

## Dos and Don'ts for Author Bios

When submitting a bio and photo consider what these tools do for the reader or audience: they give an introduction. A bio is not a biography of your life history. A bio is your pitch that runs ahead of you.

### **Experience:**

While accomplishments, awards and book titles are things to be proud of and demonstrate other people have found your art worthwhile, unless your titles are telling, the list alone doesn't say why your work appeals. A lot of bios run like a dry version of a CV. It's relevant to indicate experience but every bio could become a list of publication names which often don't reveal much. If your title is "Blue Water" it will indicate less of what you're about and the genre than "The Zombie Survival Guide: Recorded Attacks".

### **Hook:**

A bio is a hook on why someone should pay attention. It is like a thesis statement, relevant to what you're about to present. If your bio reads that you care about human rights but you write about loving busses, the bio would miscue.

A bio should key people in to what you're passionate about, and writing about. Be as specific as possible: author also writes political satire and acrostics. Add a particular model of guitar or bicycle. Add something of favourite things. "Loves the way rain sounds coming thru white pine." It adds a flavour of personality, perhaps tying into the motivations for living.

### **Distinctive:**

Your bio is an art form onto itself. It could be something personal, distinctive, and unique.

"Author lives with 2 cats" is not unique. "I have been writing since childhood" is not distinctive.

Maybe your writing is all about the domestic and "lives in X town with husband and 2 kids" adds a down-to-earth human element. Think about what impact the sentence can have.

Each bio can be a custom job. You may add a factoid, or teaser of connection. For example, to be published in a journal out of particular college, tie into the local angle: "The author was first kissed while living just outside this college town", or "Author currently lives in this town which the writer first encountered stranded roadside in 1986".

### **Tone:**

Tone depends on the market. Some magazines specify what they want and don't allow. Follow that. Otherwise, have fun with it. You can do that without feeling exposed or oversharing or being too random.

### **Free Ad Space:**

Your bio could plug future projects or your favourite charity. It could counterbalance the tone of your work or play it up. A poem about the prairies could be written in cowpoke theme. Hokey might be better than forgettable. Each bio is a very small billboard ad. What key info to pique interest would you like to put on it?