

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I'm preparing my manuscript for the preconference submission. What is the difference between a manuscript critique and an editorial review?

When you send in your preconference submission, you can choose to either have your manuscript **critiqued** by a freelancer or have it **reviewed** by an agent or by an editor of a publishing house or magazine.

- Request a **critique** if you primarily want to learn how you can sharpen your writing. You may receive line-by-line critique of a one to three pages, some general editorial pointers, and sometimes suggestions of places where you might submit the manuscript for publication.
- Request an **editorial review** if you primarily want to discover if a publishing house or magazine would be interested in publishing your manuscript or if an agent might like to represent you. Keep in mind that the editor or agent is not required to do any critique of your manuscript though each may choose to include some suggestions. Generally the editor or agent will tell you whether or not he or she is interested in your manuscript. Some may say no, but then suggest a different agent or publisher. Or you may receive a suggestion to work with a critique team member for further polishing. If the editor or agent is interested in your manuscript, you may be asked to send the manuscript after the conference to prevent suitcase overload. Very rarely does an editor accept manuscripts at the conference since others may be involved in that final decision.

Check the appropriate box on the manuscript submission form.

Remember, **two** manuscripts maximum for preconference submissions. Be sure to follow all guidelines for submitting your manuscripts. The guidelines include several informational documents, which can be found at:

<http://mounthermon.org/adult/professionals/writers-conference/forms>

When at the Mount Hermon website, click on "**forms**" on the top bar of the writer's conference page, and then look under "**Manuscript Submission Requirements.**" Review all guidelines in the documents provided.

How do I know who to choose for my two preconference submissions?

Check the site for the spreadsheet, **What Publishers and Editors Want to See**. This will include editors, agents, and freelancers and what they are most interested in reviewing.

Also visit the websites of the publisher, magazine, or agency. Do your own research and get a feel for the publisher, editor, or agent. Find out what their interests are.

When will my manuscript be returned to me and where do I pick it up?

Manuscripts are given to editors, agents, and freelancers on Thursday just before the conference begins. These may begin to as early as Friday.

However, **the Manuscript Retrieval team does not release any manuscripts to conferees until Saturday after lunch.**

IMPORTANT: All manuscripts must go through the Manuscript Retrieval System for tracking. Please do not allow an editor to hand you your manuscript if it has not been checked back in through the system. Likewise, do not hand your manuscript to an editor for review. Request a signed form and process your manuscript through the retrieval system. More information on this below.

Can I bring other projects or proposals with me?

Yes, you can.

Be aware that all manuscripts must go through the Manuscript Retrieval System. See more details included under the question below, **“What do I do if an editor requests to see my project while I am at the conference?”**

Bring:

- extra copies of the manuscripts you sent in ahead of time—just in case someone else is interested in reviewing it.
- other projects or articles that you would like to pitch to an editor or agent while you are at the conference.
- copies of projects or articles that you can take to the critique team for suggestions on polishing or publishing.

IMPORTANT: Bring extra 9 x 12 manila envelopes if you anticipate receiving additional requests from editors or agents to view your project samples.

What do I do if an editor requests to see one of my manuscripts while I am at the conference?

All editors of publishing houses or magazines have been given forms for additional manuscript submissions at the conference. This allows each editor an opportunity at the conference to review

manuscripts beyond the pre-submitted manuscripts (those manuscripts sent prior to the conference according to the preconference submission guidelines).

- If the editor would like to see your project, you will be given a half-sheet form they have signed. Check to confirm that they have signed the form. The manuscript retrieval team cannot accept an unsigned form. Also, be aware that though the editor may request to see your manuscript, his or her first priority is to review the pre-submitted manuscripts. Be patient as you check at the Manuscript Retrieval Center for your manuscript.
- Fill out the top half of the signed form and take the form and your manuscript to Manuscript Retrieval in the Hospitality Center.
- Work with a Manuscript Retrieval team member to prepare your manuscript for processing. Please do not leave it at the table without completing the process.

Again, bring with you to the conference extra 9 x 12 manila envelopes if you anticipate receiving requests from editors to view your project samples.

