

Tips, Resources, and Fail-proof Goals
for Attendees of Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference 2025
from
Rachael M. Colby

Greetings fellow writer,

I'm excited to see all God has planned for you at the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference. What a blessing to offer some help for your writing journey.

Though writing conferences provide an ideal opportunity to pitch a book, their purpose encompasses far more. They help equip, direct, and refresh beginner to veteran writers and speakers. Don't doubt your gift—develop it. The BRMCWC mission statement is, *“to inspire writers to connect with God, other writers, and industry professionals as they embrace their calling with excellence.”*

I welcome your questions about preparing for and navigating the conference and look forward to meeting you.

—*Rachael*

Fail-proof Conference Goals

- Expect to hear from God.
- Keep a teachable spirit. (Welcome to the writing journey—a journey of discovery where we're ever learning and never arrive.)
- Make new friends. Even introverts benefit from friends. Besides, someone may need you.
- Renew and build relationships.
- Seek to encourage others.

Conference Essentials and Packing List

This is mountain country, and chances are your classes will alternate from top to bottom of the mountain. (Leave the sweats and stilettos at home.) Consider going for daily walks a few weeks before the conference to prepare for navigating this beautiful campus nestled amid the breathtaking Blue Ridge Mountains.

Pre-conference Prep

- **Blue Ridge Mountains Conference Writers Facebook Group** posts about the conference and content year-round to encourage and equip writers. It's also a great place to ask questions. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BRMCWCwriters/>
- **Don't miss the Mentoring Moments live videos** hosted by Edwina Perkins, Karynthia Phillips, and Edie Melson in the Blue Ridge Conference Writers Facebook group. You can catch the replays if you're unable to attend live.

- **Download the class schedule** from the dropdown menu on the BRMCWC website here: <https://www.blueridgeconference.com/blue-ridge-mountains-christian-writers-conference/>

Though the schedule will change several times before and even during the conference, **it's important to choose classes early**. Waiting until the last minute to familiarize yourself with what's offered can prove stressful. Prayerfully consider which classes will best equip you for your call to write, both education wise and spiritually.

I highlight classes offered more than once that I wish to take. (This differs from continuing classes [CC] that extend over a few days.) Next, I highlight all other classes I want to attend in another color. Then I number my choices in each time-slot according to priority and pray again.

For a detailed explanation of class types and counsel on how to choose them, check out this excellent post on the BRMCWC blog by Alycia Morales:

<https://www.blueridgeconference.com/how-to-choose-your-classes-for-a-writing-conference-2/>

*An audio recording of most of the conference classes is available for purchase only during the event.

Packing List

- Comfortable shoes. Comfortable, casual, classy, modest outfits.
If you wish, pack a costume for genre night (Wednesday) and a sensible dressy outfit and shoes for awards night on Thursday.
- Refillable water bottle.
- Vitamin and electrolyte infused powder packs to add to your water. I use True Lemon brand's fruit flavored, stevia sweetened green tea, and Stur brand water enhancer sweetened with stevia.
- Breath mints. NO gum. Save the gum for the plane ride if you're flying.
- An umbrella, raincoat, or a rain poncho that fits in your pocket or bag. Rain ponchos are hands free and cover your bags too.
- High protein on-the-go snacks such as Slim Jims, power bars, and almonds if your blood sugar tends to drop.
- Sweater or light jacket.

- Notebook and pens, or charger/power pack, if you're taking notes on an electronic device. Notebook created for BRMCWC by Patricia Tiffany Morris:
<https://www.amazon.com/BRMCWC-Conference-Notes-Creative-Activity/dp/1955274258>
- Notify Ridgecrest of any food allergies beforehand.
- *Please note: BRMCWC is a **fragrance-free** event due to faculty members' (including conference director Edie Melson) and attendees' severe allergies.
- Sunblock, lotion, Chapstick, tissues, and hand sanitizer. (*Fragrance-free.*)
- Chocolate. (If not for yourself, then for your chocoholic friends.) Clouds Cafe on campus has us covered for coffee. Bring your own Coco-Cola, as this is a Pepsi campus.
- **Business cards** should be legible, represent your brand, and include your name, photo, email, website, and social media info. Exchange these with faculty and attendees. (Business cards with a matte finish and blank on the back are preferable so agents and publishers can write notes on them about your meeting.)

Link to Business Cards for Writers via Edie Melson on the BRMCWC blog:

<https://www.blueridgeconference.com/business-cards-for-writers-5/>

I've uploaded my custom design and ordered business cards from Staples starting at \$14.99 for 250 and \$19.99 for 500 (plus tax) here: https://www.staples.com/Custom-Business-Cards/product_335405

Have these Ready to Present to Editors, Agents, and Publishers:

Business Cards (see above)

Elevator pitch for each book you plan to pitch (One to three sentences that describe your story and its message in a captivating way.)

How to Create a Compelling Elevator Pitch for Your Book by Thomas Umstattd Jr.

<https://www.authormedia.com/how-to-craft-a-compelling-elevator-pitch-for-your-book/>

One-sheet (also known as a sell-sheet or pitch-sheet) Create one for each of your works in progress (WIPs) or completed works you plan to pitch. A one-sheet usually fits on one side of a piece of paper. Design so it's easily scanned and the most important information pops. One-sheets also serve as a guide to talk about your book if you're nervous or forget your elevator pitch—or your name. Remember, faculty at BRMCWC is there to help you. They want writers to succeed.

