

Basic Manuscript Formatting

by Shane

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About 500 words

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This short article describes the format for submitting a manuscript for publication that is acceptable for fiction and non-fiction work but not for plays or screenplays. Always check with the publisher for any special submission requirements they may have.

The appearance of your manuscript is your professional introduction to an editor. Busy editors receive dozens of submissions a day, and if they spot someone using a nonstandard format, they may think the writer is unprofessional and ignore

the submission.

The standard format includes the following: one-inch margins, double-spaced text, 12-point Courier font, and single space at the end of a sentence. Do not put extra line spacing between paragraphs. Do not use ALL CAPS, underlining, **boldface**, or a larger typeface. You may use *italics*, which authors frequently use for internal monologues. Indent each paragraph's first line by a half-inch, and do not justify the right margin or try to even it out by hyphenating words.

Cover pages are optional for some editors, but if they do not specify it one way or another, it is safest to add one to your submission. The cover page has the title in the center of the page with a byline underneath. The byline is the name, or pseudonym, of the author of the story. In this case, I'm using "Shane" as a pseudonym, so that is what I wrote in the byline. If you are not using a pseudonym, then put your name there. Further towards the bottom on the left-hand side is the author's contact information. It should include the author's name (not pseudonym), address, phone number, and email address. Your contact information is the only place in your manuscript that should be single-spaced. The name in the lower left-hand corner will get the money; the name beneath the title will get the recognition. Across from the author's name on the right-hand side is the word count to the nearest hundred words.

On Page 1 of the story, the author's name and contact information should be at the upper left-hand corner. Once again, this should be single-spaced. In the upper right-hand corner is the word count to the nearest hundred words. Halfway down the page, center the title and byline. If you do not use a pseudonym, the same name should be in both places. It is not necessary to put any copyright information. You wrote the story so you own the copyright. Do not put publishing rights information either. When you sign a contract, it will specify publishing rights.

The second and subsequent pages are identified and numbered in the top right-hand corner of each page as follows: last name or pseudonym, the title (or a portion of the title if it is long), and the page number separated by a “/.”

If you print out your manuscript for submission to a publisher, use white paper and print on one side only. When you mail it, do not staple or bind the manuscript. Mail it flat, not folded, in a manila envelope.