

Cover Letter, Manuscript and Submission Guidelines

Cover Letter

A *cover letter* accompanies a manuscript, usually a shorter piece. A *query letter* asks if the agent or publisher wants to read your work, which will be sent later. The same basic rules apply.

Keep it short. Three to five paragraphs is a good length.

Start with “Dear _____” and thank the reader for their consideration.

Spell-check. I once set a cover letter that began “Dead Sir or Madam...”

Introduce your work by mentioning the title and word count.

Briefly summarize your article or story, and mention why it might appeal to the reader.

Mention your publishing experience, credentials, or life experience relevant to this work. Don't worry about not having many (or any) publications. If this is your first submission, say so—many magazines actively look for new writers.

A standard font like Helvetica/Arial, Courier or Times New Roman is fine. 10 or 12 point size.

Manuscript Format

Courier or Times New Roman in 10 or 12 point size are standard. Make sure to check the submission guidelines, as some publishers are more specific.

Your address goes in the top right corner. Centre the title below that, along with “by” and your name.

Name, title and page number go in the header, the space at the top of the manuscript.

Double space.

To emphasize something, underline it.

Submit in a standard format, like Word .doc or .docx, .rtf or PDF. Again, check guidelines.

Submission List

Research the publication before you submit. It helps to address your cover letter to a real person (their job is usually called the submissions editor or fiction editor).

Check the yearly Writer's Market. The Aerogramme Writers studio website (aerogrammestudio.com) also puts out a monthly list of places to submit to.

Keep track of when you submit a piece, what response you get, and any personal comments—you can use these for your next submission, which helps to develop a relationship.

Rejection is a normal part of writing. *Don't be discouraged!* Just because the publisher turns down a piece doesn't mean it's bad, and it doesn't reflect on you as a writer or person. *Everyone* goes through it.

After five or so rejections, it's good to reread your submission and revise your cover letter.

Sample manuscript format, cover letter, and submission tracker templates are available at <http://guides.vpl.ca/manuscripts>

Good luck!