You may reuse envelopes that have been returned to you through Manuscript Retrieval. The Manuscript Retrieval team will have a few extra 9 x 12 envelopes available, but please plan on having an envelope with you when you turn in your manuscript.

Always be certain that you turn in your manuscript to a Manuscript Retrieval team member in the Hospitality Center. Otherwise, we cannot guarantee that your manuscript will be routed as you desire.

Can I make copies or print samples of my writing project while at the conference?

Copying and printing is available at the conference. Listen for details when you arrive or ask at the Hospitality Center.

What are the best ways for me to connect with editors at the conference?

First, spend time ahead of the conference becoming familiar with the editors who will be there. Research their publishing houses or magazines to determine which might be the best fit for the writing that you do.

Then, while at the conference, you have several ways to speak with an editor or to discover what they are interested in. You can:

- Attend an editor's workshop where you can hear more about his interests and ask questions.
- Attend one of the faculty panels on Saturday and on Monday that are specific to your publishing interests. You will have an opportunity to ask general questions or share your ideas.

- Most editors are more than happy to answer questions when they are out and about walking to and from events. Be courteous and respectful and check to see if that moment is a good time for your question or if there is a better time and place.
- Lunch and dinner mealtimes allow opportunity for you to sit at a table with editors or teaching faculty. The faculty may choose to host the conversation or enjoy conversations as they occur. If you sit at an editor's table, you may like to share your 30-second *elevator pitch* of your project or an overview of what you enjoy writing. You may also ask questions about the publishing house or magazine. Be courteous to allow time for the editor to eat his or her meal and for others at the table to also share their projects or ask questions. If the editor is interested in your project, he may request to see the project.
- After an editor reviews your manuscript, he may request an appointment with you. Locate the editor at their table during lunch or dinner to set up a time and location that will work for both of you.

How can I make an appointment with an editor?

A blank appointment schedule is included as part of the conference's materials available to you ahead of the conference. Print the schedule so you have it to note appointments with editors, agents, freelancers, or members of the critique team.

Editors and agents have these schedules available as well. Some may choose to wait until after they have reviewed the manuscripts they have been given. Others may want to schedule appointments from the beginning of the conference. Pitch your project. If they express interest, ask if they'd like to schedule an appointment with you to discuss the possibilities of your project for their publishing house or other projects or ideas you might have.

Decide on a time and location and make sure these are written down on both of your appointment calendars. Be on time for the appointment. Sometimes the editor or agent is running behind schedule. Wait patiently!

How do I prepare a 30-second pitch for my project?

Basically, a pitch is what you prepare to say in fifty words or less. You name your project, tell what it is about in an interesting way, and describe the intended audience. You may write it out and memorize it, but the key is to share it naturally and with enthusiasm.

Check to see if there is a workshop on this topic offered early in the conference. If not, feel free to stop by Manuscript Retrieval. A member of the team would be happy to provide guidelines to prepare a pitch or listen to your pitch and offer feedback.

What if I'm not sending in a manuscript prior to the conference or bringing a project?

That is perfectly fine. You might be choosing to attend the conference to sharpen your writing skills, to network, or to discover more about the publishing industry.

Be prepared to answer the most common questions that will come up, like:

What are your writing interests?

What are you writing right now?

And some editors might ask: What are you reading right now or have read recently?

If I'd like help with choosing my track, workshops, or generally how to plan my conference time, who can I talk to?

If you're involved in the Buddy System, you can ask your buddy or the Buddy System coordinators.

You can also stop by the Manuscript Retrieval area in the Hospitality Center. The members of the team are professional writers and have been Mount Hermon conference attendees and faculty. They are familiar with the conference and are available to work with you to devise a conference plan of action tailored to your interests, including potential editors that you might like to talk to. You may do this anytime during the conference as you see your interests or needs change.

Conference faculty and hospitality team members are available to encourage and to help. Don't be afraid to ask.

What do I do if the editors I chose for my preconference submission aren't interested in my manuscript?

