



From Keyboard to Printed Page

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So you've written a book or an article for young readers? Whether you're submitting to agents, or have decided to submit directly to editors on your own, here are the basics on formatting your writing, and the process of sending it out.

QUERY FIRST

A query letter is always recommended before submitting a full manuscript. This letter is an introduction of you and your story for the editor. If your manuscript is of interest, the editor will request a submission. Read "The Query Letter" on page 14 of this guide, or online at scbwi.org "Resource Library." Click on SCBWI Publication Guide Online.

AGENTS

While an agent is not necessary to submit a manuscript to an editor, many publishers accept only solicited material represented by an agent. When submitting to an agent, here are some things you should know:

- » Not all agents handle children's material. Consult the SCBWI Agent Directory on page 142, or online in the "Resource Library" portion of the SCBWI Web site. Click on "SCBWI Publication Guide Online" and "Directories & Resources."
- » Most agents list their submission guidelines and procedures at their Web sites. It is imperative that you research these guidelines prior to submitting.
- » The SCBWI recommends that you not deal with agents who charge up-front for any of their services or have a "reading" fee.

SUBMITTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

Most legitimate publishers post their submissions guidelines at their Web site. A simple Google search will pull up any publishing house you might want to submit to. Be sure to read their specific submission policies prior to sending in a manuscript.

To assist you in determining which publishers might be a good match for your writing, SCBWI offers a resource called "Edited By," a house-by-house listing of what editors have published recently (see page 26.) A careful investigation of publishers' catalogues (available by request from the

publisher), *Children's Books in Print* (available in the library), various marketing lists found in writers' periodicals, and, most importantly, examination of books themselves, should indicate to you which publishing houses would be most receptive to your work.

Here are some basic suggestions:

- » Your manuscript should be addressed to the editor who requested it in response to your query letter. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope of the correct size to hold your manuscript, with a sufficient amount of postage affixed.
- » Include a brief cover letter with only information which is necessary for the editor to know, as it relates to your manuscript (e.g., for nonfiction, describe what qualifies you to discuss your subject; for fiction, include any previous publishing credits). If you are submitting your manuscript in response to a previous query, be sure to mention this in your cover letter.
- » Keep copies of all correspondence.
- » Unless you are a professional illustrator, do not include illustrations with your picture book manuscript. An art director will choose an illustrator that suits your work.
- » Do not attempt to indicate where you would like illustrations to be placed in your picture book story, or what they should portray. This is the job of the art director and the illustrator.
- » While not all editors will do so, you may include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to encourage the acknowledgement of your manuscript.

A decision on your manuscript may take six months or more. Some editors are slower to respond than others. If you have not had a response at the end of three months, send a polite letter or email of inquiry to the editor and ask about the status of your manuscript.

Submitting a manuscript to several editors at the same time (a policy called "multiple submissions") is sometimes frowned upon by editors, but if you choose to do so, you must notify the editor up front. Simply include a sentence in your cover letter stating that this is a "multiple submission."

FORMATTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT

Here are suggested guidelines from the publishing industry:

- » All manuscripts must be typed on 8½" x 11" white paper in black ink.
- » Use 12-point Arial or Times New Roman.
- » Double space all manuscripts.
- » Pages should be numbered consecutively.
- » The default margin settings that appear in a new Microsoft Word document are acceptable. If you are setting margins manually, use a 1-inch or 1.25-inch margin on each side of the page.
- » Do not submit electronically (i.e., email) unless the editor or agent specifically requests you do so.

The format of the first page might look something like the page at right.

NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPT PAGES

While there are no specific requirements, here are current market trends for the genres listed below. We recommend that you begin by visiting a bookstore (not a library) to see what books are currently being offered by publishers.

Agents & editors seek good writing. If your voice, plot and characters grab them, they will help you decide what genre best defines your book. Research prior to submitting will help you know where your specific story falls.

Your Name
 Your Address
 City, State ZIP
 Your Telephone Number
 Your Email Address

TITLE IN ALL CAPS (½-way down page)
 By Your Name

Your story begins here...

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GENRE	# OF TYPED PAGES	SAMPLE TITLES
BOARD BOOKS	½ - 1	
PICTURE BOOK	2 - 3	<i>GOODNIGHT MOON; THE POLAR EXPRESS</i>
EASY-READER BOOK	10 - 20	<i>NATE THE GREAT BY MARJORIE SHARMAT</i>
CHAPTER BOOK	40 - 60	<i>HANK ZIPZER SERIES BY LIN OLIVER & HENRY WINKLER</i>
MIDDLE-GRADE FICTION	100 - 250	<i>HARRY POTTER SERIES BY J. K. ROWLING</i>
YOUNG ADULT (YA) NOVELS	200 - 350	<i>SPEAK BY LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON</i>
NONFICTION	LENGTH VARIES BY AGE GROUP	<i>BOOKS BY RUSSELL FREEDMAN, PAMELA TURNER, CARLA MCCLAFFERTY</i>
POETRY FOR YOUNGER READERS*	15 - 40	<i>ANIMAL SNACKERS BY BETSY LEWIN</i>
POETRY FOR OLDER READERS*	50 - 150	<i>BOOKS BY SHEL SILVERSTEIN</i>

*In manuscript form, one poem per page.

