

Plumb Bob Press Writer's Test and Application

Introduction

Thanks for your interest in becoming a Plumb Bob Press Writer. Please understand that it's our mission to feature the best of the best. To achieve that goal, our testing process is thorough and multi-faceted. If you're not a perfectionist, we're probably not a good fit.

What We're Looking For

Plumb Bob Press is looking for individuals who have significant hands-on building and remodeling experience. The more the better. Those individuals have stories to tell that impart wisdom and tips. Furthermore, you must have mastered the English language in all areas:

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Composition
- Punctuation

Writers that are hired to work for Plumb Bob Press are given assignments in their areas of expertise. You'll be asked to write about a specific column topic and told exactly what sub-topics must be covered in each of the following paragraphs within the column. It's not hard, but it requires knowledge of the subject and attention to detail.

The Application Process

To apply to become a writer, you must write a test column and fill out an application. The column you write will be uploaded as part of the application. The column must be:

- Error-free
- 500-600 words in length
- Original - write it from scratch now, not a column you've done before
- **No Plagiarism** (we use **three** separate checkers)
- Follow the enclosed style guidelines

- Mimic in style, structure, and composition the [Sample Column](#) on the following pages

Plumb Bob Press Style Guidelines

The following is a very basic style guide used in all Plumb Bob Press articles. This is a work in progress, and additions and revisions to this document are common.

1. Here's an excellent online grammar guide:

<http://www.world-english.org/grammar.htm>

Be sure to check your sample column for comma usage, quotation marks, hyphens, semicolons, use of parentheses, and all other grammar bugaboos.

2. Columns need to be written in a conversational tone as if you're having a glass of iced tea on a lazy afternoon with a neighbor.

3. Columns are to be written in second person.

4. The use of contractions is **highly recommended**. They further the conversational style. You talk with contractions, but writers typically will say, "You are going to find it difficult to spread joint compound if it's not thinned with a little water."

“**You're**” instead of “You are” sounds much better. Try it and see.

5. Avoid the use of product or brand names. Those tend to date columns and can confuse readers if that product is eventually discontinued.

6. Try to write about the process whenever possible. People want to know how something is supposed to be done, whether they are doing a project themselves or hiring a pro.

7. Avoid superlative adjectives and adverbs like: best, worst, slowest, fastest, etc. You'll always get an argument from someone with a different opinion. If you must use a superlative, always use a qualifier to give yourself wiggle room.

Example: **Many carpenters feel a wood level is best, however, those in the know have seen twisted and warped wood levels.**

8. Avoid long and complex sentences. The people reading articles found on Plumb Bob Press Web sites are in pain and don't have the patience to try to decode what you're saying.
9. Use only one space after a period.
10. Avoid the use of bold type and italics.
11. Do not use ellipsis, or multiple periods, within a sentence or at the end of a sentence.
12. Do not use quotation marks to emphasize a word or phrase.
13. Do not use capital letters to emphasize a word.
14. Do not use parentheses around phrases at any time. They are only to be used to first identify an acronym. Example: American Architectural Manufacturers Association (AAMA) Parenthetical phrases are lazy sentences.

The Sample Column

Please read the following sample column. This is exactly what I'm looking for. **The first paragraph is an introduction to the topic. The middle paragraphs *must be* one story or several different stories that you experienced that buttress what the column is about. The last paragraph is a summary or conclusion to tie together the topic.**

This column after this sentence is longer than 500 words, but it's a great example of the ***composition and structure you need to follow in your test column.***

Basement Waterproofing Techniques

If you've ever been ankle deep in mud or water on a stormy night in your basement, you surely thought about basement-waterproofing techniques as you lugged water-soaked belongings up your basement steps. Tens of thousands of homeowners like you agonize over lost possessions that, in many cases, could

have been saved from the devastation with some common sense and preplanning before the heavy rains or snow melt happened. As crazy as it sounds, many tricks to a dry basement have nothing at all to do with magical products you paint on basement walls or mystical caulks that fill cracks.

I'll never forget the second home I owned. This wood-framed house was built just after 1900, and had a classic stone foundation. Down in the basement on the driveway side, I could see lots of efflorescence on the stone walls and water stains on the floor. When we got heavy downpours, water would stream over the box gutter splashing water onto the ground right beside the spot where I saw the leak evidence.

The box gutter years before had developed a leak and previous owners neglected it. As a result, the outer edge of the box gutter resembled the crescent-shaped side of a whaleboat. Water that was supposed to go to the downspout instead was draining over the edge, splashing onto the ground and then soaking rapidly into the soil around the house and into the mortar joints in between each stone. Once I repaired this gutter and got it back into shape, the ground around the foundation dried up and I solved the basement leak.

Because I was gaining a reputation as one who could diagnose basement leaks, my friends asked for my help. On another occasion, I traced a friend's basement leak to new landscaping around a house. The landscaper piled mulch in the planting beds in between the house and the sidewalk so high, he created miniature ponds between the plants and the foundation. Ground around houses is supposed to slope away from the foundation with at least 6 inches of fall for every 10 feet of horizontal distance. This is the minimum amount of slope. At my friend's house, the exact opposite was happening; the landscaper had soil and mulch sloping towards the house. As you might imagine, as soon as the ground was regraded, his basement stopped leaking.

When trying to solve basement leaks, the first thing you should do is take all surface water out of the equation. I can't tell you how many houses I've inspected where the source of the basement water is right there in front of you.

Water pouring off a roof in any rain is problematic. This means you should pipe all roof water as far away from your house as possible. Those little splash blocks at the base of your downspouts are useless. Sump pump water needs to be piped away as well. I can't tell you how many sump-pump discharge pipes I've seen just terminate outside a foundation. The pump turns on and disgorges the

water from the sump only to have it be the source of a leak through a crack or flood a window well. Overland water flow across yards, lawns, patios, etc. must also be diverted away from a house so that this water does not get close to a basement wall.

You'll be amazed at how controlling these sources of water will stop or significantly minimize many basement water leaks. These are usually simple and inexpensive things to do, so start with these first and see if much of your wet-basement problems don't disappear.

Write Your Test Column

It's time to write your test column. You can pick whatever topic you want, so long as it has something to do with residential building and remodeling. Remember, this column needs to be original, unless you happen to have, in your portfolio, a column that matches exactly the structure, style, person, composition of the one above you just read.

The writing style of the columns that Plumb Bob Press is incorporating into its Web sites is done for a reason. You're being tested to see if you can create content that matches precisely what we're looking for.

If you don't have an existing piece of work that's an exact match, it needs to be created now. It's mission critical that it mimic the Sample Column you just read, because this style is what will be used in all future writing you'll do for Plumb Bob Press. We might as well see if you can do it, right?

Please go back to the top of this document and carefully review the submission guidelines. They can be found under the heading **The Application Process**. Make a mistake here, and your application will be rejected. Remember, I'm forming a team of the best of the best. This means you can't be a grasshopper. I'm looking for writers who don't need editing help, juice boxes, fruit roll-ups and a nap. I do have a sense of humor, it's just below the surface.

The Application

After you've written your column, save it in your word-processing software. **Microsoft Word** documents are preferred. The second choice would be a

document saved as **rich-text format**. Be sure you've double checked it for errors and compliance with all the guidelines in this document.

Next, fill out the online application. The link to it is just below.

The last item in the application is the tool you'll use to upload your test column. Do NOT send it as an attached file in an email.

Here is the link to the [Online Application](#).

Thanks for submitting your application! I appreciate your interest and wish you the best of luck.

It's my hope you become a Master Wordsmith at Plumb Bob Press.

Tim Carter

Founder - Plumb Bob Press