That is a real possibility. It could be that the publisher recently released, or will be releasing, a book or article similar to yours. The editor may be looking for something different and specific to their needs. If you have an opportunity at a mealtime, sit at one of their tables and ask what types of topics or projects they are currently most interested in. You might pick up on some new ideas you'd like to pursue after the conference.

On Friday, during faculty introductions, listen carefully. An editor will often give some details of the types of projects their house is currently most interested in. An agent will describe the projects they are representing.

Attend one of the faculty panels on Saturday or Monday to get a better feel for what publishing houses and magazines are looking for so that you can discover the best potential options for your project.

Keep in mind that the best publishing house or magazine for your project may not be represented at this conference this year. Network with other writers. Talk to the critique team. Find out about other options for your manuscript.

Take advantage of the conference's professional freelancers on the critique team and gain their professional insight in how you can further polish and edit your manuscript. The critique team members are available to meet with you for fifteen-minute appointments on a first-come-first-serve basis in the conference's Hospitality Center. They are available for walk-in appointments Saturday through Monday afternoons, from 4:00pm until 6:00pm. Occasionally individual members of the team are critiquing manuscripts near the Manuscript Retrieval area in the Hospitality Center. Feel free to ask if they are available to meet with you.

What should I bring with me to the conference?

Check the conference site for suggestions on clothing and other items needed for the conference.

Other items you might consider bringing are:

- Business cards or some way to pass on your contact information. Business cards can be printed on your computer or purchased through your local printing shop or online.
- One sheets and brochures are not required, but if you have an established speaking and writing business or ministry, these materials may help showcase who you are at a glance. Bring a few to have available to share with editors, agents, or others who might be interested in what you do.
- Printed off information from the site that would be helpful for you during the conference. Binder content will be available for download prior to the conference. Check the date under **details** on the website. This information will also be available for you to peruse in the Hospitality Center. Copies at a nominal charge are available in the Hospitality Center.
- Your Bible and anything else that will augment your conference experience.

How do I make the most of my conference time?

The most crucial way to make the most of the conference is to spend time in prayer prior to attending. Prepare your heart and mind for the busy schedule and for the unexpected. Be aware of your expectations and remain open to allow God to take you in new directions with your writing goals.

It could be that the best way to spend your time at the conference is by meeting other writers who can support you on your writing journey, or by focusing in on how you can improve your writing and make it stronger.

The conference is not about publishing what we brought as much as discovering how we can become prayerful professionals that are more informed about the industry and where God is leading us to find our place in it.

Pray about specific personal and professional goals that you'd like to keep loosely in mind for the conference. "Loosely" because the conference experience will have the greatest impact when you remain open to the new possibilities and opportunities God might bring about during this time.

What else would be of help to me?

Be sure to review all information provided for you at
<http://mounthermon.org/adult/professionals/writers-conference>

If this is your first time at Mount Hermon, take advantage of the Buddy System, which provides a 'buddy' that will help you prepare for the conference. Check the site for how to contact the coordinators under the conference *details* section. Included below are some of the tips provided to those who participate in the program and which are great reminders for all of us:

SURVIVING THE MOUNT HERMON CHRISTIAN WRITER'S CONFERENCE

(Surviving the Mount Hermon Conference was prepared by Jeanette Hanscome, a conference participant since 1995.)

Writer's conferences are essential to an author's career. They are a great place to connect with editors and agents, network with other writers, and learn. By choosing Mount Hermon you will be attending one of the best! But conferences can also be intimidating, especially your first one. So here are some tips for survival.

PLAN AHEAD . . .

If possible, decide which major morning workshop you'd like to attend before you arrive at the conference. Read over the tentative list of afternoon elective workshops. Some may change, but it won't hurt to be prepared.

Read *What Publishers and Editors Want to See*, even if you don't plan to submit anything ahead of time. Then if you are brave enough to pitch your idea at the conference, you'll know who to talk to. Plan to connect with those who are looking for your type of book, article, poem, or story. If at all possible, take it easy the week before the conference. Five days of workshops and late nights takes a lot out of you. You don't want to be tired before you begin.

