

Writing about Parenting

This is a sample syllabus. Actual course topics and assignments may vary by instructor and class.

Week 1

Types of parenting writing. Ideas. Skill set. An overview of the parenting genre—range of topics, styles of writing, and the many venues for parenting writers. Comparison of parenting research, reporting, and writing versus other specialties. Assignment: Come up with five irresistible ideas, each with a juicy headline and paragraph description of the topic and why it is a must-read. Make a list of your qualifications to write about parenting and related topics.

Week 2

Parenting venues and letters of introduction. How to identify potential outlets for your work. Targeting parenting magazines and Web sites, plus thinking outside of the box. Review of letters of introduction, their purpose, and content.

Assignment: Make a list of 10 targets for your parenting ideas. Once you have your list, figure out which section or department of the publication you'll aim for, plus the name and title of the editor in charge of that section. Write a letter of introduction to one of the targets on your list.

Week 3

Development of parenting stories, particularly service, news, and trend articles. How to find good parenting sources and "real" moms and dads for quotes and anecdotes. Research techniques and tips. Discussion of related genres and subspecialties. Elements of the pitch letter.

Assignment: Write a one-page pitch letter to one of the targets on your list. Write a 500-word news-driven parenting story.

Week 4

Recap and discussion of writing as a business, how to establish and maintain editor relationships, networking. Self-editing, time management, and maximizing your research.

Assignment: Write another pitch letter to a different target on your list. Then, write a 500-word parenting story of your choice, or do a rewrite of the story from last week.