RESPONDING TO EDITORIAL FEEDBACK

If you receive a personal response from an editor with revision suggestions, but no formal contract, respond by thanking the editor for the time and interest given to your manuscript. Consider the editor's suggestions carefully. If you decide that your manuscript would be improved by the editor's suggestions, and complete the revisions, you are professionally obligated to send that manuscript back to that editor.

No editor spends time writing a detailed editorial letter without expecting to see the manuscript again. Mention in the letter accompanying your revised manuscript, that you have followed the editor's suggestions for revisions.

MAGAZINES

Most magazines for young readers publish their submission guidelines at their Web sites. Many include their editorial deadlines and calendars so that you can submit work that is appropriate for the theme of a specific issue. Be sure to research the submission policies for the specific publication you are interested in prior to submitting. Here are some general guidelines:

- » Include the word count on the first page of your article submission.
- » Magazine publishers generally do not acknowledge receipt of articles.
- » It is appropriate to inquire about your article after two months have passed.
- » Some magazines, especially in the religious field, will accept multiple submissions.
- » Magazines plan issues far in advance; it is important to keep this in mind when submitting seasonal material.
- » Some magazines pay upon publication. They may hold your submission for a considerable length of time before either printing or returning it.
- » Most children's magazines do not pay large amounts for their material, but can provide the novice writer with valuable experience. ☺

Types Of Publishers

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PUBLISHERS

Here is a brief overview of the types of publishers and what you can expect when they say: “We want to publish your book.” Above all, when any publisher offers you a contract, know what kind of publisher you are dealing with, and don’t be afraid to ask questions.

TRADITIONAL TRADE PUBLISHERS

Traditional publishers contract with an author, ideally offering an advance against royalties. (See “Contract Questions & Answers” on page 43 for a current range of typical advances and royalties.) A few traditional publishers offer a flat fee only. Smaller publishers might offer a royalty without advance. Whether the terms are an advance against royalties or a flat fee, the author owns the copyright and his/her name is on the book. Other terms of a traditional publishing contract may vary. Trade books are marketed by publishers’ sales representatives and wholesalers to bookstores, libraries and schools, and are reviewed in dedicated book media such as *Publishers Weekly*, *School Library Journal*, *Horn Book*, *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reveiws*, and reviewed and/or synopsized in bookstore newsletters.

MASS MARKET PUBLISHERS

Mass market publishers offer similar contracts to trade publishers, though sometimes the copyright may be in the publisher’s name or a joint copyright. Mass market books are handled by publishers’ sales representatives and wholesalers and are stocked primarily by bookstores and discount retailers, such as Target and K-Mart. These books receive reviews in some of the dedicated media.

BOOK PACKAGERS

Packagers or book developers generate story and series concepts, which they sell to traditional and mass market publishers, then find writers and illustrators to produce the work. Their contracts range from offering an advance against royalty to a flat fee. Copyright is sometimes joint, but is often in the packager’s name alone. Sometimes the author’s name is on the book; sometimes it’s not. Distribution depends on the publisher, and reviews depend on the market for the book.

SMALL PRESSES

Some small presses publish books for young readers. Smaller publishers generally produce fewer titles and may offer a contract with advance against royalties, a royalty only contract, or a flat fee contract. Review media occasionally cover small press books, and distribution is usually through direct mail catalogs and/or wholesalers. As mentioned in the SCBWI Small Press Markets Guide, “Small presses can suspend operations or go out of business rather suddenly.”

EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHERS

Educational publishers publish curriculum-related material geared for use primarily in schools. Contracts may include an advance against royalties, a royalty only, or a flat fee only. Marketing is generally accomplished through a force of sales representatives who present the material to educators (in their offices/schools and at conferences) and educational supply stores throughout the nation. These representatives often sell internationally, as well. Reviews can be found in educators’ periodicals.

SUBSIDY PUBLISHERS

Subsidy publishers or co-op publishers (often known as “vanity publishers”) will offer to publish a book if the author will pay all or part of the cost. A recent *Writer’s Market* indicated the expense to range from \$1,000 to \$18,000. This type of publisher offers back a royalty, a percentage of each book sold (the amount varies from 3% to 40%). However, it is unlikely that a large number of books will be sold. The amount of marketing done by subsidy publishers varies but will not equal that of traditional publishers. In some cases, an author may be asked to pay for promotional expenses. Subsidy publishers will usually offer to send out sample copies to the media and libraries. However, dedicated book media rarely, if ever, review these books, thus leaving the real work of marketing and distribution to the author. SCBWI recommends that you avoid any publisher who asks you to pay for the publication of your work.

SELF-PUBLISHING

Self-publishing requires the author to oversee all of the details of book production from total cost to marketing and distribution. A self-published book almost never gets review media attention. If you are writing a book just to share with your children or grandchildren, a local printer may be able to help you self-publish several copies, or a desk-top computer publishing program may give you the book you want. This kind of publishing is primarily for a book that will have a limited, personal audience. ☹️