Pray that you will be open to what God has to teach you at Mount Hermon.

ONCE YOU ARRIVE . . .

Be a sponge. Make learning your priority, especially if this is your first conference. Take notes and ask questions. Listen to the advice of workshop leaders, critiques and editors, even if their comments are hard to take.

Don't be shy. Relationships are one of the most valuable things that you will take home from Mount Hermon. Talk to other writers, as well as the faculty members. Connect with as many people as possible. Six months after the conference you will be grateful for the friendship, prayer partners, and professional connections.

Try not to be a loner. Even if you signed up for "the Buddy System," find one or two friends to sit with during general sessions, eat with, and share the ups and downs of the week with. If you want to make an appointment with a specific editor, agent or faculty member, make sure that they are interested in your type of manuscript before trying for an appointment. If you aren't ready for a one-on-one, or find out that an editor's slots are filled, sit at their table at lunch or dinner. Remember that connecting with editors is not your number one priority, and it is certainly not a requirement. But you don't want to look back and realize that you didn't make that desired connection because you were too afraid to speak up.

Remember the faculty are there to help. If you have a question about a workshop, manuscripts that you submitted, how to find a classroom, or anything else, go the Hospitality Center for help or ask a registrant that looks like they know what they are doing.

Be polite. Think of how annoying it is when someone won't stop following you. Multiply that times 400. While you do want to show confidence, try not to be overbearing when approaching editors. Let them eat and go to the bathroom in peace. Be courteous if you spot your favorite editor or agent and he or she is talking to someone else. When you finally get your turn you'll make a much better impression.

Take advantage of what is offered. This conference offers an amazing amount of tools, services, and workshops. Take advantage of the pre-conference manuscript submission opportunity. If you are new to writing or don't think your work is ready for an editor's critical eye, send something in for critique. You will learn so much from it! Attend panel discussions and as many workshops as you brain can handle.

Pace yourself. You may notice when you arrive that the schedule is jam-packed. If you start to feel overloaded (more like WHEN), skip a workshop, panel discussion, or meal. Go to your room and take a nap. Take a walk. Find a place to be alone with God. Browse the bookstore. If you are discouraged, find someone to talk to. You won't get what you need out of the conference if your brain explodes.

Be realistic. Connections are often made at writer's conference, but it is rare to go home with a book contract. You will leave disappointed if your whole reason for attending is to sell a manuscript. You may be surprised by how much God has to teach you which will have nothing to do with your work-in-progress! Also keep in mind that He doesn't stop working when you leave the conference. Sometimes connections fall into place months later. So stay open to His timing.

REMEMBER THAT IT IS NORMAL TO . . .

Get discouraged. Writing is a tough and constantly changing world. You will hear a lot of things at the conference, some of which will leave you thinking that there is no place for your work. Hold on to the knowledge that God is ultimately in control of your future as a writer and that He has you at the conference for a reason.

Cry. Even seasoned conference veterans admit to having at least one meltdown during the conference. Face it; we are tired, overwhelmed, discouraged, excited, hopeful, let down, and often all at the same time. On top of that, writers are emotional people. The peak times for open floodgates are Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Don't stuff it. It really is okay. Nobody will think you are weird or that you are just being a baby. If you need to, find a friend, go to the Hospitality Center, or go to your room for some alone time. You'll feel much better and will enjoy the conference more once the tears are gone.

Get direction that you didn't expect. You may arrive with one goal for your writing and leave with a completely different one. It happens all the time.

Lose perspective. It's easy to get caught up in the feeding frenzy of meeting with editors, pitching ideas, and comparing accomplishments. Before you know it, a side of you is coming out that you either didn't know was there, or thoroughly detest. When this happens, take time-out with God. Be sure to attend the Palm Sunday service, which is a perfect time to reconnect with Who you are writing for.

Find that God is working in your heart about something that is completely unrelated to writing. With our busy lives at home, often a week like the Mount Hermon Conference is the only place where God can get our attention. Embrace it, thank Him for it, and let Him speak.

Now, prepare yourself for what is sure to be one of the highlights of your year! Enjoy!