

Can you make a living writing children's TV?

www.writersguild.org.uk

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain is a trade union
registered at 134 Tooley Street, London SE1 2TU

Top 10 tips for emerging children's TV writers

1. Never let anyone pigeonhole you. Decide what you want to write and don't limit yourself to one genre if you don't want to. Value yourself, your time and your ideas.
2. Be proactive and polite—network, make contacts and friends. Be nice to everyone you meet—you may end up working together again! Children's TV is a small and friendly industry. Engage positively with feedback and pick your battles.
3. Have a spec script as a calling card and pitch children's ideas to producers and script editors direct as well as to the BBC Writers' Room. Why not cover all the bases... professionally and politely? Do your research. Find out who buys or makes what. Never rely on other people to find you work, including your agent if you have one.
4. Know your audience—pre-school children will be different to 7-11 year olds. And it is important to bear in mind that shows will be watched by older siblings and parents or carers, too. Remember though that ultimately it's about having a good story—the principle of storytelling is the same. Children want to be transported.
5. Writing for children is a wonderful responsibility—their favourite TV shows will stay with them forever.

6. The nature of the audience opens up financial opportunities—the pre-school audience changes every three years. Animation sells all over the world. Children’s does very well on BBC iPlayer. There are 2,000 children’s platforms globally. Thanks to WGGB, children’s TV writers also get a subsequent use advance, the WGGB pension and Writers’ Digital Payments royalties.
7. Don’t be afraid to revisit past rejected ideas or those in your bottom drawer sometime in the future. When you come to them with a fresh eye, you can often see what it needs to make it saleable. Recommended to change the title! There are fewer bad ideas than you think, but however good an idea is, it’s the execution which is important.
8. Children’s programming is subject to many regulations that change constantly. People in charge get nervous about ‘imitable behaviour’, ‘poor parental modelling’ and dealing with sensitive topics, but this shouldn’t mean difficult subjects are off limits. It’s important to be honest with children, and telling challenging stories can help them understand the world and build resilience.
9. It’s important children see themselves and their culture reflected back to them. Ultimately writing children’s TV comes down to saying ‘it’s OK to be you’.

10. Join the WGGB. We negotiate better pay and working conditions for children's TV writers and count lots of them amongst our members—it's a great opportunity to network and if you're a writer, we're your union.

JOIN WGGB

We welcome writers at all stages of their careers, whether you have professional credits or are just starting out and we have a special discounted rate for students.

**For more information and to join online go to
www.writersguild.org.uk**