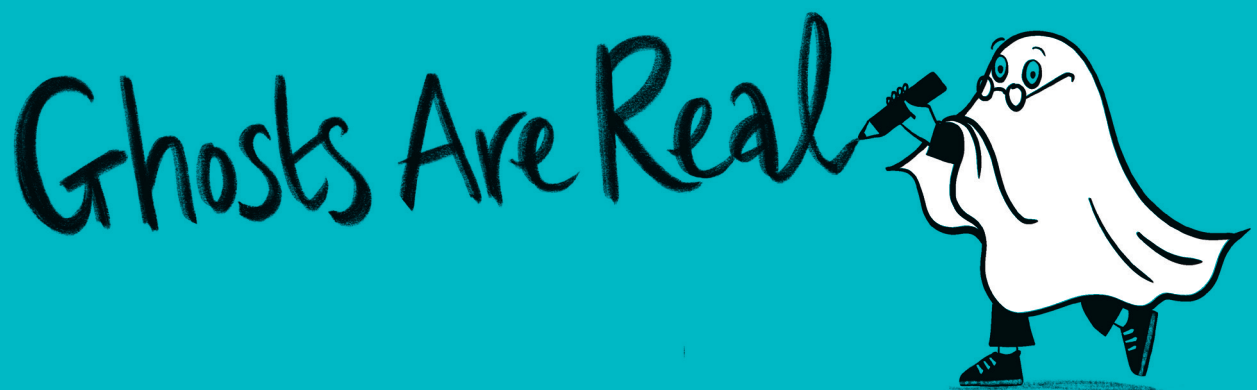




Guidelines for working with ghostwriters of celebrity-authored children's fiction



The practice of using authors to write children's books with a celebrity or in a celebrity's name has become increasingly common in the industry, yet the work of the ghostwriter is often insufficiently acknowledged or credited.

Crediting the ghostwriter as well as the celebrity can bring huge value to the book in terms of: credibility and authenticity (incredibly valuable in the age of AI), showcasing writing talent, event experience, and reinforcing the celebrity brand. There is a growing trend of heartening and welcome examples of celebrities publicly and generously acknowledging their ghostwriters. We are yet to come across any instance of book sales or a celebrity's reputation being diminished by giving acknowledgement to a co-creator or ghost.

We appreciate that every book deal is unique. This guidance is intended to assist literary agents and publishers in navigating this area and ensuring that terms for all those involved in the creation of these works are fair. When considering using a ghostwriter to write a children's book with a celebrity or in a celebrity's name, we ask that publishers and agents:

1. **Bear in mind best practice in relation to contract terms:** this is an area where flat-fee deals are commonplace. This means that the ghostwriter lacks the opportunity to share in a book's success. Royalties or bonus fees (when a book sells over an agreed quantity, or other rights are licensed) are fair ways of rewarding ghostwriters for their contribution to the work. Considering both ghostwriter and celebrity's payment at the very outset of the project, and across all rights, makes it easier to fairly remunerate each party.

Whatever the nature of the terms agreed, ensure it is clear that the ghostwriter is entitled to claim collective licensing income from the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society. This is often an essential source of income for authors.

2. **Establish the process:** discuss with both celebrity and ghostwriter how the writing process will operate, in terms of plotting, drafts and edits. Be clear about expectations in terms of volume of work and

schedules. Each celebrity and ghostwriter pairing will have their own preferences of communication, but we encourage an early meeting with both parties so that this can be established.

3. **Clarify credits:** publishers are encouraged to make the crediting of the ghostwriter a standard inclusion on the cover (unless the ghostwriter specifically requests otherwise) using the wording '[celebrity] with [ghostwriter]'. A discussion should be had with the celebrity to ensure they are happy with this arrangement. Be clear about how authorship of the book is to be referred to, both by celebrity and ghostwriter.