One-sheets include:

Book Title

Genre

Target audience (age etc.)

Projected word count

Endorsers and awards: If your manuscript is complete and you already have endorsements, state this and perhaps quote one of them toward the top of your one-sheet. (E.g., an endorsement from a well-known author in your genre, or a highly qualified professional on the topic of your book.) If your manuscript has won awards, list them.

Elevator pitch (One to three captivating sentences summarizing your book)

Platform and borrowed platform (I recommend Cherrilynn Bisbano's class, *Your Platform is Bigger than You Think*.)

A current professional quality photo (headshot)

Name and email (phone number is optional)

Name and contact info of your agent (if you have one)

Your website or blog link

Your social media handles/names

Synopsis of one to three brief paragraphs.

Bio: You'll need different versions of your bio depending on where it's going. For your one-sheet, make sure it includes any relevant information that ties in with your book.

Link to: ***Use These Simple Steps to Create Your Best Writer's Bio* via BRMCWC director, Edie Melson:**

<https://thewriteconversation.blogspot.com/2022/08/use-these-simple-steps-to-create-your.html>

Synopsis: Research and format according to the guidelines of whom you're meeting with or the publication. Single space this document. These vary from a few paragraphs for a one-sheet to between one to three single-spaced pages or more. Write synopses in present tense, third person, show the story arc and characters' transformation, and reveal the ending.

- Fiction (whole story summary)
- Nonfiction (chapter by chapter description in a few sentences.)

Link to articles on this:

<https://www.blueridgeconference.com/book-proposal-basics-for-writers-part-3-chapter-outline-or-book-synopsis/>

<https://www.blueridgeconference.com/7-tips-to-create-a-powerful-synopsis/>

<https://janefriedman.com/how-to-write-a-novel-synopsis/>

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-novel-synopsis-step-by-step-guide>

First three chapters of your work in progress (WIP) in case you're asked for them.

Acquisitions editors, agents, and publishers may look at them briefly and, if interested, will usually ask you to email your materials with a specified subject line.

For children's picture books, bring the complete manuscript. Unless guidelines specify otherwise, format your CPB manuscript in spreads. (For contests and submissions to agents or publishers, only include illustrations or illustration notes if guidelines allow.) For example:

SPREAD 1

[Left page] Once upon a time...

[Right page] Your text here

SPREAD 2

[L] Your text here.

[R] Your text here

Standard Submissions Format for Manuscripts:

- Microsoft Word document, Times New Roman font, size 12-point, 1-inch margins.
- Double-spaced lines.
- Indent the first line of paragraph .5 inches (set formatting options in Word) and leave no space between paragraphs.
- **One** space after a period.
- Do **not** use tab key for indenting paragraphs. (Format under paragraph options in Word. Hit enter from above to break into two paragraphs and create a paragraph beneath.)

Use MS Word's paragraph symbol (the pilcrow) to find invisible extra spaces and wrong formatting of paragraphs. (It's in the MS Word header and looks like this: ¶.)

- Create header according to guidelines of publisher/agent. (Example: Name/Title of Piece/Genre.)
- Number pages.

At the Conference

Research on BRMCWC's website for which agents, acquisitions editors, or publishers specialize in your genre. Try to sign up for your top two choices on Monday night at the designated time after the keynote. If no appointments are available with your faculty member of choice, aim to sit at their table for lunch or dinner.

Attendees may sit with faculty members of their choice during lunch and dinner. That moment when I step into the dining room, in full view of all seated at a sea of tables, is the scariest part of the conference for me. Having a plan helps. Choose industry pros who match your genre and writing needs. Arrive early as tables fill quickly. Scan the dining room and find the table with the faculty member you'd like to connect with.

Use this as an opportunity to glean wisdom from what they share and to ask questions, but don't dominate the conversation. Hand business cards to all present and be ready to state what you write, your mission, and vision.

Walk through the appointment room Tuesday through Thursday before breakfast, after the evening keynotes, or during breaks and check faculty members' sheets to see who's available and sign up for extra appointments. (This is in addition to the Monday night signup for your initial two 15-minute appointments.)

- Link to *Your Conference Appointment* via veteran literary agent Steve Laube: <https://stevelaube.com/your-writers-conference-appointment/>

Ask questions of faculty and attendees. Talk to industry pros during appointments, classes, and meals about advice for new writers, what they wish writers knew, and did or didn't do. Seek counsel for your projects. Ask about others' journeys.

NEW: Storytelling Café, Tuesday evening, Jim Henry Auditorium, (lower level in Mountain Laurel).

- Request to present link coming soon on the BRMCWC site. (They're drawing names.)
- (All conferees welcome to attend.)

Don't miss the rich fellowship with fellow writers at Evening Court (aka Lobby Time) in the Mountain Laurel lobby after the evening keynotes. (Also sometimes referred to as Laube in the Lobby in honor of when veteran literary agent Steve Laube blesses us with his wit and wisdom.) This fun, informal gathering of conferees and faculty helps forge new friendships, rekindle old ones, builds faith, and encourages us in our call to write.

Join the fantastic networking session sponsored by the 540 Writers Community at the rocking chairs on the balcony by Clouds Cafe. Listen for announcements, or ask anyone sporting a 540 sticker or t-shirt. (We'll take a photo of 540 members Thursday morning during breakfast.)

Mountain top and chapel walks—an option for inspired quiet prayer time. Remember, Jesus is the author of your life story. Trust His leading in all stages of your writing journey. *Enjoy.*