

# Query Letters That Sell

Or

## How to Improve Your Chances of Getting a Book Publisher to Read Your Query Letter or Manuscript

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Before you send your query letter or manuscript to an editor at a major book publishing company, be sure you're aware of the following guidelines. Many editors will not read your submission if you have overlooked one of these points.

1. Do your homework when researching the markets for your book. If a publisher is not looking for submissions in your genre or page count, you will receive a reject letter. Also be 100 percent sure to spell the editor's name correctly and include his or her exact title. My suggestion is to call the publishing house and ask for this information. Oftentimes editors leave and you don't want your manuscript thrown on the side because it's addressed to either the wrong person, or an editor who's not there.

Publishing houses are often very specialized. They make a good business by knowing their clients. You wouldn't expect a French restaurant to offer Thai food, or a pet store to sell fishing gear. If your manuscript is the wrong subject matter for a specific publishing house, 99 percent of the time it will not even be skimmed before it is either returned to the sender or tossed into a recycle box.

2. Always, always, always use at least a 12-point font. Courier or Courier New is preferred. If you use any smaller font size, the editor will shriek from having to squint at your text. This is another reason it could get rejected, and you don't want that, do you?
3. If you are submitting a query letter, keep it to ONLY one page. You might think it's very difficult to write a one-page query letter, and you're right. It is. You want to give the editor a good first impression.
4. Always use the heaviest, brightest and most white paper available. Sometimes you will see a sale on copy paper or laser paper that sounds enticing. However, if you look at the brightness number on the end of the package, you shouldn't buy it if it's less than 96 brightness. Also, to add quality to your submission, use 24-pound paper, not 20-pound.
5. As a matter of fact, many papers will appear brown when placed next to bright-white paper. Sure, it's okay if you have copy paper of a lower brightness for your in-house file copies. Just to be sure to have a ream or two of the other paper when you print your manuscripts or query letters.
6. This next point might sound like old advice, but it can't be emphasized enough. You should pay attention to spelling and grammar. It is amazing how many manuscripts, query letters, and e-mails still have a plethora of misspellings and incorrect grammar. Remember that spell checking and grammar checking computer programs do not always catch every error. Over the years with the writers I've worked with, I have suggested that they initiate a spell search for these words which are often incorrectly used: you, your, their, there, and, an, its and it's.
7. Double-space your manuscripts and single space your query letters. For the same reason that editors prefer larger fonts, they also prefer double-spaced manuscripts. It makes it easier to read, and the editor can jot notes in the added space.

Good luck.

If you have any questions about querying an editor,  
send me a quick note: [Candace@thewritersmentor.com](mailto:Candace@thewritersmentor.com)