

**Project Portfolio – March 2019

Eight Tips for Writing a Great 100-Word Bio!

By Ben Whittaker-Cook**

100-words might not seem much, but it’s plenty if you follow a basic formula. A bio exists to get your important information across as succinctly and effortlessly as possible. There are a few differing points on how to write a great bio, but this is the way I do it and it seems to get results! Most importantly, it’s easy to do if you follow some simple rules:

1) Write your bio in the third-person. It will seem strange at first – after all, whoever writes or talks about themselves in the third person except for TV personalities and sports stars?

So introduce yourself and what you do:

**Nina Rycroft is an experienced children’s book illustrator and eCourse illustration teacher.**

Right away you’ve written so much! It’s clear who you are and what you do. That’s why it’s a good idea for your first and last name to be the first two words of your professional bio.

2) Next, what about something interesting that you’re working on right now?

**Nina Rycroft is an experienced children’s book illustrator and eCourse illustration teacher. She is currently working on her Project Portfolio concept to bring creative people together and is illustrating a new picture book.**

We’re doing well!

3) Then include at least one professional but relevant accomplishment. So don’t write that you were under-15 inter schools’ judo champion. You’re an illustrator, have you done something fabulous that people should know about?

**Her first picture book, Little Platypus, received a Children’s Book Council Australia Notable Book Award.**

If you haven’t got one, don’t panic! A professional accomplishment shows that you are making inroads in the industry in which you want to succeed. That’s great, but you shouldn’t feel like you’re losing ground on the competition if you haven’t got anything to say in this area. It’s just a nice bonus!

So, now we’ve already got 48 wonderful words. We’re halfway already!

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4) Next, perhaps put one piece of professional information about yourself. Where did you study? And if so, again, does it enhance your standing in the industry in which you want to work?

It’s best to put your qualifications or study information here, because, and now here it comes… you probably studied some time ago. With a bio, it’s good to begin with your most recent accomplishments!

You don’t need to put your age or any big personal info in a bio. This way your bio won’t go out-of-date too quickly and will stay relevant.

Similarly, there’s no need to put dreams or ambitions or quirky comments in your bio. Don’t waste words by stating you like to adopt hippos or that Charles Dickens is a great influence. This is about you!

**Nina Rycroft is an experienced children’s book illustrator and eCourse illustration teacher. She is currently working on her Project Portfolio concept to bring creative people together and is illustrating a new picture book. Her first picture book, Little Platypus, received a Children’s Book Council Australia Notable Book Award. She has illustrated more than a dozen** [**picture books**](http://ninarycroft.com/books/) **that have been published worldwide and in several languages.**

5) Humour. This is a difficult one. We’re working, or trying to work, in a friendly, supportive and inclusive sector; children’s literature. However, first impressions do count and the reader won’t necessarily know you. Stating you were once a bumble bee at the Court of Camelot or that you believe your brother is an alien probably won’t win you many friends. So it’s best to avoid humour.

There is, however, an opportunity to inject a little bit about your tastes and influences here without being too ‘out there’. There’s room to highlight one of your main strengths. But make sure you do this without sending yourself down a rabbit hole. If you say you, er… enjoy drawing rabbits; you’re limiting yourself, if you say you enjoy illustrating animals with human behaviours, then that opens up a whole world of opportunities.

**She currently lives in Auckland and loves sketching cold weather animals in an urban environment.**

6) Don’t give yourself a ridiculous job title. Let the ‘ninjas’, ‘evangelists’, ‘influencers’ and ‘gurus’ have their fun on LinkedIn. ‘Illustrator’ or ‘writer’ is just fine!

7) Don’t overemote and keep emotion away from your bio. Just stick to the facts. We’re all ‘passionate’, ‘unique’, ‘hard-working’ and ‘desperate to succeed’. Let that shine through in your work, not your bio.

8) You don’t have to promise the world or announce yourself as something you’re not. So, avoid the temptation to pad out your bio. If your bio is 80 words, that’s fine! You don’t have to fill it with fluff to get to 100 words. So try to avoid writing things such as, ‘So, there you have it,’ or ‘That was all about me’.

