



HOW TO WRITE A QUERY LETTER

Paragraph #1: Opening

- This is the place to show an agent that you know who they are, that you targeted them for a reason, and that you're not blindly sending this same query to a thousand agents you found online, most of whom are not a fit.
- The goal here is not to kiss up or stroke the agent's ego. It's to show that you know who they are and what they like and that you have a reason for querying them specifically.

Paragraph #2: The Story

- This is the really hard part. You'll want to summarize your book in one or maybe two paragraphs. This means leaving out A LOT! You need to be specific enough that they understand who and what the book is about, but the goal is not to give them a CliffsNotes rundown of the entire plot. It's to get them to read more.
- In other words, the job of a query letter is to paint your book into a pretty little box that they can instantly understand BUT at the same time make it seem special and like nothing else they've read before.
- If that sounds challenging, start by filling in these blanks:
- MAIN CHARACTER, a _____, desperately wants to _____, but _____ is getting in the way. To reach his/her goal, character tries _____ but that plan fails because of _____.
- Once you have the bird's eye view of your story, add in some specific details about the characters, their location, and the lurking danger. Avoid being generic. Help them see how your character's situation is unique.

Paragraph #3: Your Bio

- If you have any writing credentials, this is the place to mention them. Definitely include your publications or awards or your MFA. If you've been selected for a prestigious conference or residency, include that.

Paragraph #4: Closing

- End with a short, polite closing. Something as basic as, "Thank you for your time and consideration" is perfectly professional. If their submission instructions ask for additional materials like the synopsis or opening chapters, mention those attachments here.



HOW TO WRITE A MANUSCRIPT SYNOPSIS

How To Write A Synopsis For Your Novel

While writing your synopsis, make sure that it includes:

- A complete narrative arc
- Your own voice and unique elements of your story
- The ending or resolution (unlike in a blurb)

As for the ideal length for this piece, it varies from project to project. Some authors recommend keeping it to 500 words, while others might write thousands. However, the standard range is about one to two single-spaced pages (or two to five double-spaced pages).

Your synopsis should:

- Tell an agent directly and clearly what your plot is – it needs to give a clear picture of the narrative arc
- Clearly identify your main characters – and at least hint at any major character development arcs
- Make clear what your hook, premise or elevator pitch is
- Demonstrate implicitly its appeal and how plot momentum increases
- Share an ending that feels satisfying

Additional Tips

Length, Tone, Format

The format of a wonderful synopsis has the following ingredients:

- Length
 - Your synopsis should be about 500 words (but check agency requirements – they can be quite variable). There's a lot of advice around suggesting that your synopsis should run to no more than one page. We think that's on the low side. Most good synopses we see run to two nicely formatted pages (ie: reasonable line spacing, normal margins and a sensible font.)
- Language
 - Be business-like; clear, to the point, neutral. In particular, it's fine to tell not show: this is a business document, not the novel itself.
- Presentation
 - Be well-presented with no typos or spelling mistakes. Use normal fonts, normal margins, and line spacing no narrower than 1.5. It's fine if your synopsis runs to two pages, but (unless an agent specifically asks for more), don't run to more than that.