentence. Parentheses halt the reader in his/her place and also slow the flow of the story. Only use parentheses if absolutely necessary.

8) If things don't seem to add up when writing numbers, this might help. Spell out numbers under 10 and use numerals for numbers 10 and above.

That sounds easy, but there are always exceptions:

- Dimensions: Use numbers. (*The rug is 7 feet by 4 feet long.*)
- Height and weight: Use numbers, even if less than 10. (*He is 6 feet tall. The baby weighs 6 pounds, 3 ounces.*) Use hyphens when the measurement becomes a compound modifier. (*The 5-foot-8-inch man jumped high.*)
- Numbers are used when giving the age of a person or animal, but spell out the number if less than 10. (*She is four years old. The 16-year-old boy ordered a pizza. The dog, who was 10, ran for the ball. The six-year-old cat slept on the windowsill.*)
- Distances: spell out the number if below 10. (*He drove four miles. We drove nine miles one day and 15 miles the next.*)
- Fractions: spell out amounts less than one (*two-thirds, five-eighths*).
- But regardless of the number or its use, spell out numbers that begin a sentence. (*Fifty years ago, Dahlynn was born.*)

Don't get your undies in a knot over this, though. Just check the number usage in your story before you press "submit."



9) Be sure to include your complete contact information on the story submission form, and let PS know if that information changes, even a few years down the road. If your story isn't used in one book, it might be used in the future. If your story makes it through one of the selection rounds, but then the email bounces and PS can't reach you, another story will quickly bounce into its place.

10) One more thought about the story submission form: do not use ALL CAPS for the story title. This is a pet peeve of Dahlynn's—you want to stay on her good side!

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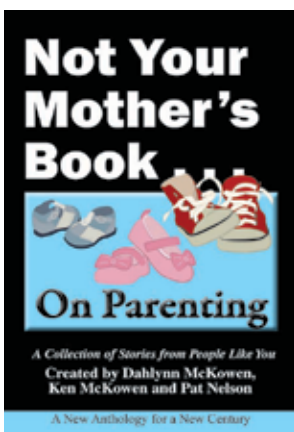
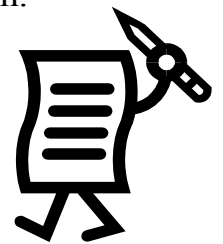
## Wedgies . . .

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11) There is a time to hurry and a time to slow down. When a story call-out is posted, this is the time for you to hurry and write a story. Once you've written your story, it's time to slow down. Stories must get their sleep. Let your story rest overnight and look at it again in the morning. Chances are, you'll make changes that will make your story better. If you make more than just one or two simple changes or corrections, consider it a sign your story still needs more rest. Let it sleep again until the next day. Stories are seldom as good as they can be when you first write them.

12) Everyone makes mistakes. Try your best to find mistakes before you submit your story. Read your story silently, concentrating on reading each word. That's a good way to find words and improper punctuation marks that don't belong. Then read your story aloud. Does it flow well? If there are awkward spots or stumbling points, you have more work to do. And if you're unsure of certain words or punctuation, do a Google search for the answer, relying only on reputable sources such as [www.drgrammar.org](http://www.drgrammar.org) or <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com>.

So before you submit your story for consideration to any of the NYMB or OMG books, get your story into great shape. If your words feel like wedgies, your story won't stand as good of a chance of being selected. Follow these tips and your story will be dressed to go out in public.



Pat Nelson is the co-creator of the upcoming title *Not Your Mother's Book... On Parenting* (release: Sept. 10, 2013) and also *On Grandparenting* and *On Working for a Living*. She is also an active part of the PS team and loves to proofread! Thanks, Pat!



Earlier this month, Pat (seated left) traveled to PS in California from her home in Washington to final NYMB On Parenting with Dahlynn (on the right). Here they are hard at work in the dining room, aka the PS conference room.



Co-creators together! From left to right: Margie Yee Webb (On Cats), Pat, Nancy Withers (On Teachers) and Dahlynn

# The Wow Principles e-newsletter

## Book Updates...



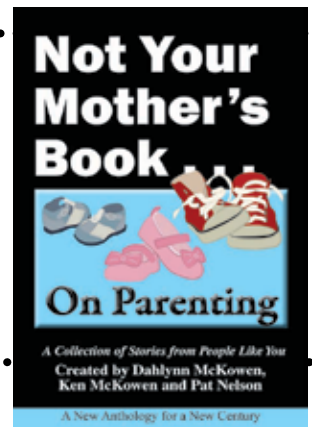
Hooray! Here's the cover for *NYMB On Dieting*! Terri Spilman, the book's co-creator, came up with the idea of a piece of chocolate cake chasing a woman and artist Stefanie Collins created a very funny cover.