If your bio is online, it’s okay to offer the reader a ‘where next’. This might be a hyperlink to your work or website. So it’s ok to write:

**‘You can read more about Nina** [**right here**](https://ninarycroft.com/)**.’**

And there you have it!

**Nina Rycroft is an experienced children’s book illustrator and eCourse illustration teacher. She is currently working on her Project Portfolio concept to bring creative people together and is illustrating a new picture book. Her first picture book, Little Platypus, received a Children’s Book Council Australia Notable Book Award. She has illustrated more than a dozen** [**picture books**](http://ninarycroft.com/books/) **that have been published worldwide and in several languages. She currently lives in Auckland and loves sketching cold weather animals in an urban environment. You can read more about Nina**[**right here**](https://ninarycroft.com/)**.**

 And once you’re done…

1)   Don’t agonise over every word and sentence. So long as your bio flows to your satisfaction, is within your 100 word-count limit, and you have all the essential information you want, let it go! And don’t keep reading your bio over and over again. Perfection doesn’t exist, and there’s no right or wrong. So long as you’re happy!

2)   An extra set of eyes will always help because if you look at things too closely, you’ll start seeing pink hedgehogs and T-Rex’s in between words. It’s ok to have a typo or two – so long as you correct it as soon as possible. One way to solve this is to get a friend, family member or colleague to read it through for you. They don’t have to be a wordsmith. And remember, you’re just looking for errors. The facts don’t need changing.

3)   The spell check on your word document is usually sufficient, but for an extra layer of safety, you may want to invest in something like Grammarly. No computer or automated checker is perfect, however, so why not get a human to check your words?

4)   Remember to go back to your bio every few months. What’s changed since you last wrote your bio? Instead of ‘aspiring illustrator/writer’ are you now a ‘published illustrator/writer’? If you’ve finished working on a collection of charcoal sketches for Acorn Publishing in New York, then move on and replace it with something equally exciting!

 **Here is an example of my bio …**

Ben Whittacker-Cookhas been a journalist and writer for more than 20 years. He has written for hundreds of magazines, newspapers and websites around the world; including the BBC, Channel Four and The Daily Telegraph in the UK. He writes everything from third-party “ghost” articles for large multinational corporates, to quirky commentary pieces for newsstand titles.

He has written several manuscripts which have been used as the inspiration for Nina Rycroft’s online illustration courses, and he is currently looking for a children’s book publisher willing to embrace his thoughtful and dark storytelling. He is from London and lives in Auckland.

**Website:** [www.benwhittackercook.com](http://www.benwhittackercook.com/)

**Email:** bwhittcook@gmail.com

**Twitter:** [@bwcook72](https://twitter.com/bwcook72)

**Instagram:** [bwcook72](https://www.instagram.com/bwcook72/?hl=en)

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**100-word bio cheat sheet**

Five common grammar headaches to look out for! These are just little tricks that can help make your writing tighter and read a little smoother. And do try to write a little every day – even if you’re an illustrator. You’ll not only develop your own style, but you’ll become more confident in your writing abilities!

**1)   The Rogue Apostrophe**

Some common ones:

It’s vs its

The creature jumped out of it’s cage. *Wrong!*

The creature jumped out of its cage. *Right!*

Decades

1960’s, 1970’s 1980’s when as a plural, not in the possessive.

The 1980’s was a great time for music. *Wrong!*

The 1980s was a great time for music. *Right!*

Objects

Avocado’s are free! *Wrong!*

Avocados are free! *Right!*

**2)   They’re. There. Their.**

Their looking very happy. *Wrong!*

There looking very happy. *Wrong!*

They’re looking very happy. *Right!*

**3)   Making sure the subject and verb of a sentence agree. Singular or plural.**

It’s important my work have meaning. *Wrong!*

It’s important my work has meaning. *Right!*

Your work is a single thing. So we use ‘has’. Just like: ‘The girl has a lovely smile’.

**4)   Overusing Capitalisation**

I think Winter is coming to find Us. *Wrong!*

I think winter is coming to find us. *Right!*

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