



## The IRS Doesn't Email and Other Tax Tips for Writers

by Carol Topp, CPA

### 1. The IRS doesn't email

The IRS does not initiate communication with taxpayers through email. They will only contact you via mail or telephone. Late last year I received an email claiming to be from the IRS stating they were investigating my tax return. I knew it was a scam because the year wasn't over, and my tax return had not been filed yet! If you receive an email claiming to be from the IRS do not reply, do not click on any links, or open any attachments. It's a scam; the IRS doesn't email taxpayers.

### 2. Mileage records

I dislike recording my odometer readings, so I use Google maps to calculate mileage instead. Mileage records must be kept contemporaneously, meaning you should not rely on your memory, so I record the destination and mileage in my Google calendar. The IRS sets the per mile rate and adjusts it annually. For 2021 writers can deduct 56 cents per mile. Tax software will calculate the

7 pm, January 12  
via Zoom

deduction if you enter your business miles.

### 3. Business use of the home deduction

The business use of the home is a valuable tax deduction for writers, but you must use a specific part of your home only for business. You cannot mix business and personal activities such as letting your family use your office. For example, my home office is used only for business, but I sometimes meet tax clients at my dining room table which is also used for family



Carol Topp

Continued on page 2.

Join us on January 12 for expert advice and "Tax Tips for Writers and Self-Publishers," with Carol Topp, Certified Public Accountant (CPA). Carol is the author of 15 books, including *Business Tips and Taxes for Writers*. Through her writing, speaking, and consulting, Carol converts tax and business issues into clear, easy-to-understand English for writers.

Visit [TaxesForWriters.com](https://taxesforwriters.com) for tax tips and business articles for the writer, blogger, freelancer, or self-published author.

### ZOOM INSTRUCTIONS:

Sign-up is free. You can join from your smartphone, computer or tablet. If it's your first time, follow the prompts and allow it to access your camera and microphone. Click on this link for the meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>. Meeting ID is 867 8214 4399. Password is 668448.

## Representation Matters

By Jeffrey Blair, Co-founder of EyeSeeMe African American Children's Bookstore

Join the St. Louis Publishers Association on February 9 for "Diversity and Inspiration in Books for Children," featuring Jeffrey Blair, Co-founder of EyeSeeMe African American Children's Bookstore.

While raising their four kids, Pamela and Jeffrey Blair started noticing that children's history classes rarely featured African American history, heroes, or contributions to society. Instead, if black people were ever mentioned in the curriculum, it was only in the context of slavery or civil rights. Pamela and Jeffrey's children yearned for historical stories of African Americans as heroes, victors, founders, creators, and contributors to society, so Pamela and Jeffrey started doing their own research and collected or created their own literature to share with their children.

In doing this research, they saw an opportunity to bridge the gap between education, identity, history, and fun for many other children. This gave them the idea to open a bookstore. They realized that African American kids can't be what they can't see. So, in 2015, EyeSeeMe was born in the hopes that if all kids are

exposed to African American history, they can feel empowered to become heroes of their own stories too.

In this presentation, you will hear Pamela and Jeffrey's challenges and triumphs in starting a brick and mortar bookstore in the age of Amazon. Moreover, we will discuss their mission in a historical context and why it is so vital to our nation's future.



Pamela and Jeffrey Blair

Jeffrey Blair is co-founder of EyeSeeMe, an African American Children's Bookstore located in University City, MO. Jeffrey has a bachelor's degree in computer science and a law degree from Rutgers University in New Jersey. He has worked in private practice and consulted for government agencies as well as Fortune 500 companies for over 30 years. Jeffrey's true passion is helping young people avoid the pitfalls of society by helping them realize and develop their true potential.

Visit [EyeSeeMe.com](https://eyesee.me).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

via ZOOM

January 12, 7-8:30pm

Tax Tips for Writers and Self-Publishers

with Carol Topp, CPA

<https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>

February 9, 7-8:30pm

Diversity and Inspiration in Books for Children

with Jeffrey Blair

<https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>

February 19, 8:30am-12:30pm

How to Publish Your Book: Fundamentals Workshop

featuring SLPA Board Members

Details on page 2.

Tax Tips continued from page 1.

meals. I can claim a deduction for my home office but not for the dining room.

#### 4. Tax software can lie to you

“The IRS stopped the home office deduction,” an author once told me. I knew that wasn’t correct. She had made a mistake in using the tax software and it failed to include a deduction for business use of the home. If something seems incorrect about your tax preparation software, contact the software provider, or better yet, consult a professional tax preparer. If there was a mistake made on

your tax return, you can amend your return up to three years after its original due date.

#### 5. Cell phone and internet use.

Your cell phone and internet fees are tax deductions, but you must separate your expenses into personal and business use. Fortunately, the IRS does not ask us to keep a log of cell phone or internet use. Use any reasonable allocation to estimate your business use. Most of my tax clients use a percentage, with 10%, 50% and 90% being the most common.

## SAVE THE DATE

**Saturday, February 19  
8:30am to 12:30pm**

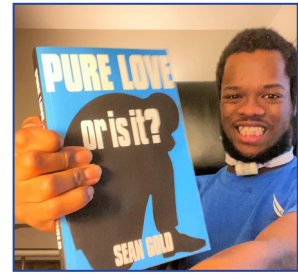


ST. LOUIS  
PUBLISHERS  
ASSOCIATION

Come to our virtual workshop and hear from experienced professionals who will share the Do’s and Don’ts of writing, editing, and cover design, plus learn what’s needed to self-publish and how a book coach can help you throughout the process. This information-packed event is presented by [SLPA Board members](#). More details to come!

## KUDOS CORNER

**SLPA Member  
Sean Gold**



**Sean Gold** is a public speaker, advocate, and President of Coalition for Truth in Independence, a nonprofit organization focused on disability rights in the community. As a young, black, gay man with a physical disability, he has hosted panel discussions and presented a [TEDx Talk on The Obstacles of Disabilities](#).

This year he published his very first book, *Pure Love, Or Is It?* with the help of SLPA board members (Jo Lena Johnson was his book coach, Pat Dorsey gave expert advice on navigating KDP and Barnes & Noble Press). As a college student studying graphic design, Sean is also working on his next project, a children’s book.

Visit [linktr.ee/AuthorSeanGold](https://linktr.ee/AuthorSeanGold) or email him directly at [authorseangold@gmail.com](mailto:authorseangold@gmail.com).



## LAST MONTH’S RECAP Polish Your Pitch: The One-Minute Book Marketing Challenge

Special thanks to marketing master, author, and **SLPA past president Bob Baker** for serving as moderator while authors of multiple genres took turns promoting their books in one minute or less. The feedback and advice provided a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between what writers think about their book and how they can share their thoughts with others. Visit Bob at [FullTimeAuthor.com](https://FullTimeAuthor.com) and [TheBuzzFactor.com](https://TheBuzzFactor.com).



Bob Baker

As an author, you should be able to tell anyone about your book, preferably in one minute or less. No one can describe your book better than you, so keep working to improve—practice with family and friends, record yourself, and make adjustments to polish your pitch!

**Customize your pitch according to the particular audience and share how your book will benefit them:**

- Readers**—how it makes them feel, what they will learn and enjoy
- Media**—how it serves their target audience and brings value
- Publisher or Bookstore**—sales potential and your ability to promote it

#### Children/Teens

- Open with a rhetorical question and draw them in by asking, “What would you do if...?”

#### Action Thriller

- Describe the issue and share why it’s a problem, including what could go wrong.

#### Faith Based/Inspirational

- Offer a call-to-action, with guidance to overcome personal struggles using examples from real life or religious texts.

#### Science Fiction

- Introduce the main characters and the challenges they face, including what happens next and cliffhangers.

#### Nonfiction/Politics

- Provide stats and unknown facts that will spark interest and engage them in the conversation.



Meetings on  
the second  
Wednesday of  
every month

**In-person gatherings are  
suspended due to  
COVID-19 restrictions.**

**All meetings will be held online  
until further notice.**

### Admission and Membership

- Monthly meetings on Zoom are FREE
- [Membership is \\$60 per year.](#)

Visit: [stlouispublishers.org/join](https://stlouispublishers.org/join)  
[stlouispublishers.org/benefits](https://stlouispublishers.org/benefits)

### SLPA NEWS & VIEWS

Editor: [Kerri Holloway](#)  
Designer: [Carolyn Vaughan](#)  
Webmaster: [Kevin Ericson](#)