We asked Terri how the submissions are lining up thus far, and she sent this: "I've found that most of the stories submitted to date focus on shape wear, 'red zone' foods and lack of willpower. It would be great to get some specific stories on fad or crazy diets, successful journeys, exercise mishaps or stories why people won't or don't diet." OK, you now have the inside scoop from the person who makes the first-round selections for this NYMB title, so get writing!

No story deadline has been set, but it will come up soon. Find a detailed chapter list here: [https://www.publishingsyndicate.com/publishing\\_syndicate/submissions/title\\_descriptions/dieting.html](https://www.publishingsyndicate.com/publishing_syndicate/submissions/title_descriptions/dieting.html)

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**Not Your Mother's Book...On Parenting:** This book is in galleys and stories will be sent for approvals starting approximately May 31st. If you have a great parenting story and missed the deadline, please submit to *NYMB On Being a Mom* or *NYMB On Family*. Those books are open to new submissions until August 1st. See our website for details and submission guidelines. Release: September 10, 2013



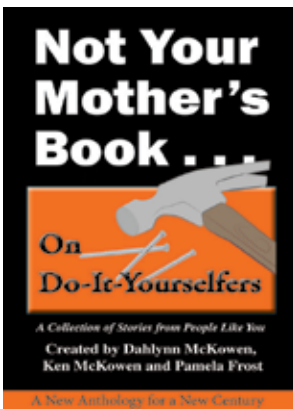
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### **Not Your Mother's Book...On Do-It-Yourselfers**

The manuscript has been delivered to PS for approval. Having peeked at the contents thus far, it's hard not to laugh!

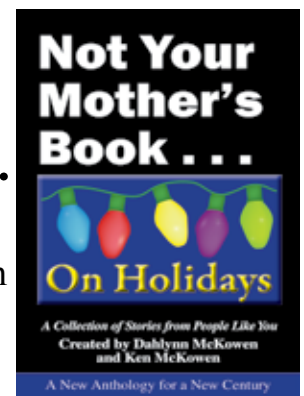
For those of you who have completed PRFs, keep an eye on your email the first week of June for possible story questions from PS.

Release: September 10, 2013



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**Not Your Mother's Book...Holidays:** Nearly all of the PRFs for this book have been sent to contributors, but we might send a few more. The book is in editing and will come together very quickly. If you completed a PRF, hang tight. We'll be in touch soon with edits. **New release date: Sept. 24, 2013**



## SEND IN YOUR STORIES!

Updated 5/29/13

### *Not Your Mother's Book . . .*

## A new anthology for a new century!

Stories needed for 30+ new books. Must be written by people age 18 and up. Details and submission guidelines on the PS website.

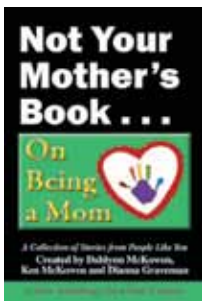
**HURRY! HURRY! HURRY!**



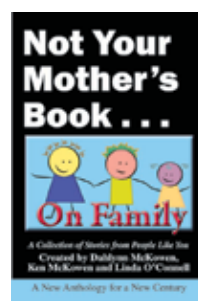
*On Cats:*  
June 1, 2013



*On Dating:*  
July 1, 2013



*On Being a Mom:*  
Aug. 1, 2013



*On Family:*  
Aug. 1, 2013

Submission guidelines at  
[www.PublishingSyndicate.com](http://www.PublishingSyndicate.com)

### *OMG! My Reality! Youth Series*

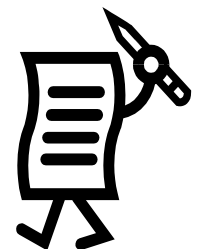
## Time to get published!

We are accepting stories for four *OMG! My Reality!* titles: *Kids*; *Preteens*; and *Teens*. Stories must be written by those age 25 and younger. Please share this information with everyone. Thanks!



Do you know a teenager who loves to write? Tell him/her to submit stories to the upcoming *OMG! My Reality! For Teens*. **Being a published author is great for college and job applications.** With the fall 2013 release of *Stand Up!*, an anthology with stories from 75 of the nation's and world's most amazing young activists, we'll be swamped with even more submissions. So don't delay! Send now!

*Help young people become published authors!*



## *My Story is Out: High School Years*

Created by Lyndsey D'Arcangelo

*The nation's newest anthology for LGBT teens!*

**Permission release forms going out in early April!** But we are looking for a few more stories to round out the manuscript. Must be penned by those age 25 and younger. Send now! [www.MyStoryIsOut.com](http://www.MyStoryIsOut.com)