

# Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog answers some readers' questions

## Photographing work

**Question:** I've wanted to get photos of my work for a variety of reasons. I'll use them to have a record of the turning, potential website use, and even to use when offering pieces for sale. I don't think I have the correct gear and know I don't have expertise. The local photographers are out of my league for prices. What do you recommend?



Even if all you have access to is your phone, try to set up and light your desired shot(s) as best you can and take plenty of images. Without film, images are cheap

**Answer:** I think you should photograph all your work for the reasons you've indicated, as well as to watch yourself grow. Your work will improve with continued lathe time regardless of where you are currently. You can't easily see the incremental changes, but photos covering longer time frames will show them dramatically, especially if those turnings are long gone. That's why I recommend that all turners keep occasional samples of their work from the beginning. Those turnings will show your growth and accomplishments over time.

Regarding the photography, I've got several suggestions. Be certain that you look to the future with all of your photos – get the best images you can, in multiple 'poses', of the highest resolution, and in the best light. No pun intended. Today, they may be simply a record of your turning and the idea or concept you were pursuing. In the future, that photo may be needed to illustrate a magazine article or book you've written.

You've said the local pros are out of your reach, but have you looked for an accomplished amateur you can afford or barter with? There are many talented amateurs who do superb work but don't 'hang out a shingle'. Are there any friends, relatives, nearby neighbours, college students, local camera club members, or others more talented than you are around? A bowl or two, some pens or bottle stoppers, or whatever you excel at can often be used in trade for their time and expertise. Some of the pros might even be tempted to barter if you approach them properly, are flexible with your timing requirements, deliver the photographic work at their convenience, and ask appropriately. Regardless of how you deal with the photographers better than yourself getting onboard, never let any finished piece get away without a few snaps at minimum, even if they are taken with your phone camera. The cameras in even the least expensive phones these days are better than those available to the pros not many years ago. If you decide you'd like to develop some of your own photographic skills, you may find another craft you enjoy.



The beauty of today's photography is WYSIWYG, for the most part. With digital, results are immediate and there's virtually no extra cost for shooting plenty

Becoming more proficient as a photographer can be useful in other parts of your life, whether photos of your work, your family, vacations, pretty sunsets, the kids, and more. Photography can be pricey but need not be expensive, depending on how far you jump into the pool. You pick the equipment, brands, sizes and sources. As for learning, there is so much information available for free via the internet, no or low-cost online college classes, local photo clubs, or friends with some photographic talent. Nothing about photography is terribly difficult but, like your turning skills, time, knowledge, practice, attention to detail, and continuing to strive and advance will pay dividends.

A look at the article in *Woodturning* issue 258 titled Improving Your Turning Photos will provide a good basis for brushing up your skills in general. It should make you aware of all aspects of photography that you can control and manipulate to your advantage to improve the final product, regardless of subject.



Photography fundamentals are identical whether fancy or simple. Composition, lighting, focus, depth of field, filling the frame, and more transcend the equipment

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KURT HERTZOG

## Turning to writing

**Question:** I'd like to make some extra money from my turning expertise and thought about writing some articles for the magazines or a book. Seems like easy money. However, my writing inexperience kind of scares me but I'd like to try it. How much does it pay? How difficult is it really? What is the best way to 'break into the market'?



Time needed for article creation in addition to photographing the supporting illustrations will include the selection and preliminary editing of the shots

**Answer:** While I admire your willingness to tackle something new, I would like to caution you a bit as well as give you some paths to pursue. My recommendation is to pursue writing as a means to share your expertise, expand your recognition, and perhaps build your brand. If your only goal is making 'easy money', I fear you may be disappointed. Yes, writing does pay and, depending on who you write for, your compensation can vary from nothing other than the expanded audience to a certain number of dollars per page or copies of book sold. Some publications pay more than others.

Write because you want to share and be recognised for your capabilities and knowledge rather than getting that easy money you speak of. I'd suggest you begin by deciding on what you'd share. Do you have a specialty that would be interesting to other turners? Do you do something that is rarely written about? Are your methods of doing something so radical, easy to learn or accomplish, or unique?

With zero experience, I think your best bet is to start with articles rather than books. You can learn the ropes of writing by submitting articles to your own or other clubs' newsletters or websites. They are always hungry for material. There probably isn't any pay but it is a good, low-risk, low-investment method of getting your feet wet. Once you've done that, or if you've

decided to skip that step, you should pick your initial target magazine.

Think through what you'd like to offer then approach the editor with your pitch.

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There are magazines in print, online, product manufacturers' websites and in-house publications, among others. You can complete an article then submit it, but that is a lot of work that may not bear fruit. Editors are always looking for new talent, fresh ideas and expertise they haven't featured. I'd suggest you contact the editor of a publication you fancy with the idea, perhaps an outline, and potential timeframe. If they are interested, they can then inform you of their topic needs, timing, payment terms and amounts, submission formats, and all of the mechanics of the process they use.

Etiquette suggests you submit to one magazine at a time, waiting for a refusal before offering your article to another publication, unless you are offering each a different topic. The last thing you need

is to have a proposal accepted by two publications and then have to pick one over the other. That isn't conducive to building any rapport with the editor(s) or a good reputation in the industry. The number of woodturning magazines has thinned considerably over the years as print media of all sorts undergoes everything from cost challenges to competition from online. If your idea doesn't fly with anyone, suggest another, or another. Once you have experience with an editor, they will often give you ideas they need filled and you can pursue it knowing they have need for it. Rarely will they do this with a newbie.

When you have a publication wanting your idea or draft, you will be guided as to elements such as word count, file formats, images or illustrations, and delivery deadline.

Once you've submitted your materials, your editor will usually be your contact as the article works its way through the various departments on its way to publication. You should then get a final proof of the article for your review. It isn't intended for you to change or rewrite but

to be certain that, during the process, nothing was altered incorrectly or in a confusing matter.

Once you indicate all is well or provide minor suggested 'corrections', the ball is in the publisher's court.

Some pay on acceptance but most publishers will pay you, or let you invoice them, 30 days after publication. In reality, the timeframe from idea acceptance and work underway to cheque in the mail can run from three to eight months, depending on the publication. Remember, there is a huge amount of work on every issue that goes unseen by most folks and every issue is many months in the planning.

I highly recommend that you give it a try but, again, do it because you want to share, enjoy the process, expand your reach, and make a few bucks.

Send your questions to Kurt's email: [kurt@kurthertzog.com](mailto:kurt@kurthertzog.com)