Transparency provides many advantages:

- a. It assures a level of quality. Ghostwriters have a wealth of writing experience and crediting their input will bring a stamp of craft and skill.
- b. It attracts readers who know the work of the ghostwriter as well as readers who have heard of the celebrity.
- c. It respects the craft of writing, inspiring children to want to write for pleasure.
- d. It assists in maintaining the careers of children's authors, without whom many celebrity books would not be possible. Authors need visibility to thrive in a career that is financially precarious.
- e. It is in keeping with fair and professional practice.
- f. In an era of misinformation and rising suspicion of 'truth', open crediting of the ghostwriter by the celebrity and publisher is viewed positively by the public. Celebrities who willingly share credits are seen as having more brand honesty.
- g. A title page credit (and/or being in receipt of royalties) will allow the ghostwriter to claim Public Lending Right, which is another vital source of income for ghostwriters of children's books.

4. **Provide accurate metadata:** the publisher should ensure the book is correctly coded in data for book sales websites:

- a. Correctly including the name of the ghostwriter will enable sales data to be generated against their name and this can be vital for helping them to secure future work.

b. Including the ghostwriter's name will allow children to find other work by the ghostwriter, enriching their reading experience and increasing reading for pleasure.

5. Include the ghostwriter in publicity

plans: encourage the celebrity to refer to the contribution of the ghostwriter when discussing the book in publicity events. We recommend the term 'I've worked with [name] or [a ghostwriter] to write a book'.

Where possible, and if agreed by both parties, include the ghostwriter in promotional events and signings. Ensure that if the ghostwriter is credited on the cover that the book is always referred to as 'by [celebrity] and [ghostwriter]' and tag the ghostwriter in social media posts.

Talk to the ghostwriter about how they can utilise their own network to help publicise the book. Many ghostwriters are bestsellers in their own name and have a wide range of contacts in bookshops, schools and libraries. Establish how the book will be pitched in review pieces and to events, festivals, schools and libraries.

We encourage the pitching of both parties (celebrity and ghostwriter), where appropriate, in a joint event for the following reasons:

- a. The celebrity will no doubt bring in audiences, but children's authors often have considerable experience in presenting books, reading and creativity to children at schools and literary festivals and can add authenticity and skill. This experience should be harnessed, and lauded.
- b. The ghostwriter may often be better placed and have the time to do school visits when the celebrity cannot, which will increase the visibility and boost the sales of the work to the benefit of all.
- c. Discussing the process of book creation will inspire children to celebrate the craft of writing, and encourage writing for pleasure.
- d. The teamwork aspect of the making of a book is an interesting and engaging part of the process and will add to, rather than diminish an event.

e. The additional exposure could help to sell the backlist of the ghostwriter, enhancing the opportunities for diverse reading for children, and assisting in maintaining the career of the ghostwriter.

6. Include the ghostwriter in the publisher's

insurance: the publisher should ensure the ghostwriter will be included in the publisher's insurance policy. This can be easily overlooked if the ghostwriter has a collaboration agreement directly with the celebrity rather than a publishing contract with the publisher.

7. **Be mindful of conflicts:** if you are an agent handling celebrity-authored children's books, it is advisable to avoid representing both the celebrity and ghostwriter as this may present a conflict of interest. The SoA is always happy to speak to agents who are navigating this situation and would like to discuss best practice.

Thank you for reading this guidance, and for looking after the authors on whom the publishing industry depends for its success.

A word for ghostwriters: the SoA has resources available for ghostwriters and SoA members can also access unlimited, tailored advice through the advisory service, including advice on contracts.

A final reminder...

In accordance with the [Book and Publishing Industry's Professional Values](#) we aim to hold ourselves and our colleagues in the industry to high standards of professional behaviour, based on mutual respect, compassion, humanity, an openness to difference and an unwavering commitment to the free exchange of ideas. At no point will abusive language or behaviour, or discrimination of any type, be tolerated or accepted.

We believe that an industry commitment of this kind can support an industry-wide culture we can be proud of.

We consider all feedback and update this guidance periodically.