

FROM KEYBOARD TO PRINTED PAGE

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SCBWI



PREPARING &
SUBMITTING
YOUR WORK

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 11 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 Agents Directory on page 135, or online in the "Resource Library" portion of the SCBWI website. Click on "SCBWI Publication Guide Online" and "Directories & Resources."
- » Most agents list their submission guidelines and procedures at their websites. 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 website. 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, the SCBWI offers a resource called "Edited By," a house-by-house listing of what editors have published recently (see page 77.) A careful investigation of publishers' catalogs (available by request from the publisher), *Children's Books*

in Print (available in the resource 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 that 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 acknowledgment 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 e-mail 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., e-mail) unless the editor or agent specifically requests you do so.

The format of the first page might look something like the page below.

Your Name
 Your Address
 City, State ZIP
 Your Telephone Number
 Your E-mail Address

TITLE IN ALL CAPS (halfway down page)
 By Your Name

Your story begins here...

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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 and 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.

GENRE	# OF TYPED PAGES	TYPICAL AGE	SAMPLE TITLES
BOARD BOOKS	½-1	UNDER 3	NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LITTLE KIDS LOOK & LEARN SERIES
PICTURE BOOKS	2-3	3-8	<i>Goodnight Moon, Heart and Soul, The Polar Express, Fancy Nancy</i>
EASY-TO-READ	10-20	5-8	<i>Madeline's Tea Party, Marley: The Dog Who Ate My Homework, Nate the Great</i>
CHAPTER BOOKS	40-60	7-9	CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS SERIES, CLEMENTINE SERIES, MAGIC TREE HOUSE SERIES
MIDDLE GRADE	100-250	8-12	GHOST BUDDY SERIES, DIARY OF A WIMPY KID SERIES, <i>LOSER</i>
YOUNG ADULT (YA) NOVELS	200-350	12 AND UP	<i>The Fault in Our Stars, Moon Over Manifest, Between Shades of Gray</i>
NONFICTION	LENGTH VARIES BY AGE GROUP		BOOKS BY RUSSELL FREDMAN, PAMELA TURNER, CARLA MCCLAFFERTY
POETRY FOR YOUNGER READERS*	15-40		<i>Animal Snackers</i> BY BETSY LEWIN
POETRY FOR OLDER READERS*	50-150		BOOKS BY SHELL SILVERSTEIN

*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 websites. 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